

Economic Vitality Committee
Virtual Meeting, 4 PM
February 2, 2021

PRESENT: John Boynton, Remon Karian, Mark Martines, Jennifer McGonigle, Jane Obbagy, Dawn Rennert, Jennifer Schunemann, Steven Verrill, Beth Williams

ABSENT: Cato Anderson, Debra Stark, Jan Turnquist

ALSO PRESENT: Stephen Crane, Town Manager; Jeremy Romanul, Select Board Asst.; Susan Bates, Select Board; Marcia Rasmussen, Kate Carr, John Hinkley, Karlen Reed

CALL TO ORDER AND ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Co-Chair John Boynton called the meeting to order.

MINUTES

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

UNANIMOUSLY VOTED by roll call:

To Approve the Minutes of January 19, 2021.

John Boynton	Aye
Remon Karian	Aye
Mark Martines	Aye
Jennifer McGonigle	Aye
Jane Obbagy	Aye
Dawn Rennert	Aye
Jennifer Schunemann	Aye
Steven Verrill	Aye
Beth Williams	Aye

TOWN UPDATE

Town Manager Stephen Crane reported that Concord Public Works will be removing snow from the commercial districts on Wednesday evening. They have already been working 24 hours and will take the time to rest before tackling the next piece. He stated that the structure of the Economic Vitality function has been under discussion during the development of the FY22 budget. Currently this function is part of the Recreation Department. It is difficult to transfer this from a revolving fund to the general fund. The function will continue to exist in the budget while the problem is resolved.

On the issue of outdoor dining, Select Board Asst. Jeremy Romanul has been working on how to make this a permanent component of dining in Concord. The State gave the Town authority to issue licenses for outdoor dining and take-out during the emergency situation as long as police, fire, and public health concerns are met. At the end of the Gov. emergency order that would go away. Local Bylaws under the purview of the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals govern capacity and parking. No fast food is permitted in Concord. Outdoor dining at establishments that hold an alcoholic beverages license need to meet additional access and safety standards.

Planning Director Marcia Rasmussen stated that a zoning bylaw amendment at Annual Town Meeting could make the changes permanent. In her opinion, it would be better for the Committee to recommend changes and lobby the Planning Board to put the Warrant before the Town rather than the Committee making the petition directly to Town Meeting because failed petitions may not come before the meeting again until two years have

passed. The same is not true for articles proposed by the Planning Board should they fail the first time.

It is anticipated that the Gov. Emergency Order will remain in force for some time. At its conclusion it is expected that the Gov. and legislature will propose a recovery plan. Ms. Rasmussen stated that many communities are responding in much the same way. Therefore, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council has been meeting to develop plans to make the changes permanent. Concord is represented in the meetings. Mr. Crane stated that supporting restaurants is a local priority.

In response to a question about how to present concerns to the Planning Board, it was suggested that a Motion be approved and sent to the Board for its consideration. Mr. Crane stated that the Planning Board will likely flesh out the committee recommendation and that local restaurants would probably urge their patrons to support the change. Ms. Rasmussen stated that the Planning Board is working on Town Meeting matters now and that she would convey the Committee's intentions to the Board.

Upon a Motion duly made and seconded, it was

UNANIMOUSLY VOTED by roll call:

The Economic Vitality Committee supports and encourages the Planning Board to bring a Zoning Bylaw Amendment to 2021 Annual Town Meeting to allow seasonal outdoor restaurant seating to be made a permanent provision of common victualler licenses without requiring additional parking.

John Boynton	Aye
Remon Karian	Aye
Mark Martines	Aye
Jennifer McGonigle	Aye
Jane Obbagy	Aye
Dawn Rennert	Aye
Jennifer Schunemann	Aye
Steven Verrill	Aye
Beth Williams	Aye

Beth Williams stated that she continues to manage information and applications for a number and variety of grants available to local businesses. As soon as she becomes aware of information from the State, she posts it to the website. In the meantime, she has partnered with Lexington to apply for a State travel and tourism recovery grant and a transportation grant. Once approved this will be seed money to attract visitors from a 50-mile radius and to then move the visitors around our towns. She has a new tour in the making: history with a chocolate twist! Information is on the website and is intended to build partnerships in the community.

CONCORD TOGETHER

Jennifer Schunemann stated that 30 Concord-Carlisle high school volunteers stand ready to help local commercial entities build websites and introduce e-commerce and social media. The students have technology expertise and are a great free resource. Jennifer stated that she will make connections between them and potential businesses.

Concord Together has just launched a new shopping passport called Take-Out Ten. Customers eat in or take out from ten eateries and submit the forms to be eligible for \$200 in Gift of Concord cards.

Local cultural organizations such as Orchard House and Emerson Umbrella are doing virtual events to enable people to participate in art and culture during this difficult time.

COMMITTEE MEMBER UPDATES

Jennifer Schunemann stated that *Discover Concord* spring edition is getting ready for printing. Submit any information by the end of the month to be included.

Kate Carr of Concord Business Partnership stated that she is creating a calendar of speakers for the Partnership monthly meetings. She would like to be able to include someone from EVC.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COMMITTEE

There was discussion amongst the Committee regarding the Warrant Article for making outdoor seating permanent and how this was vital now and in the future. Discussion went on to note the amazing and effective job that Beth Williams is doing. In that context, the Committee would like to see more of the economic vitality role. Mr. Crane had stated that this was being discussed during budget development; what could the committee do to reinforce this? The original charge of the Committee came out of the Long Range Plan and was more expansive; but what could the Committee do beyond responding to the effect of COVID on the local economy.

Stephen Crane stated that the activities of the Economic Vitality Committee are consistent with the Charge. Developing the role that Beth Williams fills in order to build for the future is difficult within a 1.8% Finance Committee Guideline, but the Town is committed. Set asides and incentive grants have been used in other communities. Longer term discussion will be needed. It was suggested that the committee could change its focus so that one meeting is to address long term issues and the other the critical short-term issues. On the other hand, the Committee could keep the flexibility to proactively plan to return to its stated mission.

Mark Martines stated that he would benefit from knowing more about the EV role. He knows that staff is doing components of the task, but there is nothing on the Town website regarding the commercial sector. Stephen Crane responded that the Town is building a new function and incorporating into the existing complicated structure. This takes some doing. Mark further asked: if the committee role is to advise, how hard should it push its views. Stephen Crane reported that Concord hosted a vaccine clinic for First Responders from Concord and 6 surrounding towns. 430 vaccines were administered. Lessons were learned to make the process more efficient, but what is needed is vaccine. Concord has 2,500 residents over 75 yet the State is providing only 100 doses per week. At that rate it will take all year to immunize the most vulnerable. There was discussion regarding local immunization sites.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Karlen Reed of Whit's End Rd. asked about the Committee schedule and that of Concord Together.

Susan Bates of the Select Board expressed her appreciation for the Economic Vitality Committee and all the hard it has accomplished in the short year it has been in existence.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon a Motion duly made and seconded, it was

UNANIMOUSLY VOTED by roll call:

To adjourn the meeting at 5 PM.

John Boynton	Aye
Remon Karian	Aye
Mark Martines	Aye
Jennifer McGonigle	Aye
Jane Obbagy	Aye

Dawn Rennert
Jennifer Schunemann
Steven Verrill
Beth Williams

Aye
Aye
Aye
Aye

Respectfully submitted
Cato Anderson, Clerk
Approved: April 6, 2021