

## **Middletown Economic Development Advisory Committee**

Thursday, November 12, 2015, 4:30 pm  
Middletown Town Hall, Town Council Chambers

### **Members Present:**

John Bagwill  
Nick Coogan  
Erin Donovan-Boyle, Newport County Chamber  
Liana Ferreira Fenton  
Rocky Kempenaar, Town Council  
Tom Kowalczyk  
Robert M. Silva, Chairman  
Barbara VonVillas, Town Council  
Ron Wolanski, Town Planner

### **Members absent:**

Joseph A. Cirillo  
David Lepore

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Silva at 4:35pm

### **1. Approval of the minutes of the October 14, 2015 MEDAC meeting.**

**Motion** by Mr. Kowalczyk, seconded Ms. Fenton, to approve the minutes of the September 9, 2015 meeting. **Vote:** 9-0-0.

### **2. Continued discussion of potential establishment of a business improvement district in the Atlantic Beach District, and potential projects.**

Mr. Wolanski stated that the discussion the October meeting focused on the anticipated cost to property owners of a potential project to bury utility lines underground. The preference of the committee was to seek informal input on the concept from some of the property owners.

Mr. Silva stated that based on some of the conversations he's had, the anticipated cost of such a project would be a concern.

Mr. Bagwill suggested that the buyers of the Atlantic Beach Club should be contacted to gauge their interest. The project has the potential to make their proposed events venue more desirable do to the aesthetic enhancement of the area.

There was discussion of the need to proceed with the idea of establishing a business improvement district, regardless of the potential utility line project. Mr. Wolanski was asked to provide additional information on options for creation of a BID, as well as an update on the status of the proposed RIDOT intersection improvements in the area.

Ms. VonVillas expressed the need to present a plan to the property owners in the area that will describe the potential improvements and benefits of a BID. Improvements to sidewalks should be a top priority.

Ms. Donovan-Boyle stated that there will be a state grant funding opportunity announced shortly to assist with improvements in small business districts. She was asked by the committee to investigate other funding options as well.

By consensus, the discussion was continued to the December 9, 2015 MEDAC meeting.

### **3. Update on status of regional economic development efforts.**

Ms. Donovan-Boyle stated that the draft of the organizational structure of the proposed office is under review by the Chamber of Commerce board. Once approved, the towns and other stakeholders will be contacted to provide representatives to sit on the board of the new economic development organization. It is anticipated that the board will have approximately 25 members representing the towns, and industry sectors.

### **4. Update on business outreach efforts**

Mr. Silva stated that he has had discussion with Rep Ruggiero on the issue of broadband internet access on the island. He also noted recent discussion with the town on a proposed solar energy purchase agreement, with proceeds from reduced energy costs to be used to purchase streetlights from National Grid, and potential change to technology that will allow street lights to serve as wi-fi hot spots. There was also discussion of RIDOT fiber infrastructure on the island as a potential option for providing improved access to high speed internet. Mr. Silva noted recent conversations with AIPC, and that with their assistance in leading the regional discussion, and with assistance from Middletown's IT Director, Matt Wainwright, a business plan could be developed. Discussion of this matter was continued to the December 9, 2015 meeting.

Mr. Silva stated that he has been in contact with the governor's office regarding a visit to Middletown by Gov. Raimondo. He expects that a meeting will be scheduled shortly.

The meeting adjourned at 5:30pm.

Respectfully submitted  
Ronald M. Wolanski, Town Planner