

Growth Study Committee Formal Recommendation

Create a Town of Hopkinton

Economic Development Office

Budget Item related to an expanded service in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency

Budget Amount: \$70,000-\$90,000

Justification: Due to COVID-19 business needs are changing throughout the country, including in Hopkinton. In particular, needs for office space are changing drastically and quickly with many companies (including those in Hopkinton) encouraging workers to work from home rather than come in person every day to an office building. Hopkinton needs to be poised to react and attract new businesses to fill the gaps when existing businesses reduce their physical footprints. Although a new expense for FY22, it is the intent that this position would pay for itself over time by bringing in new growth and prevent a significant loss of tax revenue when businesses leave, close, or downsize. During these times of pandemic many residents are struggling financially and cannot afford to take on much more of the tax burden if too many businesses leave and are not replaced promptly with others.

Purpose –

Hopkinton is a growing and diverse residential community largely defined by its rural self-image, its highly rated school system, and its family oriented recreational offerings. But it is also home to divisions of two large global corporations, several small local family businesses, and everything in between. It's clear that businesses both large and small play a significant part in community vitality and the quality of life in Hopkinton. Having a broad-based business presence in town ensures a robust inventory of well-paid jobs along with a variety of services, shops, restaurants, and yet to be developed hotel and event venues. We are a growing community whose resident population could approach 25,000 by 2030. Our household income is by far the highest of any Metrowest municipality. Our annual town budget is approaching \$ 100 million. It is time for Hopkinton to establish an Economic Development Office.

Job Description -- Role, Duties, and Activities –

- Be the “sales and marketing” department for the town of Hopkinton.
- Develop collaborative relationships with area-wide business development entities -- chambers of commerce, the 495 Metrowest Partnership, the Massachusetts Office of Business Development, the Massachusetts Biotech Council, etc.
- Establish regular outreach and connection with Hopkinton’s business, industrial, and commercial citizens.

- Assist business community in its official dealings with various community boards, committees, and permitting authorities.
- Develop relationships with regional commercial real estate brokers. Be aware of property searches in the area. Make sure the market is aware of the opportunities and vacancies in Hopkinton.
- Open avenues of communication around what is important to business; what infrastructure, transportation, and support services are appropriate? What commercial enterprises in the way of stores, restaurants, hotels, banking services, are needed? How can we partner together to bring needed amenities to our business and industrial zones?
- Assist town leaders in developing relationships with Hopkinton's industrial citizens. Create a regular give and take leading to a more common understanding between business and governance.
- Maintain a data base of all commercial and industrial properties in Hopkinton – occupancy, square footage, lease rates, taxes, etc.
- Be a ready source of information on navigating licensing, permitting, and regulatory interactions. Assist in making appropriate connections. Ensure a regular and business-like linear application and permitting process.
- Know what challenges are coming up and prepare the town when they occur.
- Attend local, regional, and national business development and public policy conferences relevant to community interests.
- Spend time at the State House with our legislative delegation. Understand opportunities and challenges presented by various bills under consideration. Get used to testifying on Beacon Hill. Become a presence in public policy advocacy on behalf of 495 regional development.
- Work with ZAC and the Land Use Department to bring forward innovative zoning and permitting opportunities which could attract appropriate industries and the amenities needed to serve them.
- Coordinate a closer relationship between our best-in-class school department and our business community. Develop an internship program, for example, or a high school “business” curriculum, and other potential business partnerships further integrating our businesses into the fabric of community life.
- Help to develop additional town-to-business partnerships with entities like the Hopkinton Center for the Arts, perhaps, or the Fruit Street fields. In the first instance a business-sponsored event series could bring “name” performances to Hopkinton; in the second a long-term ground lease to a recreation/sports complex operator could expand and clean-up the property while bringing significant revenue to the town.

Job Specifics –

One year contract (IRS1099) position established on a trial basis within the office of the Town Manager. 12 month contract at \$ 70,000 with two \$10,000 bonus opportunities: (Specific incentive targets to be determined based on identifiable FY 2022 initiatives). Potential conversion to full-time position with full benefit package upon successful review by Town Manager.

