

TOWN OF ASHFORD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
Minutes

Ashford Town Hall, Lower Conference Room
WEDNESDAY, September 27, 2023
7:30pm

Present: J. Calarese, M. Chatey, R. Fenn, M. Gantick, R. Ignatowicz, T. Wakeman

Guest: N. Thaller **Missing:** J. Rettenmeier

1. **Call to Order** at 7:32 PM
2. **Seating of Alternates.** Quorum so not needed. No alternates present.
3. **Approval of Minutes** – April 26, 2023 Motion by T. Wakeman, seconded by R. Fenn. Approved. (M. Gantick abstained.)
4. **Budget**
 - a. Report of expenditures. No report. Final invoice for C. Fields to be processed.
5. **Communications and Announcements**
 - a. Announcements/Presentations -
 - b. News from Other Commissions
 - School Roof Building Committee awaiting bids according to J. Calarese
 - PZC is moving Affordable Housing proposal forward using standard language to meet state requirements. T. Wakeman inquired how much of our housing is considered affordable now.
 - Solid Waste – T. Wakeman reported starting Oct 3-4 Town will require proof of residency to use Transfer Station and issue new stickers
 - Historical Society – planning a fundraiser to unveil painting and sell prints of Ashford historic buildings posters and other merchandise at Westford Hill Distillers on Dec. 10.
 - c. Correspondence and Meetings
 - i. OTOF – M. Gantick reported no fall leadership meeting is being planned after conferring with B. Falletti and J. Silver-Smith
 - ii. Input on POCD survey requested by Conservation Comm – AEDC members discussed what might be appropriate questions to ask in POCD survey. (see addendum A for details.)
 - iii. News about Ashford businesses – Guest N. Thaller says food truck may start to come to parking lot near Ashford Spirits. Noted building progress at Midway. Scarlet Oak Catering has parked its food trailer at Ashford Dairy Bar site (which is marked for sale.) Horse Listeners Orchard has sold, but no details on new owner.
6. **Old Business**
 - a. Draft letters to Selectmen
 - i. Blighted properties - T. Wakeman drafted. Group discussed edits, and agreed to format letter and forward to Selectmen in mid-November. Suggested AEDC draft a blight ordinance, or provide samples to BoS.
 - ii. Moore Property - R. Fenn had drafted letter. Group reviewed, and agreed to send.
 - b. EDC Marketing and Communications

- i. Active Business lists (all members) – no reports.
 - ii. Tourism activity – R. Ignatowicz to confirm trail race dates. Art Council's Holiday Artist Market event is November 18-19—explore adding to Town's CTVisits page.
- c. Potential ARPA Grants to businesses
 - i. Next Steps – M. Gantick and M. Chatey meeting with B. Falletti to finalize details to push out this fall.
- d. Restaurant strategy – M. Chatey to create new sell sheet promoting Ashford as a good location. May not market just the one property.
- e. POCD -EDC Input – (see Attachment A)
- f. EDC Website
 - i. Website and ongoing *Ashford Citizen* Updates – C. Fields has resigned from her freelance writing assignment with AEDC. Need to find a new writer to collaborate on articles and maintain website.
 - ii. Review of businesses for upcoming articles – Scarlet Oak Catering.
- g. Election of officers - Tabled
- h. New member recruitment – no discussion. Still awaiting firm appointment letter for N. Thaller to AEDC from BoS. M. Gantick to follow up with B. Falletti on this appointment, as well as R. Ignatowicz to Eastern Region Tourism Council.

7. New Business - none

8. Input from Public – none

9. Member Input for Next Agenda

10. Adjournment – T. Wakeman moved, M. Gantick seconded. Adjourned 9:14 PM

2023 EDC Strategic Priorities: Identifying and contacting active businesses; Surveying them on AEDC support opportunities; ARPA grant application promotion and fulfillment

ATTACHMENT A.
TOWN OF ASHFORD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

**Input to the Ashford Conservation Commission on Survey
About Ashford Plan of Conservation and Development
As discussed at regular meeting September 27, 2023**

General Input:

- In large part keep questions the same as in survey prior to 2005 plan. Will provide good measure of how residents' views on balance between conservation and development have changed, if at all. The original survey also touches on residents' view for expanding agriculture businesses, home businesses, retail services, industrial/manufacturing, etc.
- Is it possible to educate residents with current facts as part of the questions, the same way the 2005 POCD lays out facts in its various sections? For example, "Presently Ashford offers more than x miles of public trails, in combination with local partners Joshua's Trust, the Nipmuc Trail, and Town trails. Should Ashford invest to increase, decrease or keep the same number of miles of trails?" Opinions that are formed from the same set of existing facts will be more valuable. Folks don't know what the baseline "actuals" are today about Ashford's situation.
- Given that the Summary of Findings from 2003 listed as its #1 item the rate of growth and taxes, please hit that issue head-on. For example, "93% of the tax revenue to support Town budget is derived from residential property tax and 7% of the tax revenue is from businesses, according to recent Board of Selectmen analysis. What is the appropriate balance Ashford should aim for over the next 10 years?"

Other Areas to Explore:

The previous survey explored Satisfaction Levels from residents. These items may already be covered there but could use some expansion:

- Does Ashford provide the level of social services you think are needed to meet the needs of its residents? (i.e. Library services, recreation, senior services, public transportation, provision of food and housing safety net).
- The quality of education offered by a community is an important driver when families choose to relocate. How important is Ashford's education quality to you over the next 10 years? How satisfied are you with the quality of education offered at the local public school and the Region 10 high school? Are you satisfied with the level of police and fire protection in your community? If not, what are your expectations?

- Are you satisfied with your ability to access information from Town government?
 - Is your internet access/cellphone signal adequate to meet your home or business needs? Please elaborate.
 - Does Ashford offer enough opportunity for the next generation/youth to consider this as a community to buy a house or find a job?
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- On previous survey, the summary item #13 reflects preference for where future commercial development should be sited. Since eight Special Planning Areas were defined in 2005, please add I-84 interchange and Cadle Rock property to the listings, as well as the other SPAs: Lake Chaffee, Westford Village, and Ashford Lake.
 - Should Ashford be exploring more regional solutions to manage its growth, partnering with other close-by communities to achieve economies and efficiencies in service provision?