

**Economic Development Committee
Meeting: February 27, 2019**

Cheryl C. A. Estelle
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In Attendance: Robert Jose, Chairman, Lisa Pacheco, James Rezendez and Bruce Wilbur. Also in attendance: David DeManche, Town Administrator and Fall River Economic Director Ken Fiola.

Since the Committee has not met in a substantial amount of time, Robert Jose opened the meeting as the Chairman of the Board of Selectmen.

Chairman

On a motion made by Lisa Pacheco and seconded by Bruce Wilbur it was **VOTED:** To appoint Robert Jose as the Chairman of the Economic Development Committee.

The vote was unanimous.

History and Overview

Bruce Wilbur as a member since 1996 gave an overview of the history of the EDC as well as insights into why the Committee stopped meeting.

Lisa Pacheco stated that the purpose of the Committee was to make recommendations to the Board of Selectmen regarding economic development opportunities.

Bruce Wilbur stated that there are over 500 small businesses in Freetown and that the EDC should help these businesses to expand and grow.

The Committee then discussed what they felt their charge was as a committee. The general consensus was that the EDC should help existing businesses and to entice new businesses to locate in Freetown. In addition, the EDC should act as a conduit between the Town and business to help businesses navigate through town government.

Discussed were the following topics: ways to attract new businesses to the Town; zoning changes needed or eliminated; TIFF; Two Tier Tax Rate; Site Plan Review and ways to attract new business.

Jim Rezendez talked about the creation of a new non-profit called the Freetown Business Coalition.

The committee discussed the timing of the expiration of the TIFF's for Stop and Shop and for Amazon. In addition, the Committee discussed the proposed study for an Assonet Sewer line and its potential benefit to businesses in the Assonet business district.

The committee discussed the need for administrative support for the EDC and that a budget be created for support services. David DeManche stated that he would create a support services line for the EDC in the operating budget. It was suggested that \$1,000 be appropriated for these services.

Membership Assignments:

On a motion made by Jim Rezendez and seconded by Bruce Wilbur, the committee **VOTED:** To have Lisa Pacheco be the Board of Selectmen and Robert Jose as the EDC representative to the Board of Selectmen.

The vote was unanimous.

Fall River (FR) Economic Development Director Ken Fiola

FR Economic Development Director Ken Fiola met with the EDC to discuss the status of the Churchill and Banks property. Ken discussed the submittal of a Site Preparedness Grant by the Town for between \$125,000 to \$145,000 for the purpose of study /design of infrastructure to and on the site. Robert Jose acknowledged the receipt of information regarding this grant application but was concerned about the Town being the guarantor on the grant (i.e. repayment on a default to perform the grant tasks). Mr. Jose stated that there had been discussion about placing a lien on the property to guarantee that the Town would not be obligated to pay back the funds if the work was not performed.

Ken Fiola stated that water, sewer and other utilities were critical to the development of the Churchill and Banks property (Riverview Park). It was noted that the property had been designated as a PMUD and that the property had cleared MEPA standards.

On a motion made by Lisa Pacheco and seconded by Jim Rezendez it was **VOTED:** To recommend that the Board of Selectmen move forward with the Site Preparedness grant application. The committee would prepare a support letter to the Board of Selectmen.

The vote was unanimous.

Ken Fiola also informed the committee about opportunities available for infrastructure under the MassWorks grant program.

Finally, the committee discussed, in general, the potential for sewer to the park via Stop and Shop as well as a proposed study for a sewer line running from Town Hall to the Fall River boundary.

On a motion made by Lisa Pacheco and seconded by Bruce Wilbur it was **VOTED:** To adjourn the meeting at 7:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

David DeManche