

**Economic Development
Committee**

Stephen Costello, Chairman
William Plasko, Vice-Chairman
Alan Slater
Scott Murphy
Thomas Wynne



**Planning and Economic
Development Director**
Paul Halkiotis

General Manager
John J. Carroll

Norwood Economic Development Committee Minutes, October 28, 2015

Meeting was properly called to order but the minutes from the previous meeting were not available for review. Committee members attending were William Plasko, Alan Slater and Stephen P. Costello which provided a quorum to conduct the meeting. Planning Director, Paul Halkiotis stated that he would make sure the minutes from the previous meeting would be prepared and reviewed by the next meeting.

Mr. Halkiotis informed the members of the committee that the potential zoning amendments that we had recommended have not been considered by the Planning Board yet. It is expected that they may have time to consider these recommendations during the November 9th meeting of the Planning Board.

Mr. Halkiotis provided an update regarding expedited permitting (43D) for the site referred to as the former Polaroid land. Mr. Halkiotis stated that he has been unable to connect with the property owners for the Mercer property and that Dan DiMarco from the Campanelli Group has been unaware of the request but would contact Mr. Halkiotis regarding the same. This led to a discussion regarding the value of 43B designation. Marketing material related to a commercial warehouse property located at 625 University Ave, Norwood, MA was disturbed to the committee. It was noted in the property details section of the marketing material this site had listed 43B expedited permitting as a characteristic of the property. The committee members do not believe this designation had been made for this property. However, the committee notes that 43D permitting was included in marketing material for a commercial property. This certainly seems to ratify the committee's opinion that this designation has some value within the marketplace. Planning Director Halkiotis will contact the owners/realtor of this property and other properties along University Avenue for the purpose of considering a 43D designation for commercial properties along University Avenue.

The general discussion regarding ideas for economic development followed with Mr. Halkiotis strongly suggesting that we review the previous prepared master plan and consider implementing some of the suggestions.

It was agreed that members of the committee should familiarize themselves with the plan and Mr. Halkiotis will be providing the members of the committee with a link to the master plan which he believes can be found on the Town of Norwood website. Mr. Halkiotis also suggested that staffing was an issue within the department as numerous responsibilities need to be executed in the traditional planning function in addition to economic development. Mr. Halkiotis will do a staffing level comparison to other towns versus job responsibilities. There was also discussion regarding a budget for economic development and inclusion of our MPO assessment within the traditional planning budget. The committee is aware of competing interest for dollars within the town budget and stated that a compelling argument must be made to justify additional funding. Discussion regarding utilization of technology to market properties within the Town of Norwood also took place along with discussion of a possible video that would include members of the Economic Development committee which would be embedded in the town's website.

Chairman Costello distributed material regarding vacancy rates for three types of commercial properties with the town which appear to indicate increasing vacancy in all categories versus first quarter 2011. Accuracy of any data can be questioned but presuming similar data collection methodologies were utilized over the time frames displayed, the trends noted indicate a lack of net absorption over the last four years of "recovery". We will look to obtain clearer data regarding our existing base and occupancy levels. The resolution of the previously discussed technology challenges could prove useful in understanding existing conditions within the commercial tax base. It was noted that the property located at 1450 Providence Hwy (building 19) recently sold for \$6 million and questions were asked relative to any know development plans regarding that site. At this point in time, the new owners have not approached government officials.

A partial directory of Massachusetts economic development organizations was also distributed as was a listing of Regional Economic Development Organizations. Chairman Costello noted that he had a conversation with Thomas O'Rourke, President of the Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce, who will once again look into achieving this designation for our area with the possibility of receiving some funding that might be available economic development activities, Committee members were asked to suggest any edits but the general consensus was the charter accurately described the mission of our committee and provided guidance relative to overall governance. Vice Chairman William Plasko will provide guidance on wording related to electronic voting by committee members for specific recommendations the committee may make. Subject to a vote on the charter by all members of the committee, this charter will be recommended to the Board of Selectmen for their consideration and approval.