

Essex Economic Development Commission (EDC)

Regular Meeting Minutes

April 17th, 2025 8:00AM

Meeting Held at The Cup & Leaf, 1 Marketplace, Essex, VT and Zoom

Minutes Submitted by Clerk Keith Dunbar, April 18, 2025

Attendees

Commission Members:

Present: Igor Polenov, Chair; Ken Signorello, Vice Chair; Keith Dunbar, Clerk

Remote: N/A

Absent: Nick Fukuda

Staff: Jean O'Sullivan

Public: Irene Wrenner

Partners: N/A

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 8:11 AM by the Chair Igor Polenov

2. Agenda Additions/Changes

The following changes were made to the agenda:

- Move Welcome Mike Sands (Item 5a) to the top of the agenda.
- Add:
 - TPMA Update
 - Town Manager Meeting Update
 - Business Outreach Update

A motion was made and seconded to approve the amended agenda.

Polenov motioned to approve the agenda, seconded by **Signorello**. **Motion passed 3-0**

3. Public to Be Heard

No members of the public were present to speak.

4. Welcome: Mike Sands, Owner, The Cup & Leaf

Mike Sands introduced himself and his business, which opened in January 2025. Highlights:

- Background in the food, beverage, and hospitality industry, including managing restaurants and cafes in Boston.
- Moved to Essex for quality of life and community connection.
- Cup & Leaf specializes in high-end coffee (featuring both national and local brands), tea, and chocolate (hot).
- Emphasizes showcasing international and Vermont products side-by-side based on quality.
- Currently features local art on a rotating basis, hosts periodic art events, and is planning pop-up events with wine pairings and local chefs.
- Identified challenges:
 - Difficulties navigating municipal processes due to jurisdictional confusion (Essex vs. Essex Junction).

- Signage regulations have made it difficult to gain visibility on Susie Wilson Road.
 - Expressed gratitude for the town's support and is looking forward to contributing to the Essex community.
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5. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from April 4, 2025 were presented for approval.

A motion to approve was made and seconded.

Signorello motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by **Polenov**. **Motion passed 3-0.**

6. Business Items

a. Town Manager Meeting Update

- The Chair summarized a meeting with Town Manager Greg Duggan and Community Development Director Catherine Maloney. Key points:
 - EDC is an advisory body and should be mindful of its role and workload.
 - Encouraged to draft an annual plan with clear goals.
 - Jean is a core member and should attend all meetings, though the Commission should be conscious of her time.
 - Business outreach meetings may be conducted offline/in-person, giving flexibility for timing and scheduling.
 - Town leadership would like the EDC to provide data supporting economic benefits related to the proposed zoning change for the women's correctional facility.
 - This is not a formal directive but a request from staff to assist with community inquiries.

Polenov made a motion. The motion was seconded by **Signorello** for a commissioner **Polenov** to research and compile economic data supporting the correctional facility zoning change.

Motion passed 3-0.

Polenov volunteered to lead this effort, and any findings will be presented for Commission review and approval before being shared with town staff.

b. TPMA Update

- The next TPMA engagement with the EDC is scheduled for Wednesday, May 7 at 11:00 AM.
- Commission members are encouraged to attend virtually for optimal participation and interaction.

c. Email from Resident

- An email from a resident was discussed in connection with the correctional facility correspondence.
- Resident expressed concern about how her feedback was presented in EDC's letter.
- It was clarified that the correspondence had been excerpted appropriately and forwarded to town staff.
- The Commission acknowledged the concern but took no further action.

d. Business Outreach Update

- The next outreach meeting will be held at Glavel.

- A publicly viewable spreadsheet has been created to track and plan future outreach meetings.
 - **Members were reminded:**
 - They may view documents outside of meetings, but must not engage in discussion or edits outside public sessions to comply with Vermont Open Meeting Law.
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7. Next Meeting

The next full EDC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 7, 2025 at 11:00 AM (location and TPMA participation confirmed).

8. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded.

Signorello motioned to adjourn, seconded by Polenov. Motion passed 3-0.

Meeting adjourned 8:45.

Meeting recording available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PAQydPINLoA>