

Minutes

Economic Development Advisory Board

July 10, 2023 7:00PM

Held remotely via Zoom

Committee members in attendance (noted by Y/N):

Anne Meyers, Co-Chair	Y	Derrick Choi	Y*	Carol Levin	N	Marilyn Newman	N
Paul Saner, Co-Chair	N	Alan Christ	Y	Ken Lewis	Y	Al Raine	Y
Cliff Brown*	Y	Sandi Silk	N	Tom Nally	Y	Zeina Talje	Y

*Arrived late or left early

Staff & consultants present: Victor Panak, William Dorfman, Aaron Norris

Attendees included: Janice Kahn, Perry Grossman, Sean Lynn-Jones, Sergio Modigliani, Jane Flanagan, Linda Pehlke, Carla Benka, Fran Perler, Danny Danesh

Meeting Materials: <https://www.brooklinema.gov/DocumentCenter/Index/2936>

- 2022 Storefront Survey Memo
- Presentation by Aaron Norris and Will Dorfman on 2022 Storefront Survey
- Memo on Warrant Article Review Procedures 7-6-23
- Life Science Draft Regulations for Town of Brookline
- Marilyn Newman's Comments on Life Science Regulations

Meeting Recording:

<https://brooklinema.zoomgov.com/rec/share/d4SE7MwOjLIA7CrmHJ8zf9X4Z5M8Rt8RJOjPf12b3GZcoUX4sCbeOLAm5ITVzgon.AEahK7Dr51XqXldX>

Opening Remarks

Anne Meyers opened the meeting and mentioned that Paul Saner may not be able to join the meeting due to connection issues.

Presentation by Economic Development and Long-Term Planning Division on the 2022 Storefront Survey; Board Discussion

Aaron Norris provided the Board with a presentation on the outcomes of the Division's 2022 Storefront Survey. The presentation highlighted the strength of independent businesses in Brookline, the improving rate of vacancies, and included some insights from local real estate agents.

The Board discussed the findings of the survey. Board members asked about a variety of related topics including the effects of an increased quantity of Asian businesses, permitting delays, management and availability of parking in Coolidge Corner, "magnet" businesses for the various commercial areas.

Public Comment

Janice Kahn, TMM Precinct 15, asked about whether the study could include a calculation of what the vacancy rate indicates as far as lost revenue to the Town or the relevant businesses. Mr. Brown indicated that the property taxes continue to be collected by the Town even with vacancies and local option taxes would depend on what specific businesses are located in the vacant spaces.

Discussion of Procedures for EDAB Review of Town Meeting Warrant Articles

Anne Meyers introduced the topic. Mr. Panak went into some detail about the questions related to the process.

Mr. Nally opined that the process EDAB should follow depends heavily on the complexity on the specific warrant articles.

Mr. Raine agreed with Mr. Nally and then added that he would be against a set criteria for article selection.

Mr. Christ agreed that there shouldn't be any one-size-fits-all policy for article selection.

The Board continued to discuss these issues related to warrant article review.

Staff and Board Updates

Linkage Fee Program

Victor Panak provided the Board with a brief update on the Linkage Fee project, noting that the nexus study is moving forward with a kick-off meeting on July 13, 2023.

Life Science Regulations

Will Dorfman provided the Board with an update on the drafting of life science regulations. He highlighted several upcoming community workshops. Mr. Choi asked whether developers still have an appetite of life-science development and whether the Town is repositioning itself in relation to that market. Mr. Dorfman responded that the demand remains but that it may not be as intense as it used to be.

MBTA-CA Harvard Street Form-Based Zoning Proposal

Victor Panak provided an update on ongoing work on the Harvard Street Form-Based Zoning Proposal, highlighting the work being done by the Planning Department with the form-based consultant, Opticos Design. Board members asked about how the competing solutions for MBTA-CA compliance will be resolved for Town Meeting and how the work of Opticos Design would be used if the Harvard Street proposal is not adopted by the Town.

MBTA-CA Multi-Family Permitting Committee

Mr. Lewis discussed the recent work of the MBTA-CA Multi-Family Permitting Committee, focusing on the latest proposal of the Committee that uses existing M Districts for MBTA-CA compliance. He provided a summary of the RKG Associates analysis that confirmed that the proposed M-District plan exceeded the Town's requirements for compliance with the MBTA-CA and he noted that the M-District plan incorporated a supplemental overlay district at Walnut Street and High Street to adopt as-of-right zoning that would facilitate additional affordable housing at the BHA site.

The meeting was adjourned.