



# Town of Hopkinton

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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

### PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, November 1, 2023

*Hopkinton Town Hall*

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Members Present: Andrea Folsom, Jim Fredyma, Ian Hart, Steven Whitley  
Members Absent: Louise Carr, Alexander Pooler  
Staff Present: Anna Wells, *Economic Development Director*, Karen Robertson, *Planning Director*

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Ian Hart called the meeting to order at 6:07 pm in Hopkinton Town Hall.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES from [October 4, 2023](#)**

Andrea Folsom made a motion to approve the *Economic Development Committee minutes of October 4, 2023*. Steven Whitley seconded. There was no discussion. Motion passed 4-0.

### **DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS**

#### 1. Zoning Amendments

Mr. Hart opened the discussion explaining the three options before the Committee at this time: proceed with the amendments as they are; make changes to the suggested amendments; or withdraw them from consideration. The Committee discussed these options at length, in particular addressing the challenges ahead to build acceptance of the proposed amendments: confusion among residents about the details of the proposed amendments; apprehension and misconceptions about the potential impacts they would have; misunderstanding that these are zoning proposals, not proposals for development; and wide-ranging viewpoints about issues of housing affordability and availability.

The Committee discussed the concept of being a rural community, noting that “rural character” is a frequent phrase in Hopkinton’s Master Plan. The Committee discussed that there are many ways to conceive of rural character, including the clearly-expressed desire in Hopkinton’s Master Plan to preserve agricultural and forested lands. The Committee observed that Hopkinton’s zoning code primarily enables single-family homes on multi-acre lots, which increases pressure on these undeveloped lands. In contrast, allowing clustered and/or more dense development in certain areas and offering incentives for conservation can help preserve these lands, in turn helping to maintain one element of Hopkinton’s rural character.

Mr. Fredyma noted that over the years, residents have made efforts to minimize the impact of industrial development and contrasted that with the desire to reduce the residential tax rate.

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Further, he noted that when prospective employers consider Hopkinton, they want to know where their employees will live, but the lack of available and affordable housing leads them elsewhere.

Ultimately, the Committee decided to withdraw the suggested zoning amendments due to the anticipated difficulty in moving them forward to successful adoption at the 2024 Town Meeting. The Committee also recommitted to advocating for examination of Hopkinton's zoning and land use regulations to determine if and how these may be inconsistent with the long-established goal of building the Town's economic base. *Andrea Folsom made a motion to withdraw the zoning amendments from consideration before the Planning Board, seconded by Jim Fredyma.* As a point of further discussion, Ms. Folsom reiterated the need for comprehensive planning and visioning, and encouraged the Select Board to keep those ideas in the forefront. **Motion passed 4-0.**

Mr. Hart confirmed that the Planning Board needs to be notified of the EDC's decision first thing the next day; Steven Whitley made a motion to delegate writing a memo to the Planning Board to Ian Hart and Anna Wells, seconded by Andrea Folsom. **Motion passed 4-0.**

At the public's request, Mr. Hart opened the meeting to public comment on this issue. Ms. Karen Robertson, Hopkinton Planning Director, provided the Committee with suggestions as to how the Committee might modify its pursuit of zoning amendments in the future. Ms. Robertson added that she was including a budget item for a regulatory zoning review/audit in the budget proposal going to the Select Board next week.

Mr. Hart clarified that this was the second time these amendments were brought to the Planning Board, having been introduced to them in the fall of 2022. At that time, the EDC was told the timeline was too short to get them ready for Town Meeting, and to bring them back again in the Spring of 2023 for consideration. Mr. Whitley further clarified that the EDC brought these amendments to the Planning Board again in May of this year, and followed the Planning Board's recommended timeline and steps. During the months leading up to the first Public Hearing, the Planning Board did not raise objections nor offer feedback or suggestions until the Public Hearing. By that point, the EDC had invested significant time and effort preparing the suggestions and sharing them with the various other boards and committees. Altering them meaningfully in time for the subsequent Public Hearings was unworkable by that point. He expressed he felt they did follow the Planning Board's suggested timeline and procedure and did try to work together. Ms. Wells suggested that if the Planning Board felt the need for additional information, such as a buildout or analysis, that would have been helpful for the Economic Development Committee to know earlier in the process.

## 2. TIF Districts

The Committee discussed the benefits of creating a new TIF District in West Hopkinton to encompass the former Bio-Energy site, noting that potential purposes of the TIF District Plan could include brownfields investigation and cleanup, road realignment, and other public benefits as described in the enabling statute, [RSA 162-K](#). The committee agreed to review a draft TIF District Plan at their next meeting.

3. [Community Center Investment Program](#) (due November 30)

Ms. Wells reported that the Town has received funding for grant-writing assistance from the New Hampshire Community Development Finance Authority (CDFA) in conjunction with this grant opportunity in the amount of \$2,500. She and Mr. Cass will be participating in a pre-application meeting with CDFA this week, and will determine how to proceed from there. The Committee agreed to discuss this further at their next meeting.

## UPDATES

1. [Water/Wastewater Expansion](#)

Ms. Wells reported that since the Committee last met, the person who had accepted the Sewer Superintendent position ultimately declined the job and the position has been re-advertised. Mr. Cass and the Town's former Water/Wastewater Superintendent, Sam Currier, are still proceeding with the Asset Management work through an ARPA-funded grant and Ms. Wells and Mr. Currier continue to meet regularly with engineers to pursue Water/Wastewater system expansion. Ms. Wells' next meeting with engineers will be this coming Friday and she hopes they will provide a project scope with associated costs. She will report back at the next meeting.

2. [EDC Budget](#)

Ms. Wells reported that she is scheduled to present the EDC's proposed budget to the Select Board this coming Monday, November 6.

3. Other Board/Committee Updates - none at this time

## OTHER

Upcoming conferences & workshops:

- [Northern New England Planning Conference](#), Mon, Nov 6-Wed Nov 8 - New Castle, NH
- [NHMA 2023 Annual Conference](#), Wed-Thu, November 15-16, 9am-4pm - Manchester

Upcoming EDC meetings: **Wednesday, November 15, 6:30pm**

-first Wednesday of each month at 6:00pm: December 6, 2023, January 3, 2024

## ADJOURNMENT

Andrea Folsom moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Steven Whitley. There was no discussion. Motion passed 4-0.

There being no other business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 7:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Anna Wells

Economic Development Director

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