

**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

Economic Development Committee Meeting

June 15, 2016

Committee Member Attendees: Stephen Costello, William Plasko, Scott Murphy, Alan Slater.

Other Attendees: Paul Halkiotis and John J Carroll.

Meeting was called to order at approximately 6 PM.

Committee members were provided with copies of the minutes for the April 7, 2016 meeting, of the Economic Development Committee. All committee members present voted to unanimously approve the minutes as presented.

Committee members commented that submission of the 43D Expedited Permitting District for the Upland woods project was not to be prioritized but that the committee was still looking to move forward with University Avenue 43D designation. Additionally, Mr. Halkiotis was asked to update the committee regarding the status of the proposed bylaw changes as it would potentially have a direct impact on the 83 Morse St. project detailed in the memorandum to the Norwood Planning Board. Mr. Halkiotis stated that he now has time to focus additional effort on both of these initiatives.

Paul Halkiotis provided members the Economic Development Committee with a copy of a memorandum dated June 8, 2016 that he had submitted to the Norwood Planning Board which contained an update of seven development projects impacting commercial properties within the Town of Norwood. Mr. Halkiotis also informed both the Norwood Planning Board and by default the Economic Development Committee that he had been coordinating efforts with the United States Small Business Administration to sponsor workshops within the Town of Norwood that focus on programs offered by the SBA with a second workshop focusing on government contracting. Mr. Halkiotis also noted that the town's Planning Board continues to process a number of requests for open lot storage for automobiles. It was suggested that Mr. Halkiotis speak with the town's assessor to make sure that properties with special permits for outside storage are properly assessed as this significantly increases the value above and beyond that of the simple cost to construct a parking lot. It was suggested that perhaps consultation with other assessors could be beneficial. The concern is that valuable commercial space might not be realizing the highest and best use which would maximize tax revenue for the town. It was noted that the automobile dealerships are believed to provide significant economic benefit to the town. Mr. Halkiotis's investigation into the tax revenues

generated will give the committee a clear understanding of the impact on tax revenue for the town. Mr. Carroll informed the committee that a manufacturing company may be looking to relocate into an approximately 200,000 ft.² building within the Town of Norwood. Mr. Carroll will be following up with Peter Milano to pursue this potential opportunity. It was also noted that discussions with the Boston Skating Club may be resumed.

Mr. Halkiotis presented the committee with a copy of a Tax Incremental Financing (*TIF) status report that he had submitted to Norwood's Planning Board on June 13, 2016. There was significant discussion regarding both the accuracy of this report, the operational protocols the town follows regarding TIF projects and the interaction with the state government. Specifically, the Factory Mutual TIF seemed to significantly understate the costs associated with their development of the four story office building that contains Dedham medical Associates as a tenant. Subsequent to the meeting, a review of the state website pertaining to TIF agreements seem to indicate that Factory Mutual had spent over \$51 million in constructing said building. This significantly exceeds the stated investment at the initiation of the TIF request but it appears they made an error in completing the 2015 annual form that is submitted to the state. The committee agreed that standard operating procedures regarding awarding of TIFs, communications between the town planner and the town assessor on TIFs and dealing with state oversight needs to be formalized. Mr. Halkiotis was charged with generating a draft procedures manual. Additionally, prior to initiating a process to rescind any TIFs, Mr. Halkiotis will directly contact the companies to make sure that the information reported on the state website is accurate to the extent possible. Chairman Costello asked for the contact information for the state official from the Economic Development Incentive Programs who has oversight responsibility for TIFs for the Town of Norwood.

There was discussion regarding economic development activity in South Norwood. Committee members expressed a willingness to support any initiatives in South Norwood that would foster business development. Market forces, functional obsolescence of the existing commercial buildings and lack of significant available land for development were just some of the challenges noted in the discussion.

Mr. Halkiotis asked the committee whether or not there should be consideration given to establishing an auto mile economic cluster to minimize special permit requests initiated by various automobile dealers. Committee members suggested that the current process has not discouraged expansion of automobile dealerships within the town. It was also suggested that the information regarding the tax assessment of these properties and total revenue generated would be helpful if we decide to consider making a recommendation regarding a potential cluster.

Mr. Plasko initiated discussion regarding more proactive efforts on behalf of the economic development efforts of our committee. Discussion regarding potential advertising campaigns ensued. It was generally agreed that coordination of any advertising effort should include an upgrade of the town's website and a more prominent placement of economic development activity/initiatives on a redesigned site would be beneficial. Promoting our 43D designation for the Vanderbilt area and hopefully soon the University Avenue area combined with revised bylaws could make the town even more attractive for economic development. Consistent outreach to state officials through the efforts of the economic development committee and the town planner were also suggested as potential strategies.

The meeting concluded at approximately 7:05 PM.