



**Town of Concord  
Economic Vitality Committee Meeting Minutes  
February 15, 2023**

- Present:** Jennifer Schunemann, Chair, Mike Lawson, Cato Anderson, Jan Turnquist, Mark Martines, Marie Foley, Dawn Rennert, Remon Karian and Jennifer McGonigle
- Staff:** Beth Williams, Tourism Manager
- Others:** Karlen Reed, Don Kupka and Mary Hartman, Select Board

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 A.M.

Ms. Schunemann took the attendance:

- Ms. Foley - Aye
- Ms. Schunemann - Aye
- Ms. Williams - Aye
- Mr. Anderson - Aye
- Mr. Martines - Aye
- Mr. Lawson - Aye
- Ms. Rennert - Aye
- Ms. Turnquist - Aye
- Mr. Karian - Aye

**MINUTES**  
**January 18, 2023**

On a **MOTION** made by Ms. Rennert and seconded by Mr. Anderson it was **VOTED** to **APPROVE** the minutes of the meeting of January 18, 2023.

- Ms. Foley - Aye
- Ms. Schunemann - Aye
- Ms. Williams - Aye
- Mr. Anderson - Aye
- Mr. Martines - Aye
- Mr. Lawson - Aye
- Ms. Rennert - Aye
- Ms. Turnquist - Aye

Mr. Karian abstained from voting.

**CELLULAR TOWER**

Ms. Schunemann informed the committee that the letter she drafted, concerning the need for upgraded cellular service in Concord Center, and circulated to the committee for their comments, has been submitted to the Select Board. Ms. Hartman stated there is a potential for 4 sites that could be suitable for a cellular tower. The town has decided to

explore the Emerson Umbrella as the most beneficial site. A cupola on the top of the building would hide the tower. The Select Board directed Jason Bulger, IT Director, to explore that site. As the Trinitarian Congregational Church was also considered a possible site, Mr. Bulger informed the Select Board that talks between the church and Verizon have stalled.

Mr. Schunemann stated that she is on the Board of Directors of the Emerson Umbrella, and they are very sensitive to anything that would cause upheaval in the neighborhood.

Mr. Lawson stated that when Emerson Umbrella was presented, several years ago, as a potential site for a cellular tower, the neighborhood was very opposed to it and it was taken out of consideration.

Mr. Martines asked whether there is a difference between a site which the Town owns and one that is privately owned. Would a tower be able to be constructed under the premise that it is crucial to the safety of the public?

Ms. Hartman stated that before a site is chosen, we need to consider all the concerns of the neighborhood in which the tower will be placed. We will also have to go through the zoning process for this to be approved. The Trinitarian Congregational Church was the site for a cell tower for 25 years.

Mr. Kupka, of 39 Devens St., stated that through his job, he has had experience with the placement of cellular towers in various locations. For the tower to be placed in the church they need to be willing to negotiate with Verizon. For our purposes we need to include Verizon, AT&T and T-Mobile when negotiating a contract for the cellular tower.

There is concern that there could be financial consequences for the Emerson Umbrella if parents are not willing to enroll their children in classes with a cellular tower so close to the building. Mr. Kupka stated that the safest place around a cellular tower is at the bottom as the radio waves are being emitted from the top. We should consider locating the tower further away from residences to avoid future liability. Standing underneath the tower is safer than the residences across the street as the sound waves carry.

Mr. Martines asked if there have been any studies to debate the level of risk to neighbors.

Mr. Kupka stated that energy is measurable and indirect exposure is where issues may arise in the future. Lower powered cellular towers are safer, but we would have to put more in town.

Ms. Schunemann thanked Mr. Kupka for his insight on this matter. Ms. Hartman stated that there is a 200-page report about cellular towers which is available on the Select Board website. All Select Board Meetings are posted online after the meeting.

## **TOWN UPDATES**

Ms. Williams stated that the town is looking into hiring Chris Pappas to update the tourism plan, for the Town, through 2025 – 2026. Chris had previously worked for the town in the same capacity several years ago.

The Request for Proposal has been posted for the Bike Share Program. The bid process is underway, and she will keep us updated on its progress.

The Trolley Program for the upcoming summer is not certain. We are waiting to hear about funding from the state and so far, we have not heard anything. The Town has no funding to continue the project so if the state funding does not come through then the program is in jeopardy.

Ms. Hartman stated that there are currently plans for a major expansion to the Hanscom Air Force Base. The town has submitted their comments on the expansion including that this will have a significant impact on the economic vitality and environment in our town. The National Park is not happy about the expansion.

Ms. Williams stated that the Colonial Inn is working to get their restaurants reopened since water damaged them. This has greatly impacted their revenue as they were closed during Valentine's Day, one of their most profitable days. Also, tomorrow is voting day in Concord.

Ms. Schunemann stated that interviews are being conducted, tomorrow, for the position of Economic Vitality Officer. She is on the panel conducting the interviews as well as Mr. Anderson and members of the Concord Business Partnership.

The committee stated that important issues to consider while interviewing:

1. How do we link increased tourism to greater opportunity for our businesses.
2. They must be a people person much like a concierge.
3. Must be able to navigate bylaws and regulations.
4. How do we fill the store fronts that are not occupied?
5. What is the reason businesses are leaving Concord and how do we keep them in town?

Ms. Schunemann thanked the committee for their input and will report back at a future meeting.

## **REV250**

Ms. Schunemann expressed her concern that the town will not be able to support the number of visitors that are expected to come to town during REV250. Now that we have lost 105 hotel rooms, from the Best Western, to the state there are approximately only 250 rooms remaining in town. While visitors will most likely stay in other towns that means that restaurants will lose the revenue from feeding all the visitors.

Ms. Williams stated that groups are not likely to stay in Concord because we do not have Quad Occupancy. In order to retain visitors in town there has to be places where large groups can be

seated at restaurants and there has to be a network of things for them to do in town. Studies show that most visitors were not staying at the Best Western and their business was severely impacted when the Marriott was built across the street. It was attractive to groups of people because buses can park there but it is not walkable to anything. It mainly catered to road crews during snowstorms as a place for them to sleep when they are plowing overnight. When asked about accommodations Ms. Williams coordinates with adjacent towns to offer suggestions to people on where to stay while visiting.

Ms. Schunemann is concerned about the lack of infrastructure, in town, to accommodate the large number of people that are expected. Who do we talk to about this issue? While there is no infrastructure study group within town, this committee should identify issues and think about ways to address them.

Ms. Martines asked why there is a decline in the Commercial Tax Base. Mr. Lawson stated that with the significant growth in Residential Development this results in a decline in the Commercial Tax Base. The town needs to come up with a plan on how to use the property at 2229 Main St.

Ms. Hartman stated there is a renewed focus on attracting and retaining businesses as the Finance Committee is looking at additional sources of revenue.

Ms. Schunemann asked if the sewage improvement fee could be waived because it detracts from potential restaurants wanting to open in Concord.

Ms. Hartman stated that we currently have a large sewage constraint problem in town. We are almost at capacity and are working on obtaining relief from the state. The sewage improvement fee cannot be waived.

Ms. Schunemann asked whether we can get funds with the new Infrastructure Bill that is currently proposed with the state. It was proposed that she speak with Alan Cathcart, DPW Director, to see what issues are facing the town and how this committee could help in identifying them.

Mr. Martines asked how we can encourage building owners to build buildings that are productive and not just aesthetically pleasing.

Mr. Lawson stated that transportation will be an issue during REV250 and Minuteman Tech is a possible place for parking and shuttling to town by bus.

Mr. Anderson stated that he attended the Finance Committee meeting where they discussed the funding for REV250. There is potential for fundraising for the event as it is estimated the town will need between \$600,000 - \$800,000 for REV250. The town will also be exploring grants to fund the event.

Mr. Lawson stated that the state legislators are trying to work this into the governor's budget. Dana Booth will speak with Lori Trahan about creating a commemorative coin to be sold at the event.

Ms. Turnquist asked that, at our next meeting, the committee has a discussion about the Hanscom Expansion Plan and the devastating impact it will have on the economic vitality of the town.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

On a **MOTION** made by Ms. Turnquist and seconded by Ms. Foley it was **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** to **ADJOURN** the meeting.

Ms. Foley -	Aye
Ms. Schunemann -	Aye
Ms. Williams -	Aye
Mr. Martines -	Aye
Ms. Rennert -	Aye
Mr. Lawson -	Aye
Mr. Anderson -	Aye
Ms. Turnquist -	Aye
Mr. Karian -	Aye
Ms. McGonigle -	Aye

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

*Carolyn H. Dee*  
*Sr. Administrative Assistant*