

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
GREATER DOWNTOWN TIF ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

June 27, 2016

MINUTES

Present: James Kelly, George Sterling, Peter Robinson, Adam Hamilton, Gary Armstrong and Chub Whitten

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

Chair Sterling called the meeting to order at 7:30 with Member and Staff introductions.

Minutes:

A motion was made/seconded (Sterling/Kelly) to approve the Minutes of May 24, 2016 as written with all in favor.

Chair Sterling then introduced Town Administrator Rodney Bartlett to speak to the group. Mr. Bartlett reviewed the Transportation Alternatives Program Grant (a federally funded program to focus on and manage projects for pedestrian, cyclist and other non-motorized forms of transportation). He noted the grant was for the construction, planning and design of infrastructure-related projects and systems providing safe routes for non-drivers and the focus would be on the Common Pathway from the north (Route 202 to Summer Street) through the Downtown and Riverwalk Parking lot to the south (Grove Street to Route 202). He also noted the conversion of the railroad corridors.

Mr. Bartlett told the group there was a 20% match (the maximum amount of the grant is one million dollars), that no additional TIF dollars would be used for the project and a letter of intent was due this Friday. “That is how you leverage an \$800,000 grant in a nutshell” he said. From the audience Barbara Miler asked “do you need any sort of approval or letter of support?” with Mr. Bartlett replying “if our letter of intent is accepted, yes.”

Also from the audience Willard Williams asked about the timeframe. Mr. Bartlett noted the decision would be made in October “so I would expect the funds late winter or early spring.”

Subcommittee Updates:

Marketing Work Group

Mr. Robinson updated the members on a video they were working on (having secured a commercial photographer and videographer) a tri-fold brochure (depicting a thumbnail sketch of what the town is all about and what it has to offer) and a series of Press Releases (employment and living opportunities, assets of the community, cultural events). He noted the move to pay attention to the existing businesses in town. “It is pointless to attract new business when you lose old ones” he said. Having met with representatives from NHBB, Millipore and Teleflex he identified a need for high skill manufacturing positions. “We need to investigate what those skills are and move that forward” he said.

Housing Work Group

Ms. Taylor gave the members a brief review of the ongoing complaint of “not enough housing at the entry level” as well as a subcommittee they had created to look into creating more affordable housing. She noted their efforts to collaborate with real estate agents (bank-owned properties), the schools (student programs that involve housing rehabilitation/renovations) developers who may want to give back and the Housing Trust people “so that we are not stepping on each other’s toes.”

Mr. Throop noted the town had applied for a grant through Plan New Hampshire (funded by the NH Finance Authority) for municipal technical assistance to allow the town to take on the project of creating a village node. “This will essentially assist us in developing a new zoning ordinance to create an overlay district that would allow for a higher density village” he said adding “Carl Ogilvie, Ivy Vann, and Sue Chollet were getting things under way to create that *middle housing* that is missing.

Broadband Work Group

Ms. Dietsch began with a review of the status of broadband in town. “Broadband is excellent in a cross section of town” she said adding “but we have quadrants that have poor, poor connections.” She reviewed the failed Legislation Bill #1180 (meaning a town may **not** bond broadband) noting “so we are going back and reviewing our contract, looking at what would be most advantageous to us according to the terms of the contract. She spoke briefly about poor (DSL) service (2 megabit per second (mbps) down and nothing up) as well as Comcast (75 mbps down and 20 up) “and if you don’t have that you may have an old box.” She noted

it would be a case of the squeaky wheel getting the oil. “Action on your own part may increase your service quality” she said. When someone in the audience asked how to get that information out to the public Ms. Dietsch replied “I was hoping there would be a reporter here.” Chair Sterling interjected “press releases” with Ms. Dietsch adding “I can write a letter to the Editor as well.” Mr. Throop suggested posting the information on the website.

Noting the TDS Telecom (a Broadband Internet Provider) billboard sign Chair Sterling told the members “Michael Henry has volunteered to figure out what their end game is.” Sean Ryan interjected “their primary reason is that they service Wilton.” He went on to tell the members the Chamber of Commerce had been very busy with events and conferences, many of which have had a limited showing from the Monadnock Region. He told the members Maria Contreras-Sweet (current Administrator of the Small Business Administration (SBA)) intended to do the Women’s Network Program again. “She is at the Cabinet level and wants to meet the women in the region” he said.

Mr. Ryan went on to note several people interested in starting a business in town including a new micro-brewery, a gluten-free bakery, a company that makes cheese from cashews.

Presentation:

Andy Peterson introduced Nashua Community College President Lucille Jordon. As he pointed out a location on Vose Farm Road (not far from the local High School) he told the members “we have been riding in our grandfather’s carriage for many years. It is time to regenerate this employment and job training entity in town.

Ms. Jordon gave a brief biography and told the members this opportunity excited her. “I live in Jaffrey and I love the region” she said “but we can do better.” She went on to speak briefly about education being the driver of the economy in small towns. “That *is* the engine of economic development” she said. She noted New Hampshire was ranked 49th in the nation for its number of students going on to college. “They may have been accepted to college but they did not walk through the doors” she said. She briefly reviewed Congresswoman Annie Kuster’s amendment (2014 Farm Bill) that would partner the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA-RD) with local communities to increase investment in rural community colleges. Once law Ms. Kuster partnered USDA-RD and the Community College System of New Hampshire (CCSNH). “This is more than job training, it is access to higher education” she said adding “We will start small, (criminal justice and precision manufacturing). We have a vision but we need the

support of the community and its industry.” Mr. Whitton also noted “2 Plus 2” programs where students who are serious about earning a four-year degree find that a community college may be a good place for them to start. A student can enroll in a community college with their eyes set on goals after their Associate’s Degree is earned. Through partnership with nearby universities and online programs student have a precise education direction that starts at community college and continues through the four-year degree program. “This goes for dual High School and College courses as well” he said. Ms. Jordon noted Nashua Community college had agreements with Keene State College, Plymouth State College and University of New Hampshire. She offered that additional information could be found on their website.

Ms. Dietsch interjected collaboration with the local maker-space (MAxT). Tracey Messer noted his support and enthusiasm. He noted Monadnock Community College from 1955 (<https://sites.google.com/site/monadnockcommunitycollege/>) and that David Parke had recently been in town. “He should have been interviewed, this is as much about the past as it is about the future” he said. Nicole MacStay asked about eventually incorporating Healthcare Programs as well as collaboration with Monadnock Community Hospital.

Ms. Jordon concluded by reiterating her excitement about the future. “It takes a village” she said adding “and I am committed. I live here and I want to see the spark that goes hand in hand with a community college.”

Subcommittee Updates – Continued:

EDA Strategic Committee:

Mr. Throop noted a meeting with Carmen Lorentz, Director of the Division of Economic Development for DRED. He noted their discussion on enhancing the workforce, attraction and retention of young talent and entrepreneurs. Noting a lack of people and cost of housing as specific barriers Mr. Ryan told the members “the state is there to guide us but we have to do the heavy lifting ourselves.” Ms. Dietsch told the members she walked away with some good marketing ideas about branding the area.

Refining the EDA Contractor Scope:

Mr. Galus emphasized his concern that “using the funds that we have should be very targeted.” He told the members “right now we need to define the project and the specific goals and then find the talent to address the specific things we want done.” From the audience both Ms. Dietsch and Mr. Ierna suggested they focus on two issues: marketing and job retention.

The brief discussion about the EDA Coordinator position that followed included housing (the Chamber of Commerce has offered office space), possible schedule assignment (a three-day a week person), budgeting the budget (hiring process, staffing the phones, development of a database, refining and prioritizing projects) and how the Small Business Association may be able to assist. Mr. Throop noted the importance of collaboration with existing businesses as well. It was also suggested that a member of the Master Plan Steering Committee attend EDA meetings. Mr. Ierna reminded the members the appropriation for the EDA Coordinator was only for one year. "There is no guarantee of a second year" he said adding "we have to think strategically to get support (develop advocates) to continue this effort."

Mr. Throop agreed noting "we have to pay attention to growing our current assets. Sean is right, recruitment is not working. We need to grow the assets we already have." Ms. Dietsch reiterated her "stickiness" theory and told the members about a brown bag lunch for telecommuters and entrepreneurs that was recently hosted at the Library. "We had about a dozen people and we expect more next time" she said. Mr. Whitten noted the tenant versus owner of buildings, how businesses may be more embedded in community when the building is bought. "It is a way of proving stickiness" he said. From the audience Dennis Callcut added "it is a model of develop, sell and retire. It will keep reinventing itself."

Mr. Callcut then asked about any hydro dam follow up. Mr. Bartlett noted a meeting with Steve Walker, Chris Anderson, Jen Runyon and Lori Barg. He spoke about grants from the state to develop these sites and a letter from the Town recognizing support for it. A brief discussion about the federal regulations on hydro power followed. It was noted changing such regulations was a slow process. "Federal is federal" said one member adding "it doesn't matter if it is the Hoover Dam or the one up the street."

Nominations for GDTIF and the EDA:

Mr. Throop noted "Jason Garland is the candidate for the EDA." Evidently Jason is a nice young man and an entrepreneur with grass roots and a good community spirit. As several other members commented on Mr. Garland, Mr. Hamilton suggested he would like to meet him first (he was not present). "I would like to hear him say why he is interested" he said. "I echo that" interjected Mr. Whitten. Chair Sterling replied "I guess we will look for Jason at a future meeting."

Mr. Throop went on to note "Jim Albridge is the candidate for the Greater Downtown TIF." Mr. Albright was present and gave a brief biography and his interest in the development of the Downtown and the Town Library. He concluded

“I would appreciate the chance to serve Peterborough.” After a brief banter of questions a motion was made/seconded (Gregg/Robinson) to recommend Mr. Albright to the GDTIF Committee. “This recommendation will be put before the Board of Selectmen for appointment” said Chair Sterling.

Other Business:

Future Topics/Speakers

The members agreed to keep the Hydroelectric Dams and the Community College on the front burners. Mr. Galus also recommended identifying and assessing the community’s healthcare needs.

The meeting adjourned at 8:48 a.m.

Next Meeting:

July 26, 2016

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton
Administrative Assistant