



## **EDIC BOARD MEETING**

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2021, at 4:30 pm**

**3 Pond Road, CATA Conference Room**

- **Call to order of the Board. Meeting began at 4:41 pm.**
- **In attendance: Acting Chair Tom Balf, Tim Wood, Treasurer Ruth Pino, Jerrold Oppenheim. Absent: Taylor Hedges and Mike DiLascio. Also in attendance, John Cunningham, Attorney to the EDIC, Sal DiStefano, City of Gloucester's Economic and Development Director, and Felicia Webb, Chief Administrator for Cape Ann Transportation Authority.**
- **Approval of the September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021, meeting minutes were approved. All were in favor.**
- **Business Park Status- Continued conversations with business park tenants and owners about updating the signage for Blackburn Industrial Park. T. Hedges was not available to provide an update on the project status. COVID has certainly delayed any progress on the project. This topic will be revisited at the next meeting and Hedges and Wood will reconnect on the subject and develop a plan to move forward. Some key business park contacts have since moved on. The EDIC will have to find new contacts for some of the businesses and re-pitch the project all over again. DiStefano provided the Board with an update on industrial park inventory space and on the bio-manufacturing front. Gloucester is receiving more and more site finding requests and each has its own unique challenges and not a lot of space is available. Most recently, DiStefano had the opportunity to meet with a real estate broker that specifically finds realty spaces for the biosciences. It has been predicted that the next 2-3 years are going to flourish in the life sciences market. Blackburn already has the zoning in place, but not available spaces.**
- **Only one building is currently available but it may present some challenges. One future tactic is that the EDIC could take would be a collaborative approach to conduct one on one interviews with property owners, builds relationships, and try to assist efforts to permit or obtain financing. The good news is that Gloucester has a lot of business properties that are currently full. The properties that are not occupied have issues around them. There are many programs through the state that could be helpful in bringing these properties into productive use. DiStefano informed the Board that he has heard that 60,000 square feet is the minimum size requirement for a bio-manufacturing facility. SwanNet may be available and comes in at**

25,000 square feet. Across from NOAA is a 50,000 square foot site which is permit ready. That site is likely to be a cannabis growing facility.

- Developers are looking for a streamline approach- a permit ready site or shell of a building with the right life science zoning already in place. Water and sewer and reliable electricity. A few acre site can support a small bio-manufacturing facility. As example, Cummings Properties in Beverly has developed a” turn-key” space approach and built lab space on spec. We are told that the space is being rapidly leased.
- CATA on Demand Sponsorship Activity and Use- Webb reported to the Board that the September ridership is down and the service hours have remained the same. CATA would like to start at 6:30 am but there have not been enough drivers. They would like to put 3 drivers out at peak periods but the lack of drivers has made this prohibited. CATA informed the Board that the utilization rate has been 3.5 riders per hour, and they have completed 7,000 rides since the service started. CATA is very pleased with these results. There has been an increase of new ridership. People are using the service to and from work and this ties into the purpose of this Board and its affiliation. Gloucester’s MBTA Commuter Rail was reported to be the biggest destination. This on demand service is providing a community service. Let’s hope for a continued level of success.
- NS Blue Economy Update: Balf provided an update to the Board on when the NS Blue Economy’s report will be officially released. The public release is scheduled for Friday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021. This will be a hybrid event with 40 people in attendance at the Cape Ann Museum and others listening in on Zoom. Guests will include Lieutenant Governor Polito who will be a keynote speaker. This event will be streamed as well. This is extremely exciting that this is finally taking place.
- Municipal Harbor Plan Development Update: Balf provided the Board with an update on the Municipal Harbor Plan. A meeting is scheduled this week. The preliminary analysis by consultants finds that the Gloucester fishing economy is doing well compared to historical data and to fishing ports in other New England states. The first public meeting of the harbor planning process is scheduled on the 27<sup>th</sup> of October.
- EDIC Board Discussion of Potential Projects and Activities: The main purpose of the discussion is to set up parameters about the fundamental mission of the EDIC concerning:
  - Manufacturing/ Industrial
  - Economic Development
  - Job Creation
  - Work (Project) conducted in accordance with an approved economic development plan

Balf proposed two baseline questions for the Board to discussion:

- Does the City or the EDIC have an economic development plan?
- Is there economically developable and in Gloucester?

- The City does have some discrete plans which include a Harbor Plan, NS Blue Economy, a Housing Plan, and a Local Rapid Recovery Plan. There are discrete plans that guide decisions and projects.
- In 2007, was the last time a report was developed by Weston and Sampson on potential development sites in Gloucester.
- 30 acres on the Northwestern side of Kondelin
- 75 acres on the southern border of Cape Ann Industrial Park/Kondelin
- 250 acres, known as “Area-C” on the west side- along City border to Manchester. This is the area that Senator Tarr had money available to do a feasibility study. Tarr has continued to express interest in the plan.
- 113 acres “Area D”-other side of 128 on the Essex side.

The consensus opinion of the EDIC is that any development in these areas is going to be really expensive. At the end of Kondelin the site work is extensive. There are issues of land titles, watershed related issues, and granite bedrock issues on Area C and D. There is no access to sewer and the costs of infrastructure compared to 7 years ago is exorbitant.

- Balf posed 2 fundamental questions to the EDIC Board
  - Are there business sectors/clusters that we may wish to target for development? Bio-manufacturing and life sciences. Do we focus on developing land, or do we pursue similar companies like Applied?
  - What types of businesses are geared especially for larger facilities that have some value? Are there any other types of business sectors we can target? Does it have to be water related?
- The Board had a robust discussion about attracting life science companies and believe that it would be challenging with the turnkey spaces that Cummings have already established for that kind of use. The Board’s industry cluster discussion included, as well as the identification of certain impediments.

EDIC

- Bio-manufacturing
- Life Sciences
- Medical Supplies
- Metal Fabrication

Impediments

- Skilled Training
- Developing Housing
- The plan is for the EDIC to put together a list of potential brownfield prospects or currently underutilized industrial property, and begin to strategize about getting federal funding, how to qualify, and what projects will get funded. Balf and DiStefano

**will work together on the preliminary target list to the Board and create a plan of action.**

- **The Board also discussed the issue of an Executive Director. Instead of hiring a full-time executive director, the general opinion was that we do not currently need, nor can afford, an Executive Director and that as projects arise, and we would look at issuing an RFP for managing the project for the EDIC. The Board also discussed reaching out to other EDIC's like Lynn and Boston to see what these other communities are doing and how they are getting their funding.**
- **Motion to adjourn was made. All were in favor. Meeting ended at 5:56 pm.**
- **Next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 16<sup>th</sup> at 4:30 pm in the CATA conference room.**