

DRAFT Minutes
Economic Development Advisory Board

September 13, 2021 7:00PM
Held remotely via Zoom

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

Anne Meyers, Co-Chair	Y	Derrick Choi	Y	Carol Levin	Y	Marilyn Newman	Y
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 & consultants present: Kara Brewton, Meredith Mooney, Sophie Robison

Guests included: Jonathan Davis, Mary Sabolsi, Jonathan Klein, David Gladstone, Naomi Sweitzer, Jennifer Dopazo Gilbert, Neil Wishinsky, Jeff Wachter, Andrew Fischer

Meeting materials included: Agenda; Anticipated Warrant Article proposing to amend the General By-Law related to the Economic Advisory Board (EDAB) (supplemental materials: memo from petitioner Jonathan Davis – 9/9/2021, memo to EDAB from EDAB members Paul Saner & Al Raine – 9/10/21); Draft Report from Laboratory and Biological/Life Sciences Subcommittee (9/10/21); Draft Warrant Articles from Select Board agenda packet – 9/10/21; PowerPoint by M. Mooney on Local Rapid Recovery Plan; Draft 8/9/21 meeting minutes; Program Statement for 845 Boylston Street from Sousa Design – 8/2/21; link to portion of 8/31/21 Select Board meeting presentation regarding proposed RFP for Municipal Broadband Service Market and Feasibility

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

Review & Approve Draft August 9th Meeting Minutes

The Committee approved the August 9, 2021 minutes by roll call vote 10-0-2: in favor (AM, MN, AL, TN, SS, AC, KL, CB, CL, PS); abstain (DC, SH). Paul Saner noted his misstatement of fact at the last meeting surrounding impacts of commercial properties going off the tax roll due to their non-profit status; the total taxable property tax value from the prior year impacts all taxpayers. The extent to which commercial or residential taxpayers take on that tax burden is controlled by the Select Board’s annual vote of the split tax rate between these property value types.

Public Hearing on Proposed Warrant Article 14 by Jonathan Davis

Anne Meyers noted that EDAB would be discussing all the proposed Warrant Article topics later in the meeting to decide which to hold a public hearing on after the Select Board officially adopt the warrant. She pointed out that Mike Toffel’s proposed Warrant Article 13 also deals with recording votes at public meetings. Anne then opened the public hearing.

Jonathan Davis spoke to proposed Warrant Article 14 focused on transparency in how EDAB members disclose their membership in other groups. Mr. Davis expressed a concern about lobbying groups using the EDAB logo/slogan, and asked that the Board consider the Warrant Article to increase transparency, not to prevent participation in lobbying organizations and not to require recusal. Co-Chair Anne Meyers noted that in response to this concern, EDAB earlier this

year committed to dropping the Building a Better Brookline tagline that has been in marginal use for years to avoid confusion with other Brookline groups.

Al Raine offered a formal response saying that the language in Warrant Article 14 is negative and defamatory, and represents a double standard as the change would only be applicable to EDAB members, not to all Town Boards and Commissions. While there is nothing uncommon about members of Town Boards and Commissions participating in other groups, any changes to how members report their membership should be applied Town-wide, similar to Warrant Article 13, another proposed Article. Mr. Raine recommended that the Board take no action.

Mr. Raine's comments have been transcribed verbatim below at his request (19:07 – 26:25):

"I'm going to basically summarize the points in the statement that Paul and I sent. It was also part of the Board package which all of you on the Board have seen. I will also just note that we composed that in response to the article itself in the subsequent explainer piece, and then subsequently saw the Petitioner's supplemental memo, which did not add any new content or facts or arguments, but takes the language to a more negative and defamatory direction. So three big points:

"This article would be applicable only to EDAB and notwithstanding the Petitioner's argument, it's arbitrary, and a double standard, and it's hard to imagine otherwise. And we say that for two reasons beyond the explicit fact that on its own terms it applies only to EDAB.

"One is that the advocacy group in question, Building a Better Brookline, has a 13 member Planning Committee. Paul Saner and I are the only members of that Committee [from EDAB], and the Planning Committee also includes members of the Housing Advisory Board, the Transportation Board, and the Committee for Diversity, Inclusion and Community Relations – and why in the world something that would be applicable to EDAB because of our overlapping relationship would not be equally applicable to those other three Town Boards that are in the same position, I think, speaks for itself there's some other agenda at work here.

"The other thing we point out more broadly, and I think more importantly, in our statement is there is nothing in the world unusual or uncommon about members of Town Boards and Commissions also belonging to non-Town advocacy groups; that happens all the time. And to pick the most obvious example, Brookline by Design, which Mr. Davis is – I don't know if it has membership but – a signatory, five members of their Steering Committee or an Advisory Committee and four of those are on Advisories for the Land Use and Zoning Committee. The point isn't that there's anything wrong with that, there's nothing remotely wrong with that. The point is that it's no different from people on Building a Better Brookline who happened to be on EDAB, Transportation, or Diversity & Inclusion. This is – no matter how you slice it – an arbitrary singling out and it just can't stand.

"Secondly, this fixation on the use of the name, "Building a Better Brookline", as we say in our statement, the two of us were simply unaware of that. Not a very salient or high profile thing. But in any event, we've both been on this board a long time and were completely unaware of it. One of us was not in the discussion in which Building a Better Brookline was named and the other didn't suggest it and was equally unaware of it. I would like to think that if we were trying to improperly influence EDAB we would have

come up with something more subtle than using EDAB's letterhead phrase as the name of the group, and I've since been reminded that as we speak there is a "Building a Better Beverley", "Building a Better Wellesley", and there's a "Building a Better Cambridge". There are many organizations with names like "Building a Better Future", "Building a Better Tomorrow", and – in fact – this is simply a ubiquitous cliché and if you want to prosecute us for a lack of originality I guess we're guilty as charged, but as for a triple secret conspiracy, not so much.

"Finally, the heart of the matter is the question of what does it mean that we're on this advocacy group, and how does that relate to the normal working of EDAB. And I have to say that we don't find it very funny that the integrity of ourselves, Paul and me, or EDAB, or somebody, is being called into question. My implication in the explainer piece that goes with the Warrant and quite explicitly in the Petitioner's supplementary memo and in the words he just spoke, the words lack of integrity or lack of integrity bias or un-bias are used seven times in the one-page memo by the Petitioner, and I think equally off base is this characterization of Building a Better Brookline, or any advocacy group, as a lobbying group and our efforts as lobbying. That's obviously a loaded term and it couldn't be less applicable in this case to Building a Better Brookline or to any of the other groups to which Town Board and Commission members happen to belong or adhere. I've been involved in public service for 50 years and nobody's ever questioned my integrity before, I'm sure Paul can say the same, and I would advise the Petitioner not to do that. On the actual behavior in question, Paul and I have been completely transparent with our colleagues about our involvement in Building a Better Brookline. I believe we've informed the Board about it in meetings on a couple of occasions. To this point, no issue has arisen on which Building a Better Brookline has taken a position and that EDAB has heard or taken a position or voted on, it simply hasn't happened. But I can assure you that if and when it does happen, as it may, we would, as a matter of course, remind all of our colleagues on EDAB of our involvement in Building a Better Brookline. We would disclose any involvement we had in whatever that position might be and there'd be no question about that because that is simply what we, or any member of this board, would do and we don't need a punitive bylaw only applicable to EDAB to tell us to do that.

"Finally, we do note in our statement that Article 13, which I know we'll hear at a later time, is a perfectly straightforward way of approaching at least part of this issue. It would apply straightforwardly, equally and without characterization to every Town Board and Commission and we would hope that our Board would look favorably upon that. Needless of say, when it's a timely moment for EDAB to take a position on Article 14, we would hope that this Board would vote to recommend no action. Thank you."

Several other EDAB Members voiced general consensus that the language in Warrant Article 14 is misguided and unfairly singles out EDAB when transparency measures should be Town-wide, not piecemeal by group. Multiple members concurred that the Board take no action.

Comments from Attendees

- Jonathan Klein, Town Meeting Member from Precinct 10, Member of the Housing Advisory Board, and Member of the Planning Committee for Building a Better Brookline commented that it is unfortunate to talk about this Warrant Article as it presents as an attack on two EDAB members. As there are more than 100 Town Boards & Commissions, it is important to set a precedent that transparency and ethical measures be applied Town-wide.

- David Gladstone, President of the Chamber of Commerce, and Member of three Town Committees said Warrant Article 14 is misguided and misdirected. The EDAB members being singled out are exemplars of transparency, and any measures like this should apply to all Committees and Town Meeting.
- Mary Sabolsi, a retired infectious disease expert who was unaware of Warrant Article 14 prior to this meeting, expressed that the concern outlined in the Article is valid, but should be written to apply to all Boards and Commissions.
- Naomi Sweitzer, Town Meeting Member for Precinct 10 and a former member of the Planning Committee for Building a Better Brookline, disagreed with Mr. Davis and recommended the Board take no action as this Article unfairly targets a small number of people and is the result of some misunderstanding. If increased transparency is needed, suggest it be formally and fairly applied across Boards & Commissions, especially as there are other ongoing Town-wide efforts to improve transparency.
- Jonathan Davis, who presented earlier in the meeting on Warrant Article 14, responded that Building a Better Brookline is not singled out in Article, and that while a Building a Better Brookline email triggered this Article, it is not its sole purpose. Insisted that Warrant Article 14 was just a lobbying affinity disclosure seeking to reveal relationships.

Anne Meyers closed the public hearing; no vote was taken. Given the interest in this topic from EDAB members, Anne noted that EDAB would be opening a separate public hearing after the Select Board formally vote on the warrant.

Life Sciences Research Subcommittee Update: Draft Lab Report

Paul Saner introduced the draft Lab Report shared with EDAB in the agenda for tonight's meeting and indicated that while tonight is not a public meeting, they look forward to feedback from Board members and the public as time permits. There will be a hearing on the Draft Lab Report on the evening of 9/29 which will include a summary presentation by the Subcommittee and a public hearing. Tonight, the Biolab/Life Sciences Subcommittee will not restate the findings of the Report but seek feedback on the report from Board members on anything unclear, inconsistent, or concerning.

Carol Levin led the group discussion.

- Pg 11 – There is a photo of the interior of a lab, and the prior sentence described the differences between wet & dry labs. It should be clear if the photo is of a wet or dry lab.
- Pg 14 – Is there a discussion of the risk/reward of a Level 3 Biolab given Brookline's proximity to the Longwood Medical Area (LMA)? Carol responded that there was some discussion of this, but that while there is plenty of demand for Levels 1 & 2, Level 3 proposes unnecessary risks and is not supported by Public Health Director Dr. Jett. Their research resulted in understanding that the market does not have a large demand for Biolab Level 3 spaces.
- Pg 18 – Did the group consider including the Tax Assessor's matrix to show the value per square footage-based distinctions between life sciences and other office uses? Carol responded that they decided not to include this as they were concerned the detail wasn't necessary.
- Appendix of Key Design Feature – Are there minimum floor plate sizes/efficiencies for different lab types (this was a discussion regarding practicability of development office space)? Carol responded that for a wet lab, there needs to be significant economies of scale and that regarding floor plates the market looks at a 30-40,000 square foot range. Additionally, they require 200+ feet of building depth.

- Can we overcome some of the limitations of dry labs by upgrading the Town's technology infrastructure (e.g., past conversion of telecom hotels by upgrading power and HVAC systems)? For Life Sciences uses, most dry lab is really office lab and the tech needs are in special computers.
- Appendix 2, pg 37 (2nd to last paragraph) – Note that the language here is past tense for a public meeting happening in the future from tonight's meeting.
- Regarding the composition of the Oversight Committee, is it by design that there are no engineering/design experts on lab facilities/life sciences? Carol responded that the function of the Biosafety Advisory Council is to assist the town in providing oversight of these uses related to public health and safety, not in commenting on their actual design as these questions would be ironed out in the zoning and special permit processes.
- Pg 21 – Could the Report include whether noise or odor emissions vary based on biosafety level (this page mentions acoustical remediation)? Carol responded that different labs have varying air handling requirements and they are unaware how uniform these distinctions are by Level, or if they're determined by the types of relevant materials.
- Numerous Board members commended the Subcommittee on their work. General consensus that the report is helpful, well-written, informational, and jargon-free.

Comments in Chat During Public Hearing

- Mary Sabolsi: "Dry lab research capacity typically requires some build out for HVAC and potentially reinforcements to weight-bearing capacity, but in general, their requirements are less specialized than wet labs. However, the distinction between dry and wet labs are becoming somewhat blurred. My husband is in charge of possibly the largest dry lab project in the US and so I can provide you with additional details."
- Naomi Sweitzer: "A few things. I wanted to thank EDAB for carefully considering this. Brookline seems well positioned for this type of industry. We need the revenue that will come from this and it will add to our vibrancy. I appreciate EDAB's commitment to growing Brookline thoughtfully. Also, agree with setting up the advisory committee. Look at how successful the School Committee's Panel 4 on public health during covid has been. Finally, suggest that as soon as we get a new public health director that the committee get before that person (and maybe want to signal to the Town Administrator that it would be helpful to have someone in that role that has some understanding of these issues or will be a quick study)"
- Mary Sabolsi: "I think you should anticipate the needs of both dry and wet research in the proposed building. I also think it may be reasonable to revisit the idea of BSL-3"

Discussion of Next Steps for Reviewing Warrant Articles (WA)

- Discussion of whether or not EDAB should review WA 13 (and as it relates to WA 14, as they are both about transparency)
 - Note that there will be an additional public hearing on WA 14 regardless
 - Lack of consensus on if it is appropriate for EDAB to hear WA 13 since it does not specifically reference EDAB. Those in favor feel that it is important for EDAB to voice their opinion on overall Town transparency issues in light of necessary to also review WA 14. Those opposed feel that transparency is a larger governance/process issue and not directly relevant to EDAB, but should be considered by Committees that review general governance issues. EDAB then VOTED (9-3-0) by roll call vote to hold a future public hearing and potential vote on Warrant Article 13: in favor (MN, TN, AR, PS, DC, SH, AC, CL, AM); against (CB, SS, KL).

- Other Warrant Articles that EDAB indicated desire to review:
 - Parking: Articles 23, 24. Both regarding parking minimums. General consensus that Planning Board input is needed to ensure these WAs sync up with each other.
 - Electric Vehicles: Article 25
 - Planning & Zoning Resolution: Article 26
- WA discussed, but ultimately not of interest to EDAB for review:
 - Gun Stores: Article 22 (zoning article that limits the locations of where stores that sell guns could be located)
 - Carbon Free Concrete: Article 18 (interested, but not germane to EDAB)

Conclusion: Will hear six articles, including 13, 14, 23, 24, 25, & 26, on 9/29. EDAB will hear others on 10/4, may need to schedule additional meeting in October, but not scheduling yet.

Presentation on Coolidge Corner/JFK Crossing Rapid Recovery Plan

Meredith Mooney presented on the Local Rapid Recovery Plan (LRRP) progress. This presentation included an overview of the project and its timeline. Items highlighted included: engagement accomplished to date, subject matter experts (SME), and development of project rubrics. A draft presentation of this work will be given at a joint EDAB and SBDC public meeting on 9/30 at 7pm. The final LRRP plan is due on 10/8. Following this, staff will seek funding for projects and implementation.

Some of the proposed projects informed by SME input include: **a LRRP Project Manager/Coordinator position** (eligible for ARPA funding through 2024, maybe 2026), a multi-purpose parking deck on Center Street to consolidate public parking (especially the parking displaced by on-street outdoor dining), and creating recommendations to small businesses on priorities.

Some projects implementable at a staff level, or through a combination of staff and consultant/vendor support include: pop-up pilot program, outdoor dining toolkit, events roadmap/template, even series/arts & film festival (maybe tied to Coolidge Corner Theatre expansion & US Open), and **district marketing plan implementation**.

Some projects implementable by public-private partnerships include: creation of a backbone district management entity (organizational capacity building is critical), streamlining of the local business licensing and permitting process.

The projects **bolded** above and those listed here would assist in the creation of a Business Improvement District in the Coolidge Corner/JFK Crossing area: event planning & implementation, public art & public space activation projects, optimizing retail mix, monitoring of parking utilization and management plan.

Members of EDAB had general consensus that this work is moving in the right direction. There was interest in knowing more about storefront vacancy in Coolidge Corner & JFK Crossing, which is currently being collected by Ms. Mooney via the annual Storefront Survey (updates in October). There was also discussion of the storefront switch of Eureka! Puzzles and Wild Goose Chase, as well as the upcoming bank mergers. Agreement that this area will be discussed in greater detail at the 9/30 hearing with the Small Business Development Committee (SBDC).

Board Member Updates

- There is a new proposal on 845 Boylston Street, a property reviewed by EDAB over a decade ago (same owners, new request). What was originally a zoning change is now a variance. The matter will be discussed at the Planning Board on 9/23 with a developer led meeting on 9/14 at 6pm (info shared).
- Participation Committee met on 9/8 and discussed preparation for the US Open, including establishment of various subcommittees, and exclusive agreement with the Town for sale of US Open merchandise. Acknowledgement that Ms. Mooney was helpful in assembling a list of business organizations for outreach. Mr. Gladstone, Chamber of Commerce, noted that the US Open is a great opportunity for small businesses and nonprofits to benefit from shopping and visitors.
- NETA rescinded their application to move their medical marijuana business to 1280 Boylston Street.
- Susan Houston announced that term was ending at the end of September and she would not be seeking reappointment. The Board thanked Susan for her work and said that it was always fun, meaningful, and enjoyable work with her. The group discussed how they would be filling her vacancy, including efforts to increase diversity on the Board and bring in another architect/designer/urban planner. Consensus on advertising the position through EDAB's planned LinkedIn page.

Closing

The next meeting will take place on 9/29 and requires a quorum to vote (two members indicated they would be absent).

**Meeting adjourned at approximately 8:58 pm.