

 ECDC COMMITTEE

 VIRTUAL MEETING

Minutes of Monday, April 10, 2023

6:30 PM

Committee Members participating were Chair Lynne Bermudez and members Tom Capano, Sarah Guido, Alex Qirjazi, Rosalee Discipio, Tracey Granlund, Zillie Bhuju and Town Administrator Kevin Harutunian. Dick Gandt and BCTV were also in attendance.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Bermudez called the meeting to order at 6:33PM.

**GOVERNOR’S ORDER**

Chair Bermudez read the following announcement:

“Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023, 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 available, 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**

Kevin Harutunian made a motion to approve the minutes of the ECDC meeting held Monday, January 30, 2023. Alex Qirjazi seconded the motion and it passed with a roll call vote as follows:

Lynne Bermudez Aye

Zillie Bhuju Abstain

Tom Capano Aye

Rosalee Discipio Aye

Tracey Granlund Aye

Sarah Guido Aye

Kevin Harutunian Aye

Alex Qirjazi Aye

**FY2023 MEETINGS**

Chair Bermudez shared that the Governor had extended the date through which board and committee meetings could be held remotely to March 31, 2025. The committee agreed to hold remaining FY2023 meetings remotely. The next meeting was scheduled for June 12, 2023 at 6:30 PM.

**DOWNTOWN INITIATIVES UPDATE**

Town Administrator Kevin Harutunian provided the committee with an update on revitalization activities. Topics included the following:

* + Phase I of the Master Plan, a review of existing conditions in the town, has been completed. Phase II has begun and will run through early May. This phase involves obtaining input from the community on their future vision for Topsfield including desired businesses/services/housing. The town hopes to engage over 700 residents and all ECDC members were asked to help engage friends and neighbors, especially younger residents. There has been a good turnout from the seniors in town. Kevin thanked Gregor Smith and Zillie Bhuju, Chair and Vice Chair respectively, of the Master Plan Steering Committee for all their hard work.
	+ The wayfinding signs are being constructed and will be installed in May. There will be eight directional signs and a kiosk. The location for placement of the kiosk is still being discussed.
* Kevin reviewed the zoning articles that will appear on the Annual Town Meeting warrant which, if passed, will help with economic development. Several of the zoning articles were recommendations from the Planner that helped develop the RFP for the Old Highway Garage.
	+ Upcoming events to activate the downtown were discussed. Two block parties with food, drinks and music and a pop-up restaurant are planned for the weekend of the Strawberry Festival and on Mother’s Day weekend. On 4/20 at 5:30 PM the Newburyport Chamber of Commerce will host an event at the Public Hall, with appetizers and drinks, to highlight and discuss opportunities within the town. ECDC members were invited to attend.
	+ Discussions are nearing completion with the owner of the Village Shopping Center for the town to lease a portion of the entrance of the parking lot to create a park and municipal parking. The lease will be reviewed by the Select Board and then must be approved at the Annual Town Meeting in May for construction to begin. Kevin shared two conceptual designs for the park. Members discussed items including the shape of the park (squared vs rounded), lighting, trash, bike racks and a possible partnership with THOP to improve their abutting property.
	+ The town signed a three-year option to purchase with the owner of the property across from the Old Highway Garage for the ability to purchase his property. Developers interested in the Old Highway Garage can purchase this option from us to use the land for parking and septic. This added land provides enough septic to accommodate a100 seat restaurant on the Old Highway Garage property. If the zoning changes mentioned above are also approved at the Annual Town Meeting, the Garage should have several responses from developers when the RFP goes out at the end of May.
	+ Several businesses are interested in vacant spaces within town including a yoga studio and an ice cream shop.

**OTHER**

Chair Bermudez asked members if they could let her know if they are interested in being reappointed to the ECDC after June 30, 2023 (the expiration of the one-year term for all members). The Select Board will be making appointments to committees and boards at the end of June.

**ADJOURN**

At 8:09 PM, Zillie Bhuju made a motion to adjourn. Rosalee Discipio seconded the motion and it passed unanimously with a roll call vote as follows:

Lynne Bermudez Aye

Zillie Bhuju Aye

Tom Capano Aye

Rosalee Discipio Aye

Tracey Granlund Aye

Sarah Guido Aye

Kevin Harutunian Aye

Alex Qirjazi Aye

Respectfully submitted,

Lynne Bermudez - Chair

**DOCUMENTS**

1. Agenda
2. Draft ECDC minutes of 1/30/2023

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.