



**ECDC COMMITTEE
VIRTUAL MEETING**

**Minutes of Tuesday, February 9, 2021
6:30 PM**

Committee Members participating were Chair Lynne Bermudez, and members Zillie Bhujju, Sarah Guido, Janet Kmetz, Rosie Discipio, Alex Qirjazi, Kim Philpot and Kevin Harutunian (Town Administrator). Also present were Topsfield Historical Society (THS) President Norm Isler, and THS members Bill Whiting, Jeanne Pickering, Martha Sanders, Anne Barrett, and Vince Guerra. Also present were Select Board member Dick Gandt, Planning Board Chair Martha Morrison and Cultural Council Chair Kathleen Hunt.

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 Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Topsfield Select Board will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. Specific information and the general guidelines for remote participation by members of the public and/or parties with a right and/or requirement to attend this meeting can be found on the Topsfield website at www.topsfield-ma.gov For this meeting, 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 below.) 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."

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Bermudez called the meeting to order at 6:30PM. Select Board member Dick Gandt and Topsfield Historical Society member Bill Whiting asked to record the meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Zillie Bhujju made a motion to approve the minutes of the ECDC meeting held Tuesday, January 12, 2021 as presented. Sarah Guido seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously by a roll call vote as follows:

Zillie Bhujju – Aye
Rosalee Discipio – Aye
Sarah Guido – Aye
Kevin Harutunian – Aye
Janet Kmetz - Aye
Kim Philpot - Aye
Alex Qirjazi – Aye
Lynne Bermudez – Aye

REQUEST FOR LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR TOPSFIELD MEETINGHOUSE

John Kinhan, Co-Chair of the Congregational Church Fundraising Committee, reviewed the efforts of the church to secure a grant to assist in the renovations/repair of the 1842 Meetinghouse. The church is asking several committees, including the Select Board and the Historical Commission, for letters of support to submit with their grant request.

Chair Bermudez made a motion to approve a letter of support for the Congregational Church of Topsfield to apply for funds to assist in the renovations/repairs to the 1842 Meetinghouse on the Common; and for the Chair to sign. Janet Kmetz seconded the motion and it passed unanimously by a roll call vote as follows:

Zillie Bhujju – Aye
Rosalee Discipio – Aye
Sarah Guido – Aye
Kevin Harutunian – Aye
Janet Kmetz - Aye
Kim Philpot - Aye
Alex Qirjazi – Aye

Lynne Bermudez – Aye

CULTURAL ARTS/EVENTS PRESENTATION

Topsfield Historical Society (THS) President Norm Isler provided the committee with an overview of past THS cultural events, grants and published documents/books. Norm also reviewed the organizations whom THS has partnered with for various events. Bill Whiting reviewed technical accomplishments of the THS with its digitization of historical documents and photos. Martha Sanders shared some very old and wonderful pictures of the town and will forward to the ECDC a 3-minute video she had developed for the Gould Barn. VP Anne Pickering spoke of her responsibilities including graphic arts for the event programs, development of the newsletter, the Thanksgiving Open House and membership on the Program Committee. Jeanne Pickering spoke of the economic development benefits of THS programs as they draw people from out of town and out of state, in particular for the Parson Copen House Tours. Jeanne heads membership drives and manages the website.

DOWNTOWN INITIATIVES UPDATE

Town Administrator Kevin Harutunian provided the committee with an update on revitalization activities concerning the Old Highway Garage. The town contracted with Hancock Engineering to survey, and develop a plan to sub-divide, the lot on which the garage sits (the lot is currently linked to the land on which the Fire Station resides). The TA also shared that \$13,000 remains to be spent on Downtown initiatives from the state grant received in 2020.

An article will be included on the Town Meeting Warrant to expand the Business Village to include the sub-divided lot, the undeveloped lot on School Ave and the Box Top Store. The Planning Board is responsible for overseeing rezoning efforts and will hold two meetings and a Public Hearing on this issue during February and March. The Town Administrator will also be holding a Community Conversation in February around the old highway garage lot and its impact on revitalization of the Downtown. These four meetings will allow the public to hear about the rezoning process, the proposed articles, and to share their thoughts on development of the newly sub-divided lot. ECDC members discussed and provided input on the timing and positioning of the TA meeting and the joint advertising of the four meetings.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DISCUSSION

Due to time constraints, Chair Bermudez suggested, and the committee agreed, to defer discussion of the topic of "Business Recruitment" to the committee's March meeting.

ADJOURN

At 8:28 PM, Sarah Guido made a motion to adjourn. Zillie Bhujju seconded the motion and it passed unanimously with a roll call vote as follows:

Zillie Bhujju – Aye
Rosalee Discipio – Aye
Sarah Guido – Aye
Kevin Harutunian – Aye
Janet Kmetz - Aye
Kim Philpot - Aye
Alex Qirjazi – Aye
Lynne Bermudez – Aye

Respectfully submitted,
Lynne Bermudez – Chair

DOCUMENTS

1. Agenda
2. Draft ECDC minutes of 1/9/2021
3. Proposed Letter of Support – Congregational Church Meetinghouse
4. Topsfield Historical Society - Events & Programming

<p>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.</p>
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