

## **Hopkinton Economic Development Commission**

### **Minutes**

**March 25, 2024**

The meeting was held at the Hopkinton Town Hall, 1 Town House Road, Hopkinton, RI 02833 scheduled for 3:00 PM. The meeting was in-person.

Present: Chair Sarah Steverman, Members Etta Zasloff, James Chabot, Joe Moreau and Zoning Officer Sherri Dejardins.

The meeting was called to order by the Chair Sarah Steverman at 3:00 PM.

The minutes of February 12, 2024 were approved by consensus.

Chair Sarah Steverman welcomed and introduced Sherri Dejardins, from the Hopkinton Building and Zoning Department, who briefed the Commission on Controlled Environmental Agriculture, commonly referred to as CEA. She said that CEA represents a small but growing dimension of agriculture that can range from a 12x12 plastic covered greenhouse to a fully automated, closed loop system with controlled water, lighting and ventilation. Sherri and the Building and Zoning Department are working on two approaches to recommend to the Town Council for consideration to put Hopkinton in position to work with a CEA company who might show interest in locating in Hopkinton. One is a CEA ordinance that specifies acreage required to fix various sizes of projects and various assurances and the other is to create a CEA use category in the District Use Table with specifics of what is permitted in each of the zones.

Sherri schooled us on the Zoning Categories in Hopkinton and the [District Use Table](#).

R1 Residential 1 - up to 60,000 sq. ft (approx. 1.2 acres)

RFR80 Residential Farm Rural - 80,000 minimum lot

NB Neighborhood Business - can have both business and living space

C Commercial

M Manufacturing

One of the things she emphasized is regardless of which path they choose, state law permits agriculture in every zone. To prevent us from losing out on a very lucrative opportunity for providing tax money to our Town, we need to be proactive with policies in place that would encourage such a business to locate here and prevent a lengthy court case, as is happening in Exeter. A CEA seems to be a sustainable and environmentally friendly enterprise, that gives farmers a new income option besides solar to consider for their land use. It is time that we give it a serious look. Sherri will have something to present to the Planning Board and Council in a couple of months.

Steverman announced that there is no need to continue contributing to the shared spreadsheet of the informal inventory of existing businesses, vacant commercial space, and existing/available farmland within the Town. Joe Moreau has secured a list of all businesses from the tax collector for our use.

She also said that she had learned that there are no specifics written to guide a new business through the approval and permitting process and she suggested that we work on creating a packet of information for that purpose.

There was a short discussion about the ongoing agenda item - Creative Exploration.

- Cell towers - Joe stated that there is a Town ordinance on cell towers
- Palmer Circle Property - owners Kevin and Donna Hoyle - still on the market
- Cumberland Farms - Joe said they preferred at least one acre and no former use
- The Pavilion - will become Palumbo Solar
- Collaboration with Hopkinton Rec Dept - sports tournaments, food trucks, Music performances,

No one spoke at the Open Forum.

Future agenda Items that were suggested included working on the information packet for prospective businesses, continuing to brainstorm sustainable, environmentally friendly activities that would bring people to Hopkinton, and conduct a close review of the Comprehensive Plan for Economic Development pp. 62-70.

The next meeting was set for Wednesday, April 24, 2024, 3:00 PM in Town Council chambers at Town Hall, 1 Town Hall Road, Hopkinton, RI 02833.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Etta Zasloff  
Hopkinton EDC Secretary