

THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

March 17, 2015

MINUTES

GDTIF and EDA Members Present: Chub Whitten George Sterling, Adam Hamilton, Hope Taylor, Michael Henry, Gary Carpenter and Barbara Miller.

Also Present: Laura Norton, Administrative Assistant, Office of Community Development

Chair Sterling called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m. noting the first order of business was approval of the Minutes from February.

Minutes:

A motion was made/seconded (Henry/Hamilton) to approve the Minutes of February 17, 2015 as written with all in favor with the exception of Ms. Taylor who did not attend the meeting.

EDA Work Plan for 2015:

Project List:

Chair Sterling explained the exercise the group was about to embark on noting he would need to review the project list in its entirety and then discuss and changes or additions. Before he began he added “Marketing: website, printed material and Blog” to the top of the list. He told the members the list was comprised of member thought and ideas as well as people on the street.

Chair Sterling reviewed each of the categories including *marketing, outreach to the NH Department of Resources and Economic Development (DRED), outreach to businesses of interest to Peterborough, fiber-optic broadband for business and residents, alternative/renewable energy, agriculture and business development, employment position created to be dedicated to economic projects, 65 reasons to retire in Peterborough and 15 reasons to bring your business to Peterborough.*

Chair Sterling noted that the exercise would assist the members in narrowing the list to two to four projects to tackle. “I am in favor of four opposed to two so we can charge ahead and gain some momentum and traction” he said.

As Chair Sterling began with *marketing* he noted the importance of a Blog and how the Google search engine works. “Blog articles of 300 or greater word articles

routinely get picked up” he said adding “content is king on search engines.” Ms. Miller suggested taking advantage of the websites we already own and maintain.

Chair Sterling went over outreach to both NH DRED and to businesses of interest to Peterborough. He also noted the Business and Industry Association and said “let’s find out what these people are doing then mimic or alter it to fit our needs.”

With regards to fiber-optic broadband Chair Sterling said “there has been a *lot* of talk about that, I wouldn’t be surprised if it rose to the very top of the list.” He went on to review alternative energy and mentioned the solar array project with Borrego Solar and the Peterborough’s national recognition by the EDA as a member of the Green Power Leadership Club.

When he got to agriculture and business development Chair Sterling said “farming is an occupation of love and emotion” adding “most farmers make a gross of about \$15,000.00 a year.” He asked “what can we do with our collective minds to improve the economic benefit to them and the community?” He briefly mentioned alternative types of farming including Hydroponics where plants are grown in mineral nutrient solutions, in water, indoors.

Chair Sterling then reviewed the potential for a full-time position that would be dedicated to bringing businesses to town, 65 reasons to retire in Peterborough (noting the vast array of available resources, the quality of life, and the culture of a small New England town *all* right outside the back door).

Chair Sterling then looked around and asked “anything else?” Mr. Henry replied “I would like to go deeper and also list the 35 reasons to bring a young family to town” adding “let’s show them what we have.” The members began to interject the celebrations of the town including the arts community, the fine recreation department and school systems. Mr. Whitten noted “that is a critical component to your tool kit.” He went on to say “and it is very cogent with me.” He explained how he met with Greg Connolly of First Tracks (a website, print design and marketing company) who had moved his marketing business from Peterborough to Concord where he could attract younger people and access high-speed broadband. He went on to talk about the great schools and the need for good entry level jobs for young families. Ms. Miller suggested a job posting section be placed on the website. Mr. Carpenter noted the River Center does a very similar service and suggested a collaboration with them. Mr. Whitten asked “shouldn’t we be requesting requests for proposals for what our brand should look like?” Chair Sterling noted they would not have a budget (\$5000.00) until July. Mr. Whitten noted it would not cost money to generate proposals adding “it is just a CEO or

two who are going to move themselves and their upper management to town.” Mr. Whitten reiterated what he has often expressed, which is the quality of life here “I am constantly surprised by it” he said.

Ms. Miller noted any time she Googles the best places to retire “Keene always comes up.” Mr. Whitten replied “that is also part of the tool kit.” Chair Sterling interjected “it is almost as though Peterborough has fallen off the map” quickly adding “but it is not hard to get back on.” Mr. Carpenter mentioned a social media expert that lives in town and suggested being in contact with her. Chair Sterling replied “kids live on social media.” Mr. Pickering pointed out “not just kids but young adults as well” and went on to note the school’s website “shouts out celebrations every week.” Ms. Taylor asked if the school still participated in the solar car project with Mr. Pickering replying it did not but mentioned other programs such as a robotics program and the potential for connecting agriculture into the curriculum.

Mr. Pickering went on to suggest collaboration with the High School would afford the potential to tap into the high school resources. He mentioned the student internship programs, student talent and ingenuity as well as tapping into the talent of technology integration specialist Helfried Zrzavy for the website. “We need to draft an outline” interjected Mr. Whitten adding “we need that before we go out to any manufacturing company offices.” Ms. Miller agreed and noted the growth of home businesses. She also noted the opportunity for a grant from the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation to fund writing an RSA allowing towns to bond services they deem appropriate. She volunteered to write the grant whose deadline is May 8th and asked for assistance with terminology “in identifying what we have, what we need and the sources that will supply us with what we need.” Mr. Carpenter mentioned resident Melinda Mosier, a Senior Program Officer for the Monadnock Region at New Hampshire Charitable Foundation. “We should get in touch with her as well” he said. Mr. Carpenter then asked if a motion was necessary for Ms. Miller to continue. Chair Sterling replied “we are not spending any money but if you want to give a vote of confidence that is fine.” A motion was made/seconded (Carpenter/Taylor) to have Ms. Miller write a grant to the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation with all in favor.

Chair Sterling then directed the members to the planned exercise. Each member received three blue dot stickers with their agenda. Audience members received multi-colored dots. He asked them to go to the master list of projects and identify their three top priorities by placing a dot beside it.

After several minutes the members and audience had completed the task. Chair Sterling identified the top items to be Marketing (including website and blog) outreach to DRED (“when the tide comes in, all boats float”) outreach to other businesses (“businesses used to be the drivers in town, we need that again”) and the fiber-optic broad band network.

A brief discussion of a dedicated position to coordinate economic development in town followed. Skeptical about the funding Mr. Whitten asked about the role of the Community Development Director. Chair Sterling replied “we have one, that would be Peter (Throop) and he is plenty busy.” Ms. Taylor suggested smaller groups meeting more frequently “to get things off the ground.” Mr. Whitten agreed noting “we need to invest the time to do this ourselves” with Chair Sterling adding “in essence we are building an infrastructure.” The members discussed the group’s goal of *one voice and one mission* with Chair Sterling noting “we deviate from that even unintentionally, we break.”

The members also briefly discussed considering the high school as a hub. Mr. Pickering noted the ability to tap into existing resources “and with our space reorganization of the next few years there may be an opportunity to create human and physical resources that provide technical expertise.”

Ms. Miller asked if the new Chamber of Commerce Director (Sean Ryan) was a member. Chair Sterling replied “he is not a member but had been willing to be here and share his resources.” Mr. Hamilton interjected he was not speaking for Mr. Ryan “but he has been open to working with us and want to do that.” He also noted interest from Bonnie Fecowicz to be involved. “That is great” replied Ms. Miller adding “she is great and she works with the Hospital.” From the audience Palagia Vincent noted people moving to the area from Massachusetts and Connecticut and asked “what is it that they are looking for? What do the little guys have to do to step up our voice? What are the little fundamentals that make a true difference?” Mr. Hamilton replied “we are meeting next week to identify that.” “And you need champions” interjected Mr. Whitten.

Chair Sterling then polled the members as to what item they would like to work on:

Ms. Taylor - marketing

Mr. Hamilton – broad band and outreach to DRED

Mr. Henry - marketing

Mr. Carpenter – marketing, outreach and energy

Mr. Whitten – marketing and agriculture

Ms. Miller – broadband

Ms. Vincent – marketing

Missing – Mr. Gregg, Mr. Robinson and Mr. Crocker

Chair Sterling noted he would like to work on outreach. He suggested the groups get together and that the information get to the missing members as that they could chose an item as well. A brief discussion about appropriate ways to communicate followed with Chair Sterling noting “e-mail is fine you just cannot have a quorum “the magic number is five, that is a quorum and that would constitute a public hearing and those require a 48-hour notice.”

Vision Survey Results:

Chair Sterling then briefly reviewed the survey results and asked the members about their reactions. “What struck you as most relevant? Does anything else need to be further addressed?” “Are there any important insights or conclusions?” he asked.

Mr. Whitten pointed out on page five of the summary (a questions that asked about the three most important characteristics for Peterborough’s future) “it is the quality of schools, local employment opportunities and a vibrant downtown” he said. Ms. Miller once again mentioned the home business people and remote workers. Mr. Whitten suggested that population “would be a great subset in your marketing blog.” Mr. Henry noted “you have to have the goods to offer before you offer them” adding “and we have them. The reasons that people stay here are the same reasons new people come here.”

Winding down Chair Sterling asked the members what they should do with the results summary. Mr. Hamilton replied “the people have spoken and we have all read, discussed and understand it so we should not go against this.” He went on to say “it is like a rough map that has been laid out and we need to honor it.” Ms. Taylor agreed adding “parts of can be incorporated into our marketing pieces.” Ms. Miller noted one question on the survey was asking the respondent the best way to communicate “to the people.” She noted email was a very popular response and suggested a campaign to collect resident emails at the upcoming deliberative session and town meeting “so we can reach out.”

The members briefly discussed ways of getting news and information dispersed. Suggestions included developing the web site and blog, newspapers articles, public postings, email blasts and printed marketing pieces.

Although he had left the meeting Chair Sterling cited the dedication of Brian Pickering and asked for a motion to recommend the Board of Selectmen appoint

him an alternate member of the EDA. A motion was made/seconded (Henry/Hamilton) to make that recommendation with all in favor.

In closing, Mr. Whitten read an article written by Chair Sterling entitled *2,000 8,000 500,000* which describes the loss of 2000 jobs since the year 2000 in Peterborough from large employers such as EMS, Brookstone, NEBS and NCR; how 2000 jobs could be as many as 8000 consumers purchasing locally with as many as 4000 kids enrolling the school district; and the current industrial/commercial inventory of about 500,000 square feet (about half of the occupancy rate). Chair Sterling's article ended with "we have the space to bring in new business. It is unlikely we will find large employers, and that is fine, we just need to find more small employers providing living wages to make our economy grow. Really though, we don't need to grow so much as just get back to where we were in the year 2000. Let's bet back to business." Chair Sterling's entire article was submitted for the record.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton
Administrative Assistant