

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

January 9, 2018

MINUTES

Present: George Sterling, Chubb Whitten, Cy Gregg, Martha Schaefer, James Kelly, Barbara Miller and Adam Hamilton

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

Chair Sterling called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

Minutes:

A motion was made/seconded (Kelly/Hamilton) to approve the Minutes of November 28, 2017 as written with all in favor.

“Let’s move to strategic planning” said Chair Sterling as they awaited the arrival of Dawn Wivell from Firebrand International.

Strategic Planning Subcommittee Update – Goals Review:

Employer/Educator Forum Update: Mr. Throop began with a brief update of the Employer/Educator Forum. “We had 25 or so there with a good cross section of people who attended (manufacturing, educational, healthcare and retirement community) and the discussion focused on understanding and solving the problem of soft skills.” He noted discussion and review of the challenges kids face coming out of High School including expectations, ethics, attitude, critical thinking and problem solving skills (and) how to facilitate schools and employers working together so students are better prepared to enter the workforce. He also noted Franklin Peirce University is especially interested in forming partnerships with the towns and that Town Administrator Rodney Bartlett is leading that effort.

Mr. Throop gave the members a brief update on the progress made by recently hired consultant Mary Lou O’Neil. He told the members she had taken another employment opportunity and would be resigning. He noted the committee is considering other possibilities to filling the resource needs including the possibility of finding senior a graduate student or Senior in college who has a capstone project requirement to graduate.

He also noted the status of critical drivers of the Steering Committee (Mr. Galus out of town for several weeks and Mr. Smith with new employment that takes him out of town three weeks a month) and asked if there was a member willing to step up and join the Committee (consisting of himself, Mr. Galus, Mr. Smith and Kristen Bixby). “We could really use another hand with this” he said.

Chair Sterling asked about the time and work expectation of stepping up with Mr. Throop noting the Committee tried to meet at least once a week adding “this is really about getting employers and educators to work together, at the end of the day our job is to facilitate and try to keep things moving.” When asked what part of Ms. O’Neil’s commitment was fulfilled Mr. Throop replied she fulfilled her obligation with respect to helping to produce the December forum, adding “what remains is a piece of research focusing on identifying existing practices and programs in the region being carried out by both businesses and schools.” He continued “There are a few companies that appear to be having more success with entry level hiring and we want to understand what companies are doing that seems to be working.”

Strategic Marketing/Branding Project: Deferred to late in the meeting

Communications Subcommittee Update: Ms. Dietsch noted a meeting with Christine Halverson who “had presented a three-page summary of what we should doing with social media marketing.” She added “we need to make more people aware of our video and website and have a daily posting to social medias with a blurb” adding “not *more* than one, not *less* than one posting daily and a quarterly video.” She noted that an RFQ would be prepared to contract with someone to produce this work. The contractor would need to be someone who understands our target age group (between the ages of 28 and 40, looking to start a family or set up a business in town). A brief discussion about targeting particular demographics followed.

A motion was made/seconded (Whitton/Kelly) to authorize development of an RFQ to develop and implement a social media program with all in favor.

Other Business:

Chamber of Commerce Director Sean Ryan noted that February 1st the Business Breakfast Forum will feature a conversation with Taylor Caswell, Commissioner of the State of NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs, and William Arvelo, recently appointment Director of the Division of Economic Development for the State of NH. He noted the program is targeting leaders from a broad and diverse representation of the businesses, industries and people driving the economy. Their events cover the most relevant topics facing our Community, Region, and State, allowing members to make important and lasting connections for their organizations and their own professional development.

Cornucopia Project Executive Director Karen Hatcher announced they would be hosting a brainstorming session on January 31st for a new project called *Skittle*, where a shared kitchen, incubator, teacher and technical lab would be located in the Vose Farm Business Park. “There will be more to follow, we will be looking to engage the community” she said.

Strategic Marketing/Branding Project:

Dawn Wivell of Firebrand International introduced herself and gave the members a brief overview of the economic development branding and marketing project. She began with Phase I and a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) exercise where existing data, reports and interviews would be analyzed, gaps between internal and external influences, news sources and public opinions are identified. She noted the solicitation and gathering of additional resources (untapped and potential) and EPA, USDA and CDFA grant opportunities. Ms. Wivell suggested listing the town’s unique assets and community-wide common vision and noted the continued support of businesses and workers, new residents and the quality of life in town is the current momentum. She also noted many of the biggest obstacles (factors and influences) may be out of their control (specifically work force housing and Broadband availability).

Ms. Wivell concluded by discussing *deliverables* that included SWOT analysis, priorities, resources and a detailed action plan and the development of a vibrant ecosystem “which is critical to the health and growth of the town’s economy” she said. “Phase II is the execution” she said adding “involving your unique identity, develop your narrative and implement the action plan.”

Mr. Whitton responded with some of his thoughts on her presentation. He noted the arts community and educated population, He said that in spite of the workforce problems Peterborough is a good place to live and that efforts for securing a Community College campus and Fiber optic Broadband were positively ongoing. “2008 was tough on this town” he said adding “we lost a lot of jobs.” He noted the problems of location and connectivity of the state’s physical roadways to where the federal rest stops were.

A brief discussion about the unintended consequence of the 2008 closing (and now slated for demolition) federally funded rest stop in Antrim followed. “The consequences were not highlighted” said Mr. Ryan adding the closest federally funded rest stop was now off Route 93 North.

Mr. Kelly offered some positive input noting the successes the town has achieved. “We are not just talking about our problems” he said as he noted the efforts of supporting new businesses, the MAXT Maker Space and the formation of a town capital investment group.

Ms. Dietsch noted she had arranged several meeting with “some of the movers and shakers in town that Ms. Wivell might not otherwise meet.” Mr. Throop noted a good point was raised by both Mr. Whitton and Mr. Kelly mentioning the accomplishments we have and added the Vision Forum, Employer interviews and updates to the Master Plan. “And so much more is being done” interjected Mr. Kelly adding “a lot of research is underway.” Ms. Hatcher noted a cross pollination of information would be inherent as Mr. Wivell spoke with different individuals in the community.

Next Meeting: January 23, 2018

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton

Administrative Assistant