



**ECDC COMMITTEE  
VIRTUAL MEETING**

**Minutes of Monday, March 14, 2022  
6:30 PM**

Committee Members participating were Chair Lynne Bermudez and members Janet Kmetz, Alex Qirjazi, Tom Capano, Rosalee DiScipio (joined at 6:40 pm), Kevin Harutunian (Town Administrator), Zillie Bhujju, and Sarah Guido. Planning Board Chair Martha Morrison was also in attendance.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Bermudez called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM.

**GOVERNOR'S ORDER**

Chair Bermudez announced that, due to the COVID-19 State of Emergency announced by Governor Baker, this meeting would be conducted as a Virtual Meeting via ZOOM and as such, participation was remote. She then read the following:

"Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, this meeting will be conducted via remote means. Members of the public who wish to watch or listen to the meeting may do so in the following manner: Video conference (see log-in information on the agenda on the website.) No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings in real time, via technological means. In the event that we are unable to do so, despite best efforts, we will post on the Topsfield website an audio or video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting."

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Zillie Bhujju made a motion to approve the minutes of the ECDC meeting held Monday, January 31, 2022. Janet Kmetz seconded the motion and it passed 5-0-2 with a roll call vote as follows:

Tom Capano– Aye

Kevin Harutunian – Aye

Janet Kmetz - Aye

Alex Qirjazi – Aye

Zillie Bhujju – Aye

Sarah Guido – Abstain (arrived late to 1/31/22 meeting)

Lynne Bermudez – Abstain (not present at the 1/31/22 meeting)

### **RECREATION DEPARTMENT UPDATE – Stephanie Sweeney, Director**

Ms. Sweeney provided an update on activities she has undertaken since joining the Town Hall staff in September of 2021. These included:

- Worked with the Superintendent of Highways/Cemeteries and TAA to update park/field reservation policies, procedures and fee structures.
- Developed/conducted an online survey from 12-4-21 through 2-28-22 to assess the desires of residents regarding new recreational activities in town. Results from 320 respondents (mostly families) are currently being evaluated. It appears summer camps and after school programs are a popular request. Sarah Guido asked if pickleball was mentioned. Stephanie said it was and she will be looking into that option. Chair Bermudez will share the pickleball analysis that was conducted by the Council on Aging (COA) two years ago.
- Coordinated the building of the ice rink on the Town Common. The rink is now officially closed due to warm weather and will be removed from the Common the week of 3/21/22.
- Supported the Holiday on the Green event.
- Currently working with the Agricultural Commission for the Strawberry Festival to be held in June.

Zillie Bhujju mentioned Dawson's desire to possibly hold a cookout in May pending their expansion. Zillie offered the idea of the Recreation Department creating an "cheat sheet" for scheduled Town activities to share with local businesses. There may be opportunities for businesses and the Town to work together (as well as ensure no conflicting events). Ms. Sweeney agreed and mentioned she and Kathleen Barbarisi (Director – COA) were working on developing a community calendar for the Town website that could be shared.

### **DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE – Stephanie Bilotti, Digital Communication Coordinator**

Ms. Bilotti provided an overview of the digital communications strategy she and the Town Administrator developed. The Town website would be the information core and the Town would utilize an email distribution list, Facebook, Instagram

and Twitter to provide timely information and drive users to the website for more comprehensive information. Content on the social media platform would be posted 1-2 times daily. A key component of the strategy would be engaging users so that they in turn share the postings on their own social media. Information posted will be useful and entertaining.

Discussion was held on the pros/cons of the Town's social media sites (FB, twitter, Instagram) allowing comments. Ms. Bilotti believes it is necessary to promote user engagement. She will be monitoring FB comments before they are posted to ensure they are appropriate and on topic. There is no a way to prevent interaction on Instagram and Twitter.

Ms. Bilotti will be taking over Town website responsibility from Sue Winslow on 4/1/22. This is also the timeframe she expects to begin posting. Martha Morrison spoke to the desire of the Agricultural Commission and Topsfield Community Partnership (TCP) to have direct links from the Town website to their web pages to provide users easy access to the visually appealing, comprehensive and engaging information on their sites.

### **DOWNTOWN INITIATIVES UPDATE**

Town Administrator Kevin Harutunian provided the committee with an update on revitalization activities and discussion was held. Topics included:

- The Streetscape Community Meeting held with residents/businesses to review the streetscape concepts developed for Main St. and the Old Highway Garage and the new wayfinding signage designs. Representative Belsito is going to pursue obtaining an earmark for the Town to fund enhancement of the entrance way off Main St. to the shopping plaza.
- An offer has been made to a new Building Inspector.
- The Town accepted a \$100,000 grant from the state for development of a Master Plan. The funds will be used to hire a consultant to work with the Town and the Planning Board (who will oversee the Master Plan development). The Planning Board is currently reviewing the RFP that will be sent out by the Town to obtain a consultant.
- The Select Board, Planning Board and several department heads have been working to develop a response to the state's proposed MBTA Zoning District. Responses from towns/cities are due to the state by 3/31/22.
- The Town Administrator and Martha Morrison provided the Finance Committee with information regarding the Town's request in the FY2023

budget for a 19 hour per week Planner to assist with the numerous planning efforts with which the Town is currently engaged.

- The Business Development Showcase (BDS) is scheduled for June 7<sup>th</sup>. Housing and Economic Development Secretary Mike Kennealy has agreed to be the keynote speaker. The BDS team is working on logistics, including obtaining trolleys. TCP has agreed to help financially support the BDS.

Discussion was held on conducting a survey amongst residents to obtain information to share with potential investors including desired businesses in the downtown, travel patterns/distances for restaurants/grocery shopping, where people spend their leisure time, number of residents working from home, etc. Sarah Guido and Zillie Bhujju offered to help pull the survey together on Google Form. Rosalee will be the BDS liaison to Sarah and Zillie. Sarah suggested we glean as much information as possible from the 2019 Downtown Revitalization effort. Zillie suggested the survey be presented as "We heard you in 2019, and since the world changed since Covid, we have a few more questions".

- The new solar bench will be placed at the Rail Trail @ Main St. in April, replacing the current wooden bench.
- Preliminary discussions are underway for a possible "Grand Prix" bike race in Topsfield. The developers of such a race in Beverly are looking to possibly hold an additional event in Topsfield. Hundreds of people attend the Beverly race.
- Zillie Bhujju shared that Zumi's may have a soft opening in the next few weeks.

Alex Qirjazi had to leave the meeting at 7:35 pm.

Sarah Guido acknowledged the loss of Kindra Clineff and the fact that she was a significant help to both the TCP and ECDC. She offered her condolences to her family. The suggestion was made that something be named in Kindra's honor. Martha Morrison said that those discussions have actually begun. Kindra was so devoted to Topsfield and so generous with her time and talents. Her beautiful photos can be seen on the Garden Club, TCP and Agricultural Committee websites.

## **ADJOURN**

At 8:01 PM, Janet Kmetz made a motion to adjourn. Zillie Bhujju seconded the motion and it passed unanimously with a roll call vote.

Tom Capano– Aye  
Kevin Harutunian – Aye  
Janet Kmetz - Aye  
Sarah Guido – Aye  
Rosalee DiScipio – Aye  
Zillie Bhujju – Aye  
Lynne Bermudez - Aye

Respectfully submitted,  
Lynne Bermudez - Chair

#### **DOCUMENTS**

1. Agenda
2. Draft ECDC minutes of 1/31/2022

Pursuant to the 'Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18-25, the approval of these minutes by the Board constitutes a certification of the date, time and place of the meeting, the members present and absent, and the actions taken at the meeting. Any other description of statements made by any person, or the summary of the discussion of any matter, is included for the purpose of context only, and no certification, express or implied, is made by the Board as to the completeness or accuracy of such statements.