

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 a.m. at the Historical Society. Present were: Chairman John Fenton, Marlene Hoyt, Andrea Leary, Holly Nahabedian, and Mike Sewall; also present were: Planning Director Paul Materazzo, Senior Planner Lisa Schwarz, Town Manager Andrew Flanagan, and Selectman Alex Vispoli.

**Imagine Andover Team**

Three members of the ICMA (International City/County Management Association) were introduced: Dan Weinheimer who is the Policy and Project Manager in Fort Collins, CO; Lunda Asmani who is the Assistant City Manager in Newton, KS; and Rosylen Oglesby who is the Assistant City Manager with the City of Portsmouth, VA. They, along with Emilie Smith who was unable to attend, comprise a four-person project team who will help to evaluate and make recommendations for redeveloping Andover's Downtown.

The ICMA Team gave an overview of their respective cities which they help to manage, providing comparisons of growth and redevelopment in their towns to the potential for Andover. The Team listened to EDC members and to the Town and Business people in attendance about what they like about Andover.

**Listen Tour: Historical Society**

Andover Historical Society Executive Director Elaine Clements explained the history of Andover's Historical Society and the transformation of the Downtown since 2008 when the Society realized the importance of preserving the stories about Andover which make the Town special. The Historical Society, working alongside with other Town groups, wants to create a "Cultural Corridor" from the Shawsheen River through the Historic Mill District and Downtown until Phillips Academy. Some highlights will include an art show inspired by the river and hiking trails with artists painting along the river.

Ms. Clements explained that the Historical Society has a proposal from a Boston-based company called *Cuseum* to create historical markers virtually through an Andover app. The idea is to bring history, culture and art to people wherever they are. The app will have the ability to "ping" users when they arrive at an interesting spot and then the historical and/or cultural significance will be explained. On Sunday April 3<sup>rd</sup>, a program called Andover 101 will take place presenting 15 essential stories about Andover.

**Downtown Andover Roundtable**

Discussion continued as the community had an opportunity to share what they like about the Downtown and what they would like to see. Mixed use housing, more retail and restaurants are desired. Good schools, improved transportation and parking, a hardware store, a small film house, hiking/outdoor activities, and a cultural center were also important and suggested. Housing and activities targeted to the varied demographics from millennials to seniors are desired. Having areas or activities open in the evening with affordable options, as well as places for informal gatherings/meetings is needed and wanted. Perhaps Old Town Hall or the Youth Center could be utilized for activities.

**Downtown Andover Roundtable (cont'd)**

Where the current Downtown “boundaries” are, compared to where they are hoping to expand, was discussed. It will be important to communicate better about resources that are at Phillips Academy such as the Addison Gallery and Samuel’s Restaurant, as well as marketing activities of interest with students at Merrimack College. Public transportation needs to be capitalized on, how to get folks from the Industrial Areas to Downtown should be explored, and implementing recommendations from the Parking Study is being worked on. The Commuter Rail is an asset. Pedestrian safety is a concern.

There was a comment about commercial rental rates being high and perhaps part of the reason for frequent turn-over and vacancies. Regulatory Boards need to help streamline the permitting process and business owners want to feel comfortable communicating issues with landlords and Regulatory Boards which should be more consistent. Zoning and By-laws need to be updated and reflect long-term advantages to redevelopment.

The ICMA team recognized the pride which was expressed in Andover’s history and cultural assets. Zoning challenges exist, but finding ways to partner more with Phillips Academy and Merrimack College will help to provide more opportunities for all ages. Doing a better job with positive messaging is essential. There is a need to attract businesses to the side streets off Main Street to help expand the Downtown. Businesses need to know that the community wants to support their staying by: streamlining permitting, recognizing Andover’s assets and utilizing existing resources, and having businesses form a partnership with the Town. The ICMA team will take information gained and report back on their findings to the Town Officials in April.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 a.m.