



City of Malden

Malden City Hall
215 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148

Meeting Minutes - Final Economic Development Committee

Councillor Taylor, Chair
Councillor Luong, Vice Chair
Councillor Condon
Councillor Crowe
Councillor McDonald

Tuesday, February 10, 2026

5:30 PM

City Hall, Room 105
215 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148

Watch the meeting with Teams: <https://tinyurl.com/bdz6jwtj>

Roll Call

Present: 5 - Ari Taylor, Michelle Luong, Paul Condon, Peg Crowe and Carey McDonald

Also Present: Council President Linehan, Councillors Colon Hayes, Winslow, O'Malley via Teams
Maria Luise-Special Assistant to the Mayor
Christopher Mooney-Assistant City Solicitor
Alex Pratt-Director of OSPCD
Zack Lemel-OSPCD-Deputy Director of Economic Development
Michelle Romero-City Planner
Carol Ann Desiderio-City Clerk

Councillor Taylor called the meeting to order at 5:42 PM.
There will be audio and video of this meeting via Teams.

Minutes to be Approved

Business

The Chair of the Economic Development Committee will give an introduction to the committee and discuss expectations moving forward.

The Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development will be in attendance to give the committee an update on economic development.

Councillor Taylor explained that the Economic Development Committee is newly formed and aims to set guidelines for future meetings, focusing on projects that make sense for both the current and future needs of the city, and aligning closely with OSPCD to ensure strategic planning. She handed the floor over to Alex Pratt, Director of OSPCD and Zach Lemel, Deputy Director of Economic Development.

Alex Pratt introduced Zach Lemel, Deputy Director of Economic Development who just came on board yesterday with the OSPCD and handed it over to Zach.

Zach Lemel, Deputy Director of Economic Development introduced himself to the committee and explained he has come from Newton and joined Malden because of Alex

and the friends he has spoken to who have moved to the Malden to see where it is and where it is going as well. He discussed his experience in regulatory change, neighborhood planning, and visioning, emphasizing the importance of flexible rules and regulations to support city growth and the need for a city vision to guide development.

Alex Pratt provided an update on the comprehensive plan, detailing the involvement of the master plan steering committee, the selection of a consultant, and the use of state and federal grants to fund the initiative, with the goal of shaping the city's vision for the next 15-20 years. The master plan steering committee includes members such as Council President Linehan, Councillor O'Malley, Michelle Romero, City Planner, Chuck, Ioven, Chair of the Planning Board, Pat Hayes, member of the Planning Board and himself and staff from OSPCD, all working together to guide the comprehensive planning process. We know the Master Steering Plan is a key component of that. The committee is close to selecting a consultant to run the master plan process, with the budget for the plan estimated at \$300,000 to \$350,000 entirely funded by state and federal grants secured by OSPCD. The comprehensive plan aims to establish a long-term vision for the city, with economic development as a key component, and the committee expects to have a consultant in place soon to begin the process. We have also had conversation with the Finance Committee in November and heard a desire for the Council on some quick changing to the zoning codes now for the progress on Commercial Street to stimulate development and grow the city's tax base. He emphasized the need to preserve commercial and industrial uses while considering mixed-use development due to market trends. The reason why we are focusing on Commercial Street was because the amount of value is one of the lowest in the City. One of the best ways to increase the tax base is to start with the low value properties and increase them. Efforts are being made to ensure that any zoning changes preserve existing commercial and industrial uses while enabling new development, with the team planning to present detailed proposals within a month. The research that we did indicates that the office space market in Greater Boston is stagnant, making mixed-use development a more viable option for Commercial Street, and the committee is exploring ways to maintain industrial value while attracting new investment. He mentions they are developing an economic development package to review regulations and support business growth, Zach will conduct conversations with local businesses in the coming weeks to gather feedback on what works, what doesn't, and how the city can foster a more welcoming environment for entrepreneurs. He announced a forthcoming review of the city's inclusionary zoning policy, including an updated economic feasibility analysis to maximize affordable housing without deterring development, funded by federal grants. Staff will explore ways to streamline the creation of affordable housing, noting that most recent projects have been 100% affordable, which is unusual and warrants further examination. He described efforts to promote the Malden gaming district using grant funding, including marketing campaigns and partnerships with the Chamber of Commerce to attract visitors and support local businesses. The city has partnered with the Chamber of Commerce to launch initiatives like the 'Choose Your Own Adventure Pass', which offers discounts at district businesses to encourage visitors to explore multiple venues. Promoting the gaming district and its businesses helps demonstrate to potential developers that the local economy can support additional restaurants and entertainment venues, making Malden an attractive location for investment and enjoy the gem we have in the City. So that is what we have going on for Economic Development.

Councillor McDonald highlighted the importance of integrating Commercial Street development with the Malden River plan, ensuring that the river remains a central asset in future agreements and dimensional controls. Councillor McDonald appreciates and also emphasized the importance of supporting the city's strong base of immigrant-owned businesses and building a welcoming environment for all business owners.

Councillor Colon Hayes asked what the thought behind letting people know about businesses already here will role into new businesses.

Alex said we have great businesses here and we want to make it easier for people to come into the City and enjoy what we have in the City and would hope that a developer would come into the City and we show that our businesses are successful they would want to be part of it.

Councillor Linehan thanked Alex and Zach for coming down and giving us this update on Economic Development and said she receives information about the businesses in the City and appreciates that explanation to residents and other visitors to come into the City.

Councillor Winslow said this conversation is great and he knows one of the things on the other side of town could get mixed into the Master Planning and feels it is very exciting. He feels the gaming district is an outstanding thing. He worked for the Malden Redevelopment previously and looks forward to working with Alex and Zach with these projects.

Councillor Crowe is excited about all the work that is happening and is excited about the Commercial Street Corridor because there's been lots of studies on this but nothing really stuck but that the key is going to be the River Works project and Bike to the Sea. She feels reframing it is great and is excited to hear about the progress moving forward.

Councillor Luong said thank you this is awesome with all the new projects it is exciting to see. She raised the issue of vacant commercial properties, discussing the possibility of creating an inventory and exploring incentives to encourage landlords to fill empty spaces rather than keep them vacant

Alex that is something to look into and have more discussion on showing them we can help them with doing something that may make a difference for them.

Councillor Taylor thanked Alex and welcomed Zach. She said this was great information and looks forward to working with both of them.

Other Business

Adjournment

A motion was made by Councillor Crowe, seconded by Councillor McDonald, that this meeting be adjourned at 6:09 PM. The motion carried unanimously.

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