

Economic Development Advisory Board Minutes

February 1, 2021

7 – 9 PM held remotely via Zoom

EDAB Board members (in attendance noted by Y/N)

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

Staff present: Kara Brewton, Meredith Mooney

Guests included: Henry Winkelman, Jeff Wachter, Jenn Mason

Materials provided ahead of time to the Board included: Link to 12/22/2020 [presentation](#) and [memo](#) to Select Board regarding storefront survey & update on initiatives for small businesses

Information shared via Zoom during the meeting: “Draft Charge of Lab & Bio/Life Sciences Subcommittee”, 2/1/2021, P. Saner.

Paul Saner opened the meeting remotely via Zoom due to COVID, ensured all members were able to participate with audio and video, and announced that the meeting would be recorded.

Thank you to outgoing EDAB member Don Warner

EDAB members and staff recorded thank yous to Don Warner for his service on EDAB and as a Town Meeting Member for more than a decade, providing insight and analysis as an architect and commercial property owner.

Annual Co-Chair Election

Tom Nally chaired this agenda item and asked for nominations. Susan Houston made a motion to re-elect Anne Meyers and Paul Saner as Co-Chairs of EDAB. Anne Meyers asked if others were interested and encouraged members to speak up. After hearing none, EDAB then VOTED unanimously by roll call vote (in favor: PS, AM, CB, AR, DC, SS, SH, KL, CL, AC, TN) to re-elect Anne Meyers and Paul Saner as Co-Chairs of EDAB.

Discussion & vote on forming Lab & Bio/Life Sciences Subcommittee

Paul Saner gave some background about how the only location zoned for biolab use currently is at Brookline Place, which occurred 16 years ago. Following further discussion, EDAB made edits to the draft charge as noted below (additions underlined; strike through deletions). EDAB members agreed that the Subcommittee’s work should also include looking at specific sites at the same time, given the specific lab use requirements and space needs. Alan Christ also suggested looking at how lab use has successfully

interwoven around edges of residential neighborhoods. Susan Houston noted that Brookline is noted “bronze” on the state’s biolab website, and that this website could be helpful not only as a resource but also as a potential marketing tool.

Following further discussion, EDAB VOTED that a Lab & Bio/Life Sciences Subcommittee be formed including Marilyn Newman, Cliff Brown, Carol Levin, and Paul Saner with the following charge (in favor: AC, KL, SH, SS, TN, AR, CB, CL, DC, AM, PS).

EDAB Lab & Bio/Life Sciences Subcommittee charge:

EDAB is creating an ad hoc subcommittee to investigate and evaluate the possible addition of Research & Development and/or Laboratory Life Science and other related uses to the Brookline Zoning By-Law beyond the present GMR district at Brookline Place.

The ad hoc subcommittee will research market, design, safety, zoning, licensing, monitoring, financial, infrastructure and transportation requirements, community impacts and acceptance and other considerations germane to the topic. This work will be done in coordination with other ongoing or future planning efforts. The ad hoc subcommittee will endeavor to provide a draft report with preliminary recommendations to EDAB ~~by September 2021.~~

Commercial Areas Updates

Meredith Mooney announced that over the weekend we learned that we would be receiving assistance as part of the state’s Local Rapid Recovery Program. Brookline will receive technical assistance to create an economic recovery plan for Brookline, including specific projects that we would like to work on. This is anticipated to be a five month process, including a series of webinars with other communities. As we noted in our application, we are especially looking to move forward with the formation of a Coolidge Corner Business Improvement District. Initial conversations with the state indicate that there may be additional funding for implementation as a later phase of this program.

Economic Development will be applying to utilize both the annual Community Development Block Grant funds as well as CARES Act funding towards a second round of direct assistance to small businesses.

Outdoor dining: In June, the Town quickly permitted quick-build outdoor seating platforms. This program ended in December, but we immediately started a winter phase, which includes the requirement and provision of concrete barriers and guidance on outdoor heating elements. For the Spring and Summer phases, we will be moving towards permanent outdoor dining guidance including decorating the concrete barriers, building and documenting a prototype for parklets with platforms at sidewalk level, etc. A permanent program could provide more inclusive opportunities as many restaurants have several steps up to their indoor dining rooms. Brookline’s General By-Law and Zoning By-Law restricts outdoor dining to six months; we will be submitting revised language for Spring Town Meeting consideration to permit a longer outdoor dining season. We are also looking to permanently permit sandwich boards under some conditions, which was also temporarily allowed during COVID.

The Brookline Chamber of Commerce may submit an application for the state’s tourism grant initiative, which requires matching funds.

Approval of January 2021 meeting minutes

January 4, 2021 meeting minutes were edited including spelling/grammatical errors and a clarification that the action taken regarding the dedicated bus lane pilot at Gateway East was a unanimous vote. The revised minutes were then approved by roll call vote (in favor: AC, SH, SS, TN, AR, CB, KL, DC, AM, PS; abstained: CL).

Other Business/ EDAB & Staff Updates

- EDAB dates – the December meeting will be on Dec. 6th, and Paul Saner asked EDAB members to additionally hold March 8th on their calendars given the timing of Spring Town Meeting warrant articles.
- Sandi Silk agreed to have staff post an Instagram note about her joining EDAB; Sandi also offered to get an EDAB page on LinkedIn started.
- Kara Brewton thanked EDAB members in advance for their continued patience with limited staff availability. The Planning Department is now 13 employees, 4.5 positions recently vacated and/or not in the current budget. Kara and Meredith have been without two full time staff since Fall of 2019. The bare minimum of continuing with sustainability work is at least 25% of Kara's time. The Department also just lost a Housing Planner that was leading the Boylston Street Corridor Study Committee, which will now be only supported by ED staff.
- Paul Saner noted that Chestnut Hill Realty has entered into an arrangement with Stonebridge of Colorado as their hotel manager and consultant for the Durgin Garage project; Paul expects an uptick in permitting activity this coming year.
- Paul Saner reported that the Town recently fell below the state's "safe harbor" requirement of 10% of its housing units as affordable; he expects we will be back above this level in a couple months.
- Paul Saner noted that the Economic Development bill is in place and has three components: (i) majority voting for change of zoning as long as any additional housing can be created; (ii) a bonding earmark for \$285,000 to be used to study to improve our commercial corridors; we've formally lobbied the Secretary of Administration & Finance to follow up so that these funds can be secured; and (iii) the ability to form Tourism Destination marketing districts, which are essentially a BID for hotels. Anne Meyers and Paul Saner intend to investigate whether this structure would be of interest for Brookline's hotels.
- Susan Houston noted that the A Better Brookline organization now has half of the 7,000 signatures needed for a likely May 2022 ballot referendum that would establish a Commission to study whether to become a city and name the Commissioners on the same ballot.
- Ken Lewis, Derrick Choi, and Paul Saner are interested in hosting a developer panel to hear from the market. They are especially interested in mixed-use development and how parking and inclusionary requirements affect proformas. This panel would either be held in March or later in the year.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 8:35 pm.