

MONTAGUE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND INDUSTRIAL CORPORATION
TOWN HALL
1 AVENUE A
TURNERS FALLS, MA 01376

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday December 5, 2024 at 4:00PM

IN PERSON MEETING

Town Hall Upstairs Meeting Room (2nd floor)
One Avenue A Turners Falls, MA

Present: Rob Steinberg (RS), Kimberly Williams (KW), Linda Ackerman (LA), John Furbish (JF), Ella Ingraham (EI), James Mussoni (JM)

Absent: Richard Ruth (RR)

Staff: Chris Nolan-Zeller, Assistant Town Administrator (CNZ)

Meeting opened 4:02 PM Kimberly Williams presiding.

Approval of minutes: **MOTION BY LA to approve the minutes of 9/4/24. Seconded by JM. All Approved. Motion Passed Unanimously.**

Appointment of EDIC Officers for FY25. RS expressed interest in being elected Chair, with the goal of leading the committee toward a more active role in Town in support of economic development. JF expressed trepidation about the committee becoming too involved, with LA agreeing that its members are busy and may lack additional time to dedicate. RS stated that all members should give what they are able, but some have more time to give than others.

Motion by JM to postpone appointing a new Chair until the current Chair can be present. Seconded by LA. JM – Yes, KW – No, LA – Yes, EI – No, RS – No, JF – Yes. Motion Failed (3-3).

Motion by RS to appoint RS as Chair. Seconded by EI. JM – No, KW – Yes, LA – No, EI – Yes, RS – Yes, JF – Yes. Motion Passed (4-2).

Motion by JM to appoint KW as Vice Chair. Seconded by LA. All Approved. Motion Passed Unanimously.

Updates on Farren Care Center Site, Working Group Formation. CNZ updated group on Town's \$62,000 state grant for Montague City Village Center Zoning Amendments. Re-zoning is the first step toward being able to develop the site, but the Town will not receive its grant agreement until January. The Town plans to contract with Mass Housing Partnership, who will guide through re-zoning process, including with community engagement and public outreach. Town

Planner also putting together working group to weigh in on the project, with anticipated EDIC representation in group.

RS expressed concern that new housing development at former Kittredge Estate in Leverett would consume much of area's demand.

KW noted this may not be the case, as the Town's catchment area is largely along the Route 2 corridor, rather than south. EI added that people priced out of the Amherst area are moving further north, including to Montague. JM expressed that former Kittredge Estate and the Farren site are not comparable re-development projects.

JM: EDIC should work as an advisory committee steering Town's administration for projects generating economic development, including through suggesting grants regarding tourism, redevelopment, and streetscape improvements.

KW: Town should continue strengthening bond with Franklin County Chamber of Commerce & Regional Tourism Council.

JM: Next agenda, we should brainstorm funding proposals for community development. More housing is needed.

KW: Growing local attractiveness for commuters to five-college area, despite perceived distance.

EI: Local area is viewed as affordable compared to Amherst, but current Montague residents are struggling to afford their housing, with local salaries being low.

JM: Local workforce is under-qualified and under-educated for the jobs in demand.

KW: Local area provides lots of opportunity for people starting their careers due to high professional demand and less competition compared to large metro areas.

JM: Committee focus should be overall economic, rather than industrial development.

EI: Agriculture also plays foundational role in local economy.

RS: More affordable housing is the essential next step for any new economic growth. A mix of affordable and market-rate is needed. Region can become a magnet for people with entrepreneurial energy. Clustered housing in already-developed land can help preserve town's rural character.

JM: We should support Northern Tier rail proposal for potential of growing economic opportunity, increasing tourism, and reducing congestion on Route 2.

K: Housing options should be affordable for people working in the area.

E: CNZ should be prepared to discuss the difference between what the state considers “affordable” vs. “subsidized” at next meeting.

LA: We should also seek information on Erving’s new clustered housing development behind town’s Senior Center.

RS: Would like to see map of potential development opportunity sites in Town. CNZ agreed to help with this effort by using mapping tools from the Assessors office.

Meeting adjourned 5:04 PM

Next meeting Thursday February 13 at 3:30PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Nolan-Zeller, EDIC Coordinator