



**Town of Concord
Economic Vitality Committee Meeting Minutes
April 12, 2023**

- Present:** Jennifer Schünemann, Chair,
Cato Anderson, Mike Lawson, Mark Martines, Steve Verrill,
Mark Martines, Dawn Rennert
- Absent:** Marie Foley, Remon Karian, Jennifer McGonigle Jan Turnquist
- Staff:** Beth Williams, Tourism Manager; Mimi Graney, Economic Vitality Manager;
Megan Zammuto, Deputy Town Manager

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

Ms. Schünemann took attendance, reflected above.

MEET AND GREET – NEW TOWN STAFF

An informal meet and greet allowed members of the Economic Vitality Committee to get to know two new staff members – Mimi Graney, Economic Vitality Manager, and Megan Zammuto, Deputy Town Manager.

PATRIOTS DAY CELEBRATIONS REVIEW

The group discussed final preparations for the upcoming Patriots’ Day celebrations. A Command Center has been set up at the Assessor’s office to support public safety. Given that the lack of reliable cell service continues to pose a public safety concern, all agreed that this was a prudent plan.

A review of events and timing was discussed – including a new event, “Stand Up for Ellen” – a celebration of the life of Concord’s Ellen Garrison.

TOWN UPDATE

Tourism is already well above 2022 levels, with Beth Williams reporting that the first tour bus arrived on January 2nd this year. Walking tours booked through the Visitor Center are ‘through the roof.’ This is consistent with information from Discover New England – an organization that reports that tourists are seeking slower, sustainable travel that avoids big cities. Concord provides this experience. Beth also reported the while business in general is still sluggish, there is an increase in weddings, literary-related travel, and school trips.

Parking lots are full to the point where some people are reporting trouble finding parking. The committee once again discussed the idea of having a remote parking lot with a shuttle to bring people into town centers. All were concerned that a Trolley for tourism had not received funding. \$150,000 is required for the full season. A trolley would also alleviate parking concerns, as visitors could park outside of town centers. Beth’s team was working on grant opportunities – either through the Transportation Bond Bill or by

applying together with Lexington and Lincoln to prepare for Rev250 infrastructure needs to transport tourists throughout the area.

TOWN MEETING

The Economic Vitality Committee fully supports the warrant articles to allow food trucks and to allow smaller footprint food establishments, as outlined in the warrant articles. Jennifer called on EVC members to generate letters of support for these initiatives and to encourage residents to attend Town Meeting.

MOVING FORWARD

With Mimi now on board as a staff member, the group discussed how to best prioritize future projects. A list of possible areas of focus included: Business Guide (to orient new business owners and streamline the permitting process), Concierge Tools to facilitate new and existing businesses' requests for information or support, Problem Solving as a team, Idea Generation, and Long-term Planning; these areas will be further developed at future meetings.

What will be the future role of the Economic Vitality Committee? How can we work together – with the Town offices, with the Select Board, and with other Departments – to overcome challenges to creating and fostering a thriving economy for Concord?

Mike Lawson stated that the purpose of the committee was to ensure that – for the first time – local businesses have a voice in government and in the town process. Now that voice is in place (via Mimi). With a direct liaison to the management level through Mimi, the role of the EVC should shift to one of teasing out challenges, lobbying for changes that may be needed to overcome those challenges, and to push issues forward.

ADJOURNMENT

On a **MOTION** made by Mr. Lawson and seconded by Ms. Rennert. It was **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** to **ADJOURN** the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Schünemann
Chair, Economic Vitality Committee