



Town of Warren, Rhode Island

Minutes of the Economic Development Board

The Town of Warren, RI Economic Development Board met at a Regular Meeting on October 22, 2012 at 6:00 p.m. at Town Hall, located at 514 Main Street. The presiding officer was Brandt Heckert. Board members present were Sara Volino, Mark Lombari, Karen Dionne, Kate Dickson, Spencer Morris, and Benjamin Terry. Board members Patrick DeSocio, Christine Lichatz, and Darcy DaCosta were absent. Town Council member Scott Lial was in attendance. Ex officio member Caroline Wells was absent. Kristin MacDonald was present at the meeting to serve as Secretary to the EDB.

1. Review and Approval of Minutes from the Regular Meeting of September 17, 2012

The minutes from the regular meeting held on September 17, 2012 were reviewed by the members via email. Ms. Volino made a motion to accept the minutes, the motion was seconded by Ms. Dionne and all members were in favor.

After a brief introduction, Mr. Terry was welcomed by the EDB as a new board member.

2. Report from Gateway Signage Workgroup

The new gateway signs have been installed on the Barrington border and also on the Swansea line on Rt. 136. Mr. Heckert said he would contact Conservation Board member Helen Hawkinson regarding coordinated planting with Christine Lichatz, primarily on the "wishing well" location on the Swansea line. Mr. Lombari reported that the town manager needs to work with the State of RI regarding approval for placement of the addition signs on Routes 114 and 136 on the south entrances to town. Mr. Lombari stated that any future wayfaring signage needs to coordinate with the design and placement of the new gateway signs. The signage workgroup plans to set up a time to look at the wayfaring flowchart previously put together by Ms. Dionne and Mr. Bolster and discuss a plan of action moving forward. The board also discussed aesthetic issues and the need for design review in town. The Gateway Signage workgroup will report on their progress at the November meeting.

3. Discuss results of the joint EDB/Town Council workshop on September 25th

The Board discussed the topics that were introduced at the workshop. The economic section of the Comprehensive Plan has been completed but needs to move to the next level, which is planning and public review. This item needs to be moved forward by Caroline Wells; the item should be placed on the Planning Board agenda for October.

Mr. Morris reported that the Town Council gave the EDB approval to investigate the town's tax stabilization program. Mr. Terry stated he and Mr. Morris would work together and research tax incentives in other committees and how these programs would apply to Warren.

Mr. Heckert said that Mr. DeSisto is in the process of changing the zoning and signage ordinance; Mr. Lial said that he would check with Mr. DeSisto regarding the status of this issue. Mr. Heckert noted that although the new signage ordinance will be stricter than the current ordinance, enforcement of the ordinance by the Zoning Official is a key element to overall signage regulation.

The Board discussed the difficulties of targeting beneficial businesses to Warren as well as the need for a point person in town hall to streamline the process of establishing new businesses in town.

Ms. Dickson reported that she felt that overall format of the workshop needs to be revisited. There need to be mutually agreed upon topics of discussion in order to optimize the use of everyone's time.

4. Discuss results of Shipshape Challenge and Warren Walkabout

Ms. Dickson reported that the Warren Walkabout was successful and well attended by the public; however, she felt that more cooperation with the town government is needed in the future to make this annual event a success. The judging for the Shipshape Challenge did not occur at the Warren Walkabout but at a later date. There will be press releases to announce the winners of the various prize categories. Now that a formula has been put in place, it will be easier to promote and organize this event next year.

5. Discussion to promote the Storefront Improvement Program

With \$20,000 currently available in the Storefront Improvement Program, Mr. Heckert asked the Board to consider outreach strategies for business and property owners. The Board discussed the program and how to encourage local businesses to participate. Mr. Morris suggested coordinating this program with another project like the Shipshape Challenge in order to engage participants who are already interested in making improvements.

Mr. Heckert encouraged everyone to vote for Hope and Main at the special election scheduled for Monday, October 29th, 2012.

A motion was made to adjourn by Ms. Dickson, the motion was seconded by Mr. Terry and all members were in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

The next meeting of the EDB is scheduled for Monday, November 19, 2012.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristin M. MacDonald

November 16, 2012

