

Economic Vitality Committee  
Select Board Room, noon  
February 26, 2020

**PRESENT:** Cato Anderson, John Boynton, Mark Martines, Jane Obbagy, Debra Stark, Jan Turnquist, Marcia Rasmussen, Dawn Rennert, Jennifer Schunemann, Steven Verrill (remotely), Beth Williams

**ALSO PRESENT:** Susan Bates, Select Board; Nick Pappas, resident and businessman

**CALL TO ORDER**

Select Board member Susan Bates called the meeting to order, announced that member Steven Verrill would participate remotely by telephone, and summarized the rules for remote participation. In addition to others, the primary requirement being that all votes must be by rollcall if a member is participating remotely.

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

Ms. Bates reported that she had discussed committee leadership with several members and called for Nominations for Chair. After discussion nominations were closed and it was

VOTED UNANIMOUSLY by roll call:

To elect John Boynton and Jennifer Schunemann as Co-Chairs of the Committee.

Cato Anderson	Aye
John Boynton	Aye
Mark Martines	Aye
Jane Obbagy	Aye
Debra Stark	Aye
Jan Turnquist	Aye
Dawn Rennert	Aye
Jennifer Schunemann	Aye
Steven Verrill	Aye
Beth Williams	Aye

Mr. Boynton called for Nominations for Clerk. After discussion, Nominations were closed, and it was

VOTED UNANIMOUSLY by roll call:

To elect Cato Anderson as Clerk of the Committee.

Cato Anderson	Aye
John Boynton	Aye
Mark Martines	Aye
Jane Obbagy	Aye
Debra Stark	Aye
Jan Turnquist	Aye
Dawn Rennert	Aye
Jennifer Schunemann	Aye
Steven Verrill	Aye
Beth Williams	Aye

**REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF JANUARY 22, 2020 MINUTES**

Mr. Anderson proposed acceptance of the January 22 Minutes as presented.

Upon a Motion duly made and seconded, it was

UNANIMOUSLY VOTED by roll call:

To Approve the Minutes of January 22.

Cato Anderson	Aye
John Boynton	Aye
Mark Martines	Aye
Jane Obbagy	Aye
Debra Stark	Aye
Jan Turnquist	Aye
Dawn Rennert	Aye
Jennifer Schunemann	Aye
Steven Verrill	Aye
Beth Williams	Aye

## CONTINUED DISCUSSION OF GOALS

Ms. Bates noted that several openings continue to exist on the Committee and solicited input on this. She indicated that this committee is one of the few that are open to non-residents as the Select Board wants to ensure that the perspective of business and property owners who may not reside in Concord are included. John Boynton stated that the 13-member committee should include property owners in four retail districts, owner or manager of local business in four retail districts, representatives of local historical/cultural institutions, ED of Chamber of Commerce, Representative of Planning Department, Town Visitor and Tourism Manager, four community members.

Discussion about staffing incorporated well-known public figures active in local businesses such as Helen Brady; Remon Karian owner of Fiorella's Restaurant; Kristin Canty owner of Woods Hill Table and Adelita, as well as recently acquiring Pier 4 in the city; Ian Calhoun, owner of 80 Thoreau and Concord resident. It was stated that these people have the broad experience to know how to bring people in as well as foster leadership in the local base.

Debra Stark stated that she is interested in creating events that will bring people to visit Concord and shop here. Jane Obbagy stated that her goals include reaching out to the restaurant and retail components and the destination sites that bring visitors. She believes that they are the constituents of the committee with local residents who challenge big box operations. Mark Martines suggested that before the committee can have a goal, it needs to better understand the baseline of where we are. Ms. Obbagy stated that she needs a narrow focus for concrete achievable goals.

Mr. Boynton stated that the committee emerged from the Long Range Plan *Envision Concord* which found many packets of activity with little coordination. That recommendation is to build on the vitality of current assets without encouraging residential growth to best serve the local constituencies. Planning Director Marcia Rasmussen arrived.

Ms. Turnquist stated that a welcome to the community would be great. Mark Martines stated that we should make residents and visitors aware that shopping locally matters as well as connecting them to Concord when they are away/on the road. In his opinion, communication and sustainability are crucial. Ms. Rennert stated that we must educate the community to the value of community. Mr. Anderson stated that we need to connect the recent Jazz Festival and Ag Day events to building community, just like smaller events sponsored by the Recreation Department for neighborhoods. Ms. Williams stated that she is at work connecting federal partners to Recreation events. Ms. Turnquist stated such coordination should include local businesses by providing signage or flyers to expand awareness. Mr. Boynton stated that the Committee should review the purpose and goals included in the Committee Charge. Ms. Schunemann stated that the committee should begin by developing a matrix of the many and varied components discussed.

Ms. Obbagy stated that the place to begin Goal Setting is the issue of parking. She noted that this is the biggest issue for businesses, especially for employees and large events. She noted that theft proliferates in stores when there are large events. Cato Anderson stated that we need mapping of the Center for the

buses delivering tourists. Ms. Williams noted that the Town owns the parking lots at the North Bridge and that all buses are receiving notice of the location and duration of drop zones. In the Center, the Town provides two spaces in the Keyes Rd. Municipal Parking Lots as well as spaces at Wright Tavern and Monument Hall. Buses will be directed out Lowell Rd for longer term parking.

In response to a comment about notice of disruption of filming or large scheduled meetings, such as the Thoreau Society, it was stated that the Public Information and Communications Manager is the contact person for filming requests and applications. Abutters will be notified. News and Notices, an online notice of events that can be subscribed to, is also useful for information distribution to a wider constituency.

Dawn Rennert stated that once the sum of topics has been generated, it could be addressed by one topic per agenda with invited guests for thorough discussion and notice in the *Journal* and by the Select Board. Regarding the *Concord Journal*, Ms. Rasmussen noted that the editor is hosting a one-hour meeting in the West Concord Dunkin Donuts on Friday at noon. He appears to be eager for more content. On the subject of gathering content, Mr. Martines suggested a survey at the Visitors Information Center, the Concord Business Partnership, and the Concord Chamber of Commerce as a path to get more input. He stated that we need more data from more sources to be convincing and Ms. Obbagy noted that as the committee reaches consensus it could then develop a survey to check with a range of constituencies. Ms. Turnquist suggested that the committee should always check in the Select Board, Police Department, and Fire Department before making any conclusions public.

Ms. Schunemann stated that her summary of discussion is that the committee will identify and breakdown by meeting to prepare a snapshot of issues and then check these with other committees, staff, and constituencies so that the discussion has context. Mr. Martines asked what role the committee could have on parking; that topic alone could take over the entire mission. Ms. Obbagy suggested narrowing the topic to employee parking. For local retailers, there is access to dedicated employee parking that is not public parking. Nick Pappas stated that the Long Range Plan, on which he and Mr. Boynton served, discussed Transportation and Mobility. In his opinion, too narrow a focus on parking will go nowhere.

Other topics stated without discussion include: shopping outreach—economic import; drawing tourists from major sites into town; start to help tourists to see Concord as welcoming; cooperate within the region; liaise with new businesses coming to Town; economics of fees in new businesses (Serafina); regulatory issues in abatements, concessions, sewer upgrades; attract/retain new restaurants (water user, economic incentives); local retailers cannot pay rents at same rate as chains; incentives to landlords; retail sustainability of independent shops; successful character of downtown shops; state of retail in Concord—is any money being made?; communication/coordination between Town, non-profits with other economic drivers.

Ms. Williams stated that there is no visitor data that is Concord-specific other than meal and hotel taxes. There is no definer of attendance or sales tax. Ms. Obbagy stated that we need to make the case for contributions of the business community to Concord. Mr. Martines expanded this with the note that residents pay approximately 93% of the property tax, which means that businesses pay 7%. If there is a change in character of the town, residential share of taxes will grow. Ms. Obbagy noted that not supporting local businesses will increase the residential tax burden. We need to work together to complement each other.

Mr. Boynton suggested that the next agenda should include a review and consolidation of the topics listed. Ms. Schunemann suggested that the committee should examine the state of retail in Concord and what changed and then sharing tasks from the goals. Mr. Martines suggested that this should not be the “state of...”, but How can the Town help/support local businesses? Ms. Schunemann stated the next

meeting should be about process, leadership/ invitations, and “low hanging fruit.” Ms. Bates stated that committee members could email their ideas to the co-Chairs but may no cc: all as this would break Open Meeting Law.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

Nick Pappas stated that he has recently retired from ownership of an ice cream business in the city and as such was a member of the Harvard Square Business Association. They held monthly meetings of the approximately 300 members to learn about other business activities. The city attended, as did Harvard University. They specifically coordinated two annual events, the May Fair and an October Fest. They have a website where members as well as the public can learn what is happening now. HSBA also provides free wi-fi in the Square. Members pay a fee of \$300 and the annual budget is \$300,000.

## ADJOURNMENT

Upon a Motion duly made and seconded, it was

UNANIMOUSLY VOTED by roll call:

To adjourn the meeting at 1:35PM.

Cato Anderson	Aye
John Boynton	Aye
Mark Martines	Aye
Jane Obbagy	Aye
Marcia Rasmussen	Aye
Debra Stark	Aye
Jan Turnquist	Aye
Dawn Rennert	Aye
Jennifer Schunemann	Aye
Steven Verrill	Aye

Respectfully submitted

Cato Anderson, Clerk

Approved: May 13, 2020

Committee Roster	edress	telephone
Cato Anderson	<a href="mailto:canderson@mcwaltervolunteer.com">canderson@mcwaltervolunteer.com</a>	978 369-4313
John Boynton	<a href="mailto:jb@bradfordmill.com">jb@bradfordmill.com</a>	978 505-7169
Mark Martines	<a href="mailto:mjmartines@comcast.net">mjmartines@comcast.net</a>	617 470-0070
Jane Obbagy	<a href="mailto:director@concordchamberofcommerce.org">director@concordchamberofcommerce.org</a>	617 921-1515
Marcia Rasmussen	<a href="mailto:mrasmussen@concordma.gov">mrasmussen@concordma.gov</a>	
Debra Stark	<a href="mailto:debra@debrasnaturalgourmet.com">debra@debrasnaturalgourmet.com</a>	978 274-2658
Jan Turnquist	<a href="mailto:janturnquist@gmail.com">janturnquist@gmail.com</a>	508 320-4240
Dawn Rennert	<a href="mailto:dawn@concordbookshop.com">dawn@concordbookshop.com</a>	978 496-5447
Jennifer Schunemann	<a href="mailto:jennifer@voyager-publishing.com">jennifer@voyager-publishing.com</a>	
Steven Verrill	<a href="mailto:verrilfrm@aol.com">verrilfrm@aol.com</a>	978 369-5952
vacancy		
vacancy		
vacancy		
Susan Bates, Select Board	<a href="mailto:sbates@Concordma.gov">sbates@Concordma.gov</a>	
Ruth Lauer, sec.	<a href="mailto:ruthclauer@gmail.com">ruthclauer@gmail.com</a>	978 369-1897