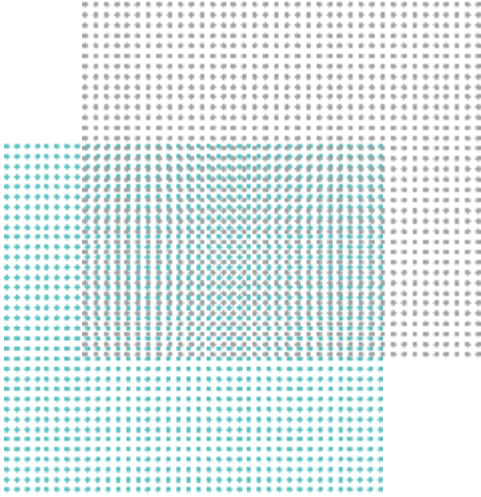




February 27, 2023

Economic Development
Committee – FY23
Update to Select Board



- The Economic Development Committee (EDC) was formed in 2020 by the Select Board following the completion of the Belmont Business Strategy. The role of the Belmont EDC is to develop, implement, and update the recommendations in the Belmont Business Strategy, in conjunction with Town staff and departments



- Advise the Select Board and other town boards on issues concerning bylaws, polices, regulations, and zoning that foster commercial growth, strength the local economy, and are consistent with maintaining the character of our community

- Focus efforts on activities that maintain or expand the commercial & industrial tax base

- Identify changing economic trends and develop recommendations to maximize interest in our community and attract these potential new businesses

- Advocate for state and federal grants, incentives, or for improvement in regulations that help advance our economic priorities

- Establish relationships and improve communication with local businesses

Committee Membership Overview



Name	Position	Affiliation	Term
Paul Joy	Co-Chair	Senior Analyst, Ducker Carlisle	2023
Katherine Venzke	Co-Chair	Owner, Helena's Boutique	2023
Wendy Etkind	Secretary	Product Management, Oracle Retail Global Business Unit; 30+ yrs working in & with the retail industry	2024
Erin Brown	Communications Coordinator	Owner, The Blue Butterfly; Freelance Writer	2024
Rui "Renee" Guo	Planning Board Representative	Planner, VHB	2024
Deran Muckjian	Member	Owner, The Toy Shop of Belmont	2024
Jack Sy	Member	Owner, Number 1 Taste	2024
Emma Thurston	Member	Chief Operating Officer, Cal Verde Naturals	2023
Marie Warner	Member	CEO & Founder, Boston Women Connect and Warner Professional Sales	2023



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2022-23 EDC Accomplishments

2023-24 Economic Development Committee Goals



Vision Statement

- Belmont is a vibrant and inclusive community that fosters innovation and growth, where businesses thrive and individuals can live, work, and play in a safe and sustainable environment

Local Government Support for Small Business

- Small business and property owners to have open lines of communication with the town, including someone in the town with the position to guide in the process of opening business
- A more proactive Belmont in attracting new business from across Metro Boston and beyond
- We want Belmont to be able to better identify, research, apply for, and win state and federal grants
- We encourage Belmont to pursue additional Commonwealth surplus dollars for local one-time projects
- Create a comprehensive and reliable checklist for opening a business in Belmont that covers different industries and business types—including estimate time of completion

New business formation and growth

- Strive to make it easier to open a business in Belmont, including bylaw review, small business input, and strategic flexibility and change in accordance with other peer communities
- Advocate for and help fund the Trapelo Wayfinding project to increase the number of people who visit, shop, and dine along the corridor

Continued EDC Activity

- The EDC commits to continue hosting networking events, posting a communications newsletter,
- We will also continue bringing small business, citizens, committees, and property owners together to discuss future initiatives, as well as support other committee activities as a supporter, liaison, or participatory member (i.e. MBTA Community Advisory Committee)



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2022-23 EDC Accomplishments

Charge 1 – Advising the Select Board and other town departments



- Presented 2021-22 achievements to the Select Board in Feb 2022 & created an Annual Report



- Town committee outreach included Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Long-Term Capital Budget Committee, School Committee, Community Path Project Committee, Energy Committee, Diversity Task Force & DEI Implementation Committee, Website Renewal Committee, and the MBTA Multifamily Zoning Committee



- External organizational outreach included the Urban Land Institute (Wavery Square TAP Public Forum); MassDevelopment PACE (Property Assessed Clean Energy) and Work-Based Learning Alliance (successfully handed off to School Committee and Administration)



- Researched opportunities to improve parking regulations, zoning regulations pertaining to business formation, and networked with Belmont landlords and members of the public to better inform challenges and opportunities



- Expanded committee membership to 9 via committee charge change in order to expand impact and outreach

Work-based Learning Alliance Example

Factsheet	
Mission	To enable Massachusetts high school students access to paid virtual internships with Commonwealth employers
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$4 Million in state grants
Business Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IBM MassLife Sciences Center Mass Cyber Center
School Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waltham Sr. High Bellingham High School Uxbridge High School Bartlett KIPP Academy Lynn Charter School Plymouth North Greater Lowell Regional Vocational Technical Hopedale Jr Sr High Everett High BMC Durfee High Nipmuc Regional High Tri-County Regional Vocational Technical Bartlett High School Westfield High Billerica Memorial High School

“This new STEM internship program will give more students across the Commonwealth foundational opportunities to gain meaningful work experience.” - Governor Charlie Baker

“With this new program, we are targeting the barriers around short-term employment and recruiting young people, and by addressing these gaps, our administration hopes to boost the pipeline of STEM talent streaming into the Commonwealth’s workforce.” – Lt. Governor Karyn Polito

“It is my understanding that Principal Taylor and the Superintendent are excited about this opportunity for our HS students and Principal Taylor is helping Liz Baker (Director of Science & Technology/Engineer) recruit students for the 10-week programs. Thank you for working with Jeff (Liberty) and Liz (Baker) to bring this opportunity to Belmont students.” –Chair Meg Moriarty, Belmont School Committee

“I cannot believe this finally exists and at no costs thanks to the grant. While its not 100% the experience some students are looking for, I think partnering (with the Work-Based Learning Alliance) would be a huge step in the right direction to connect more students to work-based learning opportunities.” – Liz Baker, Director of Science & Technology/Engineering, Belmont Public Schools

Charge 2 – Focus efforts on activities that maintain or expand the commercial & industrial tax base



Listening to Citizens' Ideas and Suggestions

- Hosted Elizabeth Dionne, Dan Berry, and Max Colice after their Belmont Citizens Forum piece “Belmont is Sitting on a Fiscal Cliff”
 - Listened to their suggestions (and other members of the public) around Rezoning and Planning Ordinance Changes; utilizing town-owned land for additional development; utilization of State-owned land; and Eminent Domain alternations
 - EDC Committee agreed its worth pursuing suggestions for zoning bylaw changes, in coordination with other relevant committees and the Select Board

Feedback from Local Business & Commercial Property Owners

- Attended discussions (alongside SB Chair Paolillo, Administrator Garvin) with Belmont Center commercial property owners and the Belmont Business Center Association about vacant storefronts on Leonard St. and beyond
- Have had additional conversations with other Leonard St. property owners as well as reach out to current and former businesses owners about the challenges of opening and operating a business in Belmont


Analyze Belmont's Current Challenges and Opportunities

- Hosted Anne Marie Mahoney (former Capital Budget Committee chair) about her experiences in Belmont Town Government building capital projects, as well as her take on Belmont's future
- Reviewed the findings of the Collin's Center Report—especially sections pertaining to economic development





Recommendations to Select Board

- Advocated for an Economic Development Coordinator position, including drafting a job description (roles and required experience)

Sep 09 2022 **Belmont is Sitting on a Fiscal Cliff** Construction and Housing, Newsletter, Open Space, Sept/Oct 2022, Town Committee Meetings Comments Off



By Max Colice, Elizabeth Dionne, and Dan Barry Belmont is effectively insolvent. It cannot pay its operating expenses and pension debt without one-time federal aid. Compounding this problem, Belmont's operating expenses are rising faster than its revenue. Unless Belmont increases its revenue, the town may have to cut services drastically. Like every other town in Massachusetts, Belmont's revenue comes mainly from property taxes. The Board of Assessors assesses each property's value, then computes the property tax by multiplying the property value by the property tax rate. Even though Belmont's property tax rate is relatively low, its single-family property tax bill [\[READ MORE\]](#)

Share / Save    

Posted by mm at 11:16 am Tagged with: Belmont, belmont center, commercial real estate taxes, property taxes, taxes

Charge 3 - Identify changing economic trends and develop recommendations to maximize interest in our community and attract these potential new businesses



Wayfinding

- Pursued and received a wayfinding grant;
- Created Wayfinding working group including EDC representation, Trapelo Corridor business representatives, Community Development, Belmont Police, and Belmont DPW representatives
- Successfully iterated final design after Select Board review, community suggestions, and consultant buy-in
- SB Belmont Gardenia approved August 2023
- Currently awaiting funding opportunity



Charge 4 -Advocate for state and federal grants, incentives, or for improvement in regulations that help advance our economic priorities

Grant	Amount	Use	Impact	Future
Wayfinding	\$25,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used to design aesthetically striking and Belmont-specific wayfinding signage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would positively impact Trapelo Rd Corridor businesses and beyond 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional funding required in order to fully execute the project—could be a combination of private/donated and public capital dollars
Massachusetts State Surplus	\$100,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EDC and SB created the Small Business Grant program, executed by Town Administration Town Granted ten \$10k grants to Belmont local businesses Grant Program architecture can be used to execute additional small business grant opportunities 	<p>Awardees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avalon Dance Production The Exercise Coach Malcolmson Philanthropic Advisors Gregory’s House of Pizza Cheeky Monkey Burnin by Ray Sweet Heart Valentina Day Spa Il Casale The Wellington 	
ARPA Funding request	\$312,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EDC requested 4% of total Belmont ARPA funding for economic development 	<p>None – funding request was deferred due to other budgetary priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Belmont ought to compete for other grant fundings through MA, IJJA, IRA, and other sources
Other	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified other grants in partnership with the LRRP to move forward on the results of that study 		



Charge 5 - Establish relationships and improve communication with local businesses



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Communication Coordinator Role

Sends a bi-monthly newsletter to businesses with updates, important information and surveys to get feedback

Business Database

Established to be able to communicate with businesses, with periodic updates

Belmont Business Directory

Launched, maintained, and hosted on the town's website

Small Business Networking

Drew 40-50 local business owners. Fundraised for the event and procured sponsorship; raised a \$2,000 event budget. Got participant feedback about opportunities for future networking events

EDC and Belmont Town Day

Raised awareness among residents of our charge and initiatives.

Business Outreach

Sought to better understand the challenges through the town's zoning bylaws. Discussed offering an informal new business mentoring program.

Media

Wrote op-eds for the Belmontonian, Belmont Citizen Forum, and co-chairs were interviewed for the Belmont Journal (Belmont Media)




Letter To The Editor: Accomplishments, Priorities Of Belmont's Economic Development Committee

FEBRUARY 7, 2023 BY FRANKLIN B. TUCKER — [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

Photo: Small business revival in Belmont Center is a priority of Belmont's Economic Development Committee

To the editor:

As Co-Chair of Belmont's Economic Development Committee alongside Katherine Venzke, I am pleased to share a brief overview of our accomplishments this past year with the greater Belmont community.

LEONARD ST., BELMONT, MASSACHUSETTS

**BELMONT BUSINESS CENTER
1930'S**

Source: Belmont Historical Society

