NP&EDC

NANTUCKET PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Nantucket Planning & Economic Development Commission APPROVED Minutes Remote Participation via Zoom Webinar
December 05, 2023 @ 4:00PM

Commissioners: Chair Mary Longacre, Vice-Chair Barry Rector, Nat Lowell, Bert Johnson, Seth Engelbourg , Joseph Topham, Dave Iverson, Kristie Ferrantella , John Trudel, Wendy Hudson, and Dawn Hill Holdgate

Staff: Leslie Snell, Director of Planning, Megan Trudel, Senior Planner, Michael Burns, Transportation Program Manager and Nicky Sheriff, Land Use Specialist

I. Call to order:

Chair Longacre called the meeting to order at 4:00pm.

Chair Longacre read a prepared statement in accordance with Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023 regarding open meeting law, which outlines how the meeting is conducted via remote participation and states the ground rules for any discussion.

II. Establishment of quorum:

In Attendance:

Commissioners:

Wendy Hudson *Aye*
Nat Lowell *Aye*
Joseph Topham *Aye*
Seth Engelbourg *Aye*
Kristie Ferrantella *Aye*
Vice-Chair Barry Rector *Aye*
Chair Mary Longacre *Aye*
Dawn Hill Holdgate *Aye (joined the meeting later)*
Dave Iverson *Aye (joined the meeting at 4:05)*
John Trudel *Aye (joined the meeting later)*
Bert Johnson *Absent*

Staff:
Leslie Snell, Director of Planning *Aye*
Megan Trudel, Senior Planner *Aye*
Michael Burns, Transportation Program Manager *Aye*

Nat Lowell moved to approve the agenda and the motion was duly seconded by Barry Rector and the motion was carried unanimously.

Vote taken by Roll Call:
Wendy Hudson *Aye*
Kristie Ferrantella *Aye*
Nat Lowell *Aye*
Joseph Topham *Aye*
Seth Engelbourg *Aye*
Vice-Chair Barry Rector *Aye*
Chair Mary Longacre *Aye*

D. Ongoing Discussion – Enabling Legislation

1. Membership- discussion of suggestions received from Commissioners for updated NP&EDC roster.

Chair Longacre expressed gratitude for the submitted suggestions. The discussion involved using the existing sheet distributed to everyone, a summary sheet submitted by Chair Longacre, and another version worked on by Barry Rector. Chair Longacre emphasized finding a starting point for the commission's composition and ensuring a thorough discussion among the Commissioners.

Seth Engelbourg expressed a need to establish ground rules for the meeting's objectives. He questions whether the goal is to reach a final decision and vote on the exact membership composition or to formulate a proposal for a future vote. Mr. Engelbourg' sought clarity on the meeting's purpose and outlines the importance of defining the process and goals for the discussion.

Chair Longacre stated that the ideal goal would be coming out of the meeting with a defined roster. However, she acknowledged that there are elements to consider in achieving this goal. She emphasized the importance of discussing these elements and notes that the accomplishment of the goal will depend on the direction of the ongoing discussion.

Leslie Snell suggested using the spreadsheet created by Barry Rector as a starting point for the discussion. The spreadsheet separates options by sector, providing a clear illustration of who voted for each sector, subcategories, and the total votes. Leslie believed that the total votes will help identify the agencies or sectors that the group is most interested in moving forward with, thus aiding in narrowing down the options.

Barry Rector highlighted the challenge in organizing responses related to sectors, as some participants expressed a desire for specific entities within a sector. This made it challenging to categorize responses, especially when individuals wanted a mix of at-large representatives from different agencies within a particular sector. Despite the difficulty, the spreadsheet is presented as the best attempt to represent the information provided by the participants.

Seth Engelbourg raised two potential sources of bias in the voting process. First, some members may have voted more times than others based on their preference for a larger or smaller board. For instance, if someone advocated for a 15-member board while others preferred a seven-member board, the former would have voted twice as many times. Second, he pointed out that the shaded gray lines indicating sector totals might not necessarily reflect a preference for sectors over specific organizations. It could be a result of the simplicity of voting for a category rather than an individual organization within that category. Despite acknowledging the imperfect process, he highlighted these considerations for the group's awareness.

Chair Longacre responded to Seth Engelbourg's concerns, suggesting that these issues can be addressed and clarified through the ongoing conversation. She encouraged members to freely express their thoughts, clarify their intentions, or even change their minds based on the overall discussion. Regarding the total votes column on the far right, she acknowledges its potential limitations and mentions that it may be less helpful. She expressed awareness that the column could be skewed, particularly if a member voted for two seats in one category, leading to a higher vote count. Chair Longacre then deferred to Barry Rector to provide insights on this matter.

Barry Rector addressed concerns about potential skewing in the total votes column, explaining that it might appear skewed in the categories of General Public and At Large due to the absence of a clear way to allocate votes for multiple individuals. He acknowledged slight imperfections in the Planning Board category but suggests that tackling these issues individually can bring clarity. Barry also draws attention to the "actual recommended" columns, where members provided their opinions on the board's composition. He noted a few instances of members going over the recommended count, which can be resolved during the meeting.

Chair Longacre suggested starting the discussion with planning board seats, noting a lack of consensus but a leaning toward three planning board seats, possibly with the other two serving as alternates. She posed the question of whether there is general agreement on having three planning board seats, prompting further discussion among the commissioners.

Wendy Hudson sought clarification from Barry Rector on why he is suggesting one planning board seat and expressed a desire to hear his thoughts on the matter.

Barry Rector explains his rationale for suggesting one planning board seat, emphasizing the importance of considering the practicality of achieving a quorum for effective meetings. He highlights that having more seats increases the challenge of meeting quorum requirements, and his goal is to make the commission functional in that regard. He also mentions the consideration of ex-officio members who can contribute without counting toward the quorum. Wendy acknowledges the explanation and expresses a desire to discuss how the three planning board seats would be selected in the future.

Wendy Hudson expressed surprise at the suggestion of only one planning board seat and defends the reliability of planning board members, stating that many are extremely reliable in attendance. She advocated for a larger board with good attendance to incorporate more voices and suggests that nonattendance can be addressed through increased discipline. Ms. Hudson emphasized the importance of taking the seats seriously and states her preference for a bigger board despite concerns about meeting quorum requirements.

Chair Longacre presents an alternative perspective on the size of the board and its impact on meeting quorum requirements. He emphasizes that a larger board allows for more members to miss meetings while still maintaining a quorum. This provides a balanced view, considering both the advantages and challenges associated with different board sizes.

Joseph Topham expresses support for having three planning board seats and is open to the idea of having two planning board members participate as alternates in a non-voting capacity. He emphasizes the importance of attendance and expresses a willingness to stay actively involved in meetings, even if serving as an alternate.

Leslie Snell suggested starting with three planning board seats, given the consensus, and recommended progressing to the next group in the conversation. She expressed that approach would allow for flexibility to adjust the number of seats based on further discussion.

The discussion revolved around determining the number of seats for various sectors on the Nantucket Planning and Economic Development Commission (NPEDC). There is agreement on retaining one seat for the County Commissioners. For the housing sector, there was a consensus to broaden the eligibility for the seat while keeping the Housing Authority or their designee as the appointing entity. The conversation then shifted to the business sector, with broad interest, but the details of how to fill the seat are yet to be discussed. The suggestion is made to first identify the sectors and then address the process of seat selection within each sector. There's a suggestion to move the discussion about the business sector to a later phase.

Wendy Hudson expresses the need for more representation from various economic sectors on the Economic Development Commission. She mentions the lack of active associations for businesses like retailers and restaurants. While recognizing that the Chamber of Commerce represents many businesses, she suggests finding a way to include voices from different sectors more cohesively. Wendy acknowledges that the current structure may not be ideal for addressing this concern but emphasizes the importance of working on it for the future.

Nat Lowell shared his perspective on the importance of having representation from various economic sectors, particularly focusing on businesses in town. He mentioned the challenges faced by businesses, especially with recent issues like short-term rentals, and emphasizes the need for a voice that can provide insights and explanations about the intricacies of local businesses. Nat highlighted the role of representation in recognizing, explaining, and understanding the details of different business aspects.

Barry Rector provided clarification on his choice of the Chamber of Commerce as a representative entity for the business sector. He emphasizes the importance of having an organization that focuses on a broader regional level, considering the scope and mission of the commission. Barry also highlighted the practical advantages of selecting an entity over individuals, citing easier problem resolution and continuity. He expressed the hope that those who marked the business sector on the spreadsheet could contribute to further defining the representation for this sector.

Wendy Hudson provides clarification on her thoughts about the representation of the Business Sector. Initially, she considered the Chamber of Commerce staff, but she now supports the idea of nominating organizations for representation. Wendy suggested that a member from the Chamber's Board, with its large membership, would be suitable for the seat. She also raised the question of term lengths for the representative and emphasizes the importance of downtown and year-round businesses in shaping the economy. Additionally, Wendy mentioned her involvement with the Retailers Association of Massachusetts, providing a link to state-level insights on retail matters.

Seth Engelbourg expressed concern about the model used for the business sector representation, citing the potential lack of a public process. He highlighted the diverse nature of the listed organizations, some of which are nonprofits or businesses, and suggests that a sector-based model with a public application process, ultimately decided by the NP&EDC, would be a better fit. Mr. Engelbourg emphasized the NP&EDC's role as a government entity responsible for overseeing economic development.

Chair Longacre interjected to mention an existing model where a private organization, the Nantucket Conservation Foundation, has appointed a representative to a public board, specifically the Coastal Resilience Advisory Committee. She acknowledged Seth's preference for a public process but highlights that the private organization's appointment model has been implemented in other instances.

Seth Engelbourg expressed agreement with the idea of having a designated staff member from the Chamber of Commerce rather than delegating the selection to the Chamber of Commerce for any representative from the business community.

Leslie Snell reminded the commission members of their long-standing relationship with the Chamber of Commerce. She highlighted the Chamber's role as one of the Regional Tourism Councils funded by the state through the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism, emphasizing their government relationship. Snell mentioned various collaborative efforts, including business-related workshops and support during the COVID-19 pandemic. She suggested considering the reverse relationship, having a representative from the Chamber of Commerce on the Planning Commission.

Barry Rector also reminded the commission members that the Commission has no regulatory authority and is advisory. He emphasized that even the best plans devised by the Commission must be executed by others, leading to potential frustrations. Rector highlighted the importance of focusing on regional interactivity and suggests avoiding involvement in matters already handled by other agencies at the local level.

Chair Longacre touched on the Environmental Conservation section indicating that there is widespread support for including various stakeholders in the decision-making process. Currently, there is a seat for the Conservation Commission, and input from them has been received, as mentioned in an email within the packet. The discussion has included the possibility of involving the Land Bank, which has expressed interest in participating Chair Longacre sought input from Commissioners on how to address matters in this area.

Seth Engelbourg mentioned that he forwarded an email on behalf of the Conservation Commission expressing strong support for retaining a seat on the NP&EDC. He suggested a model similar to the one used for the Housing Authority, where the Conservation Commission could have a designated seat. Mr. Engelbourg is supportive of the Land Bank's participation as well, proposing that both the Conservation Commission and the Land Bank can be involved simultaneously. He also highlighted the distinct goals of the two organizations, with the Conservation Commission focusing on regulatory issues and land protection, while the Land Bank is more oriented towards open space and access. Mr. Engelbourg emphasized the need to clarify whether discussions involve Land bank staff, The Land Bank Commission, or if the Land Bank can designate representatives from either staff or Commission for participation in the NP&EDC.

Joseph Topham, who served six years on the Conservation Commission, expressed agreement with Seth Engelbourg's comment, emphasizing the value of having a representative and receiving regular updates. He strongly advocated for the Conservation Commission's continued presence on the Board, highlighting their responsibility for wetlands, which he considers crucial for the Town. Furthermore, Mr. Topham voiced support for the Land Bank, stressing the importance of open space. He suggested allocating two seats for this category, indicating a willingness to include both the Conservation Commission and the Land Bank in the decision-making process.

Chair Longacre appreciated Seth Engelbourg' s comments and highlighted the significance of taking the matter to the Conservation Commission for discussion. Chair Longacre had previously expressed concern about the Conservation Commission having a narrow scope, and Mr. Engelbourg pointed out that there is a broader interest in conservation beyond the commission's focus. Chair Longacre's concern revolved around the possibility of the Conservation Commission appointing someone less educated or versed in conservation issues to the NP&EDC. To address this, Chair Longacre supported the idea of keeping the Conservation Commission as the appointing authority but providing flexibility for them to designate either one of their commissioners or another well-qualified individual to represent conservation interests. In addition, Chair Longacre advocated for including the Land Bank in the discussion, suggesting the allocation of two seats in this area to accommodate both the Conservation Commission and the Land Bank's interests.

Commissioner Engelbourg added to the discussion by clarifying the broader scope of the Conservation Commission's duties. He mentioned that people often perceive the Commission's role based on wetlands-related discussions, but the actual duties of Conservation Commissions in Massachusetts predate the Wetlands Protection Act. Established in 1963, the Commission's original focus included open space preservation, acquisition, and education. He noted that the Wetlands Protection Act came into effect in 1972, and the Land Bank, formed in 1983, assumed roles similar to those of Conservation Commissions in other municipalities. While wetland permitting is a part of their responsibilities, Conservation Commissions predominantly focus on open space, recreation, access, and acquisition. On Nantucket, where Commissioner Engelbourg serves on the Conservation Commission, they face a high volume of permits but maintain a broader scope beyond what people commonly perceive. He emphasized that the Conservation Commission's actual scope is significantly broader than what people may think, highlighting their contributions to open space preservation and recreation.

Barry Rector, reflecting on the ongoing organization review, expressed a preference for focusing on the organizational structure before determining the specific entity to be involved. Commissioner Rector mentioned a concern about the potential inclusion of staff in the process, stating the view that staff involvement should not be part of such processes, and it should be a board-driven procedure. While acknowledging that this perspective might not be popular, Mr. Rector raised concerns about having two Environmental Conservation entities in the process, as they may have similar missions, and there's a potential risk of collusion.

Commissioner Rector leaned towards a more purist approach, suggesting the consideration of having only one environmental conservation entity involved to avoid potential issues in the future. Mr. Rector concluded by expressing gratitude and emphasizing that the concern is based on potential future scenarios rather than an immediate issue.

Leslie Snell brought attention to an important distinction in the composition of the Conservation Commission and the Land Bank. She noted that the Conservation Commission is an appointed group, appointed by the Select Board, whereas the Land Bank is an elected group. Ms. Snell highlighted the difference in the appointment process for these two entities. This information served as a reminder for the discussion on the composition of elected versus appointed members within the NP&EDC. Ms. Snell's input suggested that the distinction in appointment mechanisms may be a factor worth considering when determining the composition of the NP&EDC.

Nat Lowell added to the discussion, emphasizing that the Land Bank is a state agency similar to the Housing Authority. He noted the significance of the Land Bank's inclusion, echoing Seth Engelbourg' s informative points and highlighted that people often misunderstand the roles of various commissions, including the Conservation Commission. Nat expresses the belief that the Conservation Commission is perhaps one of the most misunderstood commissions on Nantucket. Commissioner Lowell supported the idea of the Land Bank being part of the NP&EDC, indicating that it should have been considered earlier. He sees the relationship between the Land Bank and the NP&EDC as already unfolding, emphasizing its importance. Mr. Lowell agreed with Leslie Snell's point about the distinction between elected and appointed members, acknowledging its validity. Despite this, Mr. Lowell argued for the Conservation Commission's seat to remain, viewing their missions as separate and valuable. He concluded by stating that the addition of the Land Bank is a major positive development for NP&EDC's future.

Dawn Hill Holdgate Joined the meeting at this time.

Chair Longacre moved on to the discussion on Historic Preservation noting that there was broad interest from the Commissioners in this category.

Joseph Topham expressed his perspective on the need for a dedicated seat for Historic Preservation. He stated that when he thinks of Historic Preservation, he associates it with Nantucket itself, considering the entire island to be inherently historic. Commissioner Topham mentioned that Holly Backus, who is involved when needed, adequately addresses Historic Preservation concerns. He disagreed with the idea that a separate seat for Historic Preservation is necessary, emphasizing that the island's historic nature is ingrained in its governance. Instead, Commissioner Topham suggested considering a seat for a Certified Local Government Commissioner, pointing out the differences in the roles of the Historic District Commission (HDC) and the Historic Commission. Mr. Topham believed that HDC looks at larger town projects, while the Historic Commission focuses on smaller projects with less connection to the

Board. Topham advocated for periodic updates from Holly Backus, perhaps every six months, along with other organizations. He felt that giving a dedicated seat for Historic Preservation may not be the most beneficial approach, suggesting that other organizations could contribute more to the long-term planning of Nantucket. Mr. Topham concluded by stating that focusing on moving the town in the right direction should be a priority, and adjustments related to Historical Preservation can be made later.

Chair Longacre suggested adding Holly Backus's (Preservation Planner) name to the list of staff members at the bottom of the spreadsheet, similar to the Transportation and Energy sections. This addition is not necessarily to designate her as ex officio but to serve as a reminder that there are three (3) staff members, who can provide support in the areas of Transportation, Energy, and now Historic Preservation. This inclusion acknowledged the valuable support that staff members can offer in these specific domains.

Commissioner Rector echoed the sentiment of adding Holly Backus's name to the list, expressing the view that she would be the best choice to be part of the Board. Rector suggested that Ms. Backus could serve in an advisory capacity, providing valuable insights without having a voting role. Rector explained that his preference for the Certified Local Government (CLG) Commission was based on its broader perspective compared to someone from the Historic District Commission (HDC). He emphasized the importance of Holly's role as the CLG liaison to the state, highlighting the incredible work that happens in that capacity. Commissioner Rector commended the collaboration between Holly Backus (Preservation Planner) and Lauren Sinatra (Energy Coordinator), citing their progress on issues like the Wind Farm.

Wendy Hudson expressed intrigue and appreciation for Commissioner Rector’s suggestion about thinking more regionally, acknowledging that she doesn't focus on that aspect enough. Ms. Hudson sees regional thinking as a valuable lens for many considerations. Wendy specifically praised the idea of using Holly Backus as an ex officio with more regular reporting, recognizing the benefits it could bring to the Board. Commissioner Hudson agreed with the structure proposed and emphasizes that the Historic District Commission (HDC) deals with specific and minute details, which are not the primary focus of the Board.

Chair Longacre sought clarity on whether the Commission wanted to allocate a seat in the general sector for Historic Preservation or not.

Dawn Hill Holdgate suggested putting one seat in the Historic Preservation category and recommends having an at-large member rather than a staff member in this role. She pointed out the challenge of finding someone from the Historic District Commission (HDC) due to their already extensive time commitments. Given the island's overall status as a Historic Landmark, Dawn emphasized the importance of having a person designated in this category. Commissioner Hill Holdgate introduced the idea of appointing members through the County Commissioners, considering it as a potential impartial body that encompasses individuals elected to the select board. She acknowledged the need for further discussion on how to handle appointments, whether through the NP&EDC or the County Commissioners. Ms. Hill Holdgate shared her thoughts on the matter and suggested exploring options that might make people more comfortable, indicating that she arrived late and may not be aware of previous discussions.

Chair Longacre clarified that the ongoing discussion involved three decisions for each category: defining the seat, determining the mechanism for filling the seat, and establishing the appointing authority for the seat. Currently, the focus is on defining the seats within each category. The conversation is part of the broader process of shaping the structure and roles of the NP&EDC.

Barry Rector expressed his hesitancy to allocate a seat in the Historic Preservation category at the moment. Rector believes that relying on staff would ensure more timely access to information and effective advice for the Board. He emphasized that the identified staff members are top-notch in their respective roles. He also noted that, given the focus of the commission, staff could fulfill the role effectively without the need for a designated seat. Commissioner Rector underscored that staff members would serve in an advisory capacity without voting rights.

Joseph Topham chimed in and agreed with the sentiment of not wanting to allocate a seat in the Historic Preservation category at the moment. He referenced Holly Bacus's commitment to continue supporting the Board in various capacities, suggesting that a designated seat may not be necessary. Topham expressed reservations about voting and mentions the need to think about it further, particularly in relation to the County Commissioners having a vote. He indicated that he is not currently in favor of that approach and prefers not to delve too deeply into the details at this time.

Commissioner Lowell suggested taking a holistic approach to the decision, similar to the one taken with the housing category. He reflected on the decision to allow the Housing Authority to be the entity selecting someone and sees a parallel thought process for the historic preservation seat. Mr. Lowell acknowledged that this seat is a new concept and emphasizes the importance of starting it off on the right foot. Commissioner Lowell explored the idea of the NP&EDC making the appointment, considering it as a fair and fitting approach. He compared it to the existing seat within the Housing Authority that has been functioning for years. While Dawn Hill Holdgate proposed the idea of the County Commissioners appointing someone, Mr. Lowell preferred to set that aside for the moment and focus on determining the appropriate entity for making the appointment. He also went on to express the need to think more about it and aligns with Joseph Topham and Barry Rector's perspectives on the matter.

Commissioner Rector advocated for avoiding an amorphous choice and suggested focusing on what would be an appropriate source to make the appointment for the Historic Preservation seat. He proposed narrowing down the options rather than leaving them open-ended. Commissioner Rector highlighted the possibility of considering the CLG (Certified Local Government) commission, pointing out its broad base of responsibilities, both locally and regionally. He emphasized the alignment between the NP&EDC and CLG, suggesting that these entities complement each other well. Commissioner Rector expressed the desire to be more distinctive about the targeted entity for the appointment, leaning towards the CLG as a suitable choice. He also stressed the importance of continuity in the decision-making process, advocating for a thoughtful and strategic approach to selecting the appropriate source for the appointment.

Chair Longacre suggested moving the discussion along by placing a "one" in the Historic Preservation sector, acknowledging that eight out of the nine Commissioners who submitted suggestions included this sector. The decision is made with the understanding that the specifics of how to fill the seat will be determined later. Chair Longacre then moved on to the next category on the list, which is Social Services and welcomed Commissioners to share any points or questions. She also provided an overview of the discussion's progress, noting that they have covered the categories with very strong support. The focus is now on categories in the middle range. At-large positions are being deferred until later in the discussion, allowing for a comprehensive consideration of opinions once other seats have been decided.

Chair Longacre addressed the topic of Social Services and the potential inclusion of a sector seat for Social or Human Services on the NP&EDC. There is a consideration to avoid creating a circular loop where there is an NP&EDC representative on a subcommittee (Contract Review Committee) of the Council for Human Services, which is under the Health and Human Services Department. Chair Longacre suggests discussing the idea of a sector seat for Social Services or Human Services. This category could encompass services for the elderly, disabled population, and veterans. There is also a mention of Elder Services as a separate category, and Chair Longacre proposed moving it next to the Social Services category for a collective review.

The discussion went on to revolve around various sector categories for the NP&EDC, including Social Services, Arts and Culture, Transportation, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Land Bank, and Non-voting Taxpayers. There was a consensus to include a seat for Social Services, with a suggestion to explore a regional focus. Arts and Culture and Transportation were also favored as sector categories, with the idea that the Transportation Program Manager, Mike Burns could serve as an ex officio member. The concept of including the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion sector was discussed, with a suggestion to invite representatives from relevant organizations for periodic updates. The Interfaith Council's inclusion was questioned due to its religious nature. The advisory committee of non-voting taxpayers was considered, but there was a shift towards including diverse voices within the general at-large category rather than as a specific seat. The Renewable Energy and Sustainability sector was also discussed, with a recommendation to involve the town's staff, particularly the Energy Coordinator, Lauren Sinatra. Overall, there was an emphasis on fostering collaboration with relevant staff members and periodic updates from different sectors.

VII. Other Business

A. Next Meeting Monday, December 18, 2023, at 5pm, via Zoom

VIII. Adjournment

Nat Lowell moved to adjourn the meeting and the motion was duly seconded by Barry Rector and the motion was carried unanimously.

<u>Vote taken by Roll Call:</u>

Wendy Hudson *Aye*
Dave Iverson *Aye*
Nat Lowell *Aye*
Joseph Topham *Aye*
Seth Engelbourg *Aye*
Vice-Chair Barry Rector *Aye*
Chair Mary Longacre *Aye*
John Trudel *Aye*

Links to the documents included in the Meeting Packet:

1. 12-05-23 NPEDC AGENDA.PDF (nantucket-ma.gov)
2. COMMISSION MEMBERS SUGGESTION FOR MEMBERSHIP.PDF
3. COMMENTS.PDF