

# THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

April 21, 2015

## MINUTES

**GDTIF and EDA Members Present:** Chub Whitten, George Sterling, Adam Hamilton, James Kelly, Jeff Crocker and Peter Robinson

**Also Present:** Peter Throop, Director and Laura Norton, Administrative Assistant, Office of Community Development

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

### **Minutes:**

A motion was made/seconded (Sterling/Kelly) to approve the Minutes of March 17, 2015 as written with all in favor.

### **EDA Work Group Updates:**

#### *Marketing Work Group:*

Peter Robinson distributed a handout to the members noting the group had met and agreed a worthwhile project was to create a website and market it. “We all agreed it should be a standalone” he said adding “and the reason for that is that there is already a *lot* of content on the town website. We want to attract business, we are the PEDDA (Peterborough Economic Development Authority) and this site will identify available sites and buildings with photographs and descriptions as well as links to realtor groups and contact information.” Mr. Robinson went on to speak about the incentives (low rents, vast supplies), the quality of life in the Monadnock Region (recreation, healthcare, culture, education, and community) as well as success stories from both a business point of view (New Hampshire Ball Bearing and MicroSpec) and community point of view (Wastewater Treatment Plant and Solar Farm). He noted each section would have links for additional and complimentary information.

Mr. Robinson reviewed the demographics of the area (proximity to cities and major airports of New York, Boston, and Montreal) and suggested 50, 75 and 100 mile radius graphics “to show visually we are not remote and you can get here, we are not out in the middle of the sticks.”

Mr. Whitten interjected “fabulous, this is impressive.” Mr. Sterling asked about any collaboration with ConVal (local regional High School). Mr. Robinson replied

“they have offered support with their branding and may do a lot of the heavy lifting on this project.” He also noted a private individual had offered assistance with the website “and we are deciding to use one or the other or both.” Mr. Robinson went on to explain their initial idea of having a call duty for additional information where one member is on call each month. “But I am not liking that idea so much, it makes for too many people in the mix, it is a bad way to approach it” he said. At this time from the audience Pelagia Vincent volunteered to be the point person for the website. “I will be Volunteer Peterborough Concierge” she said with a smile. Mr. Kelly noted the importance of the human connection. “The personal side is really like makes it happen” he said.

Also from the Audience Chris Mann noted the phone may be good for some individuals “but the younger people do their research by using computer links” adding “they research online and do not use their phone to call directly.” Ms. Mann also mentioned reasons for relocating here included nature, air quality and safety. Mr. Robinson Interjected “quality of life” as Mr. Whitten said “safety, which is the first time I have heard that mentioned, that is huge.” He went on to say “time is of the essence. I make a motion Palagia be our point person for the website.” Mr. Robinson told the member the volunteer for the website was Gordon Peery noting “websites are like living entities, that have to constantly updated on a regular basis so I am thinking about a potential collaboration between Gordon and the school.” He went on to say “I would love to use Gordon but we have to think of the future and keep in mind the school is staffed nine months of the year.”

#### *Outreach Work Group:*

Mr. Whitten note this group consisted of himself, Mr. Sterling and Mr. Carpenter. He noted the outreach to DRED in Concord as well as the importance of the website. “The website and the committee that reaches out is crucial to the toolkit” he said. Mr. Sterling noted he had visited Franklin Peirce University to look for interns and ended up in a conversation about the economic condition of New England and how some communities in particular (Brattleboro and Montpelier Vermont and Great Barrington, MA) had very successful “comeback” stories and had developed ancillary businesses back into their towns or expanded industry all together. He pointed out one town used medical avenues while another used energy. “We already have those things and they give us a leg to stand on” he said. Mr. Whitten asked about a future for manufacturing with Mr. Sterling replying “it’s a long shot” but added “it may be possible for a new company that accessorizes ball bearings or medical devices.” Mr. Whitten interjected “and it hinges on our marketing.” He also noted some demographic data research done by Mr. Henry indicated that the average age in town was 52 years.

*Broad Band Work Group:*

It was noted that this group met “it was led by Barbara Miller” said Mr. Sterling who also reported the group had begun the process of writing a grant request to the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation for \$5,000.00 to take the next steps in bringing broad band internet to town. “We still need a Chair for this group” he said adding “the deadline (for submission of the grant) is May 8<sup>th</sup>.” Mr. Robinson asked about any involvement from the Peterborough Chamber of Commerce with Mr. Sterling replying he would look into it. Mr. Throop interjected “Carole Monroe will participate in the group” adding “she is deeply steeped in the technology and has expertise to share.”

**Town Meeting Items of Interest:***Zoning Ordinances:*

Mr. Throop briefly reviewed the history of the Agricultural Business Enterprise District ordinance. He pointed out the Planning Board had spent the better part of a year developing an amendment to a petition amendment that had passed the year before. “It is a question of the intent of uses in the Rural District and the fair number of risks associate with it” he said. He went to explain the mission of increasing economic viability of farms and farmers while protecting the abutters and neighborhoods. He concluded by noting “the farmers are happy with it and the neighbors have appreciated what we have done. It is good for the town and allows adjunct activities on farms when and where appropriate.”

Mr. Sterling asked “are you looking for an endorsement statement from the EDA?” Several of the members noted they had not read the zoning ordinance and would prefer to do so before they noted full support of it. Mr. Hamilton asked if there had been opposition to the amendment with Mr. Throop replying “no, just a lot of questions.” He noted the numerous public hearings and said “the difficulty was finding the balance point of what a farmer could reasonably do to make their farms more viable while reasonably protecting the neighbors from any adverse effects.” Mr. Crocker asked “were there any petition articles related to this?” Mr. Throop replied “no.” Mr. Throop then noted he would email the amendment out to the members for review and proceed to schedule a short meeting to vote on a statement of support.

*Downtown Parking Lot/Bonding/Use of GDT TIF Funds:*

Rodney Bartlett gave a brief history of the proposed plan for a parking lot behind Depot Square. He briefly reviewed the history of the town-approved \$80,000.00 feasibility study, investigation of potential locations and public feedback survey efforts. He noted the location of a lot behind Depot Square would be primarily for employees which in turn would afford greater parking access to shoppers, visitors

and tourists in the downtown. He told the members “it will also remove barriers for redevelopment of vacant or under-utilized properties in the District.” He told the members about the access problems with the steep slopes and grades around the GAR Hall and “after several attempts we gave up.” He went on to explain their access plan and finalized land acquisition purchase and sales agreement with 46 Grove Street and the plan to extend the Greater Downtown Commercial District to that lot. He noted 46 Grove Street was currently in the Family District (parking lots are not a permitted use in the Family District) and that the lot would become non-conforming if the amendment did not pass at Town Meeting.

Mr. Bartlett went on to say the original lot was a design for 80 vehicles which was later reduced to 60 vehicles. He described the park-like setting with improved drainage and a stormwater infiltration system. He noted a Southwest Regional Planning Commission Brownfield Grant application for mitigation of Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAH) mostly coal ash waste of railroad operations had been applied for. He described a landscape plan for the railroad corridor, a pedestrian bridge across the Nubanusit for easy access the downtown and minor improvements to Depot Park. “Even though we are adding impervious surface the net quality of the river will be improved” he said. In closing Mr. Bartlett clarified several plan points asked by the members and reviewed the lighting plan (6-foot poles down-lit except over the bridge where lighting must be up-lit).

Mr. Crocker asked if the town had any sense of the distance involved (lot to shopping areas). Mr. Bartlett replied “we have” and told the members the distance from the Fire Station parking lot to Little Roy’s was 760 feet, “and the distance from this new lot to Little Roy’s is 770 feet.” Mr. Crocker asked “what makes us think people are any more prone to park in this lot than the Fire Station lot? Mr. Bartlett advised that the new lot would be primarily for store and business owners in the downtown “freeing up parking in front of their places of business.”

A brief discussion about the consideration of metering parking spaces and alternatives for all-day parking followed. Mr. Bartlett told the members “there are many opinions as to whether or not that is an appropriate way to go.” He cited maintenance and operation issues as well as enforcement compliance. “Any push-back from the Police?” asked Mr. Crocker with Mr. Bartlett replying “not for the kiosk system but yes on the meters.”

Mr. Sterling asked again “are you looking for an endorsement statement from the EDA?” Mr. Bartlett replied “yes.” A motion was made/seconded (Hamilton/Kelly) to announce the EDA’s support of the Downtown Parking Lot project as described with all in favor.

Mr. Whitten noted a support statement for the amendment from the Business Support Group of the Peterborough Chamber of Commerce and read it to the members. He then asked if the members would like to approve the Chamber's letter and use it as their own. Mr. Crocker interjected "let's just speak for ourselves." Mr. Sterling added "we'll work on our own statement and review when we meet again." "When will that be?" asked Mr. Whitten. After a brief discussion the members agreed to meet on a date and time certain of April 28, 2015 at 7:30 a.m. in the Board of Selectmen's Meeting Room at the Town House. It was noted that the agenda for that meeting would be to vote to endorse the aforementioned Zoning Amendment once all members had a chance to review it as well as a review of a draft endorsement statement for the Downtown Parking Amendment.

Mr. Bartlett told the members the project would be financed by a 1.1 million bond and with the Greater Downtown TIF funds paying the principal interest on the load.

In closing Mr. Robinson expressed the relevant question of "do we need more parking?" Mr. Bartlett replied "think of looking at the experience of a visitor coming to town, off the highway into town and finding no central place to park. They are not left with a good experience." He also mentioned the new lot would remove barriers for redevelopment of vacant or under-utilized properties such as the Granite Block.

Mr. Whitten concluded "this is an excellent, excellent thing" adding "we all need to encourage people to support this and be advocates for this lot."

### **Pumpkin Festival in Peterborough Discussion:**

Mr. Sterling asked Pelagia Vincent to speak about this agenda item. Ms. Vincent summarized the events of the Pumpkin Festival last fall that resulted in the City of Keene not re-issuing their permit for 2015. "They are looking for a place to move and many towns have shown interest" she said.

A brief discussion about the event and its pluses and minuses followed with Ms. Vincent noting "being a best kept secret does not fill the stores and restaurants" adding "and the organizers would like to keep the event in the Monadnock region." Ms. Vincent looked to the members and asked "can we take it and use it to our benefit?" While noting the town does not have a college campus "there are still safety issues and the Police, Fire and First Responders would have a major role in the decision." She also told them the cost factor was in the vicinity of \$200,000.00 "their first blush if you will" adding "and that may be negotiable."

Mr. Robinson asked “what is the net benefit?” adding “we would need the money up front.” Ms. Vincent replied “I have not explored it completely, I was looking to see if there was any interest.” Mr. Robinson noted “we could at least investigate it” adding “but this is an *event* not a long term process for the community to grow. I think this belongs in the Chamber’s wheelhouse more than ours.” Mr. Crocker suggested a cost analysis citing the significant financial impact to the municipality. “I don’t get it” he said “we need more details to understand the economic benefit to this. I am open to hearing about it but for me, there are a lot of questions.”

Ms. Vincent told the members if they were interested in taking the idea to the next level Ruth Sterling of Sterling Communications could be invited to attend a meeting to answer questions. “I just want you to think about it so we are not looking back and saying *Shoot!*” adding “we have an opportunity to take the mountain down by a couple of inches. We all go to Keene, but they do not come here. This could be the continuation of a new tradition and frankly without insult to Keene, Peterborough can showcase it better. ”

With a smile Mr. Throop replied “I would like to make a few comments as a Keene resident.” He went on to note the problem were essentially affiliated with the college community “and the riots never impacted the festival in the Downtown, it remained a very family-oriented thing.” He went on to note the difference in the festival when it became a competitive event. “Before that it was a delightful event” he said.

Mr. Robinson suggested the town could have their own Pumpkin Festival regardless of where the Keene event relocated. Mr. Throop noted the reality of leadership and coordination such an event would require. “Organization and outreach combined with the strength, excitement and fabric of the community as well as the collaboration of different organizations would be involved” he said.

Mr. Robinson noted he was supportive of seeing an event like that come to town “but it is not for us” he said. He went on to say “this is a Chamber (of Commerce) thing with service clubs like the Lions and Rotary playing, not us.” Mr. Hamilton suggested the Chamber be asked if they were interested in inviting Ms. Sterling in for more information. Mr. Sterling replied “I will follow up with Ms. Sterling (no relation.”)

### **Other Business - Updates:**

*Planning Board Update:*

“Activity is up” said Mr. Throop adding “and there are some bigger things down the pike.” He spoke briefly about their Work Plan for regulatory modification for the year, specifically the Open Space Residential Development and Shoreland ordinances.

*Master Plan Steering Committee Update:*

Mr. Throop noted the Committee was working on a Vision Statement for the Master Plan. “They have started a draft and have a good sense of what they are looking for” he said adding “from there they will update the Economic Vitality Chapter and they may be looking for some assistance from the EDA.”

*Monadnock Art x Tech Update:*

Mr. Kelly reported was working on legal documents, bylaws and their lease. “It has taken time” he said. Mr. Bartlett noted he would follow up with the town attorney about the lease today.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 a.m. Next meeting Tuesday, April 28<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton  
Administrative Assistant