

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

January 10, 2017

MINUTES

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

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 introductions of the members and staff. “Good Morning” he said adding “we will begin with the first item on the agenda which is the Minutes.”

Minutes:

A motion was made/seconded (Kelly/Hamilton) to approve the Minutes of November 22, 2016 as written with all in favor.

Communications Proposal:

Mr. Throop requested this be deferred for the moment.

Economic Vitality Forum:

Mr. Throop told the members this forum (scheduled by the Economic Vitality Subcommittee of the Master Plan Steering Committee) was originally scheduled for January 26th has been changed to February 2nd from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m. with a meal served. He noted over 25 outreach and assessment plan questionnaires had been completed. “The purpose is to engage the information we have gained from them (what they identify as community assets and characteristics that support their businesses and organizations, what they see as challenges or obstacles, identifying potential collaboration opportunities and identifying and articulating Peterborough’s uniqueness and brand as a destination location). He noted the cross section of employers in industry, retail, healthcare and start-ups. He reviewed the Economic Development Tools graphic for local and regional economic development (*workforce, real estate and sites, quality of place, business attraction and retention, entrepreneurship and incubation spaces*).

Mr. Throop spoke briefly about models and approaches that have a good return on investment. Noting the 2.6% unemployment rate he told the members “that is practically full employment, it is hard to find people to work the jobs.” He then went on to review the context and activities of the forum noting “we had hoped to have a guest speaker (Jim Damicis, SVP Camoin Associates) do a presentation of the Economic Development Framework but the cost was prohibitive.” He

concluded by noting the importance of a good turnout at the event. “We will begin a marketing and participation blitz this week, we’ll request and RSVP because we are serving a meal” he said. When asked about the marketing effort Mr. Throop replied “we’ll have a banner, posters, send out e-mail invitations and use social media” adding “word of mouth is the most important and potent for of invitation.”

From the audience Ms. Miller asked “would you like people who did interviews to invite the fold they interviewed? Mr. Throop replied “that would be fabulous, a personal invitation makes a big difference.”

Affordable Housing:

Hope Taylor gave a brief update of the subcommittee’s activities. “It is a bit of a balancing act” she said adding “we are trying to get rid of the impediments. We have a list of empty buildings, neglected properties, potential partners and interested investors.” She went on to tell the members they’d had two investors walk away from opportunities due to the high cost of rehabilitation and the (zoning) regulations involving changes of use. A brief discussion about creating a clearer, town-based program or agenda to accommodate the housing needs of employers like New Hampshire Ball Bearing and Monadnock Community Hospital followed. “We need these businesses to stay” said Ms. Taylor adding “it is not so much recruitment as it is keeping these guys.” Ms. Taylor then gave an example using the former River Center building. “We measured and crunched numbers to figure out a way to make it happen. This building happened to have a third floor apartment that an Engineer said had to be taken out. We wrestle with that because it may not be good for an elderly tenant a young person would be fine with it. We have to look at the zoning regulations.” “That is life” interjected Ms. Dietsch. Ms. Taylor replied “no Jeanne, it is not working, it takes too much time.”

New Hampshire Ball Bearing’s Donna Hanley gave a brief report of their perspective. “We employ 665 people in the area and have 47 openings for labor positions. We are in a growth mode with no support or resources for affordable housing in town. People have to look elsewhere for affordable housing.” Ms. Hanley went on to say “we are dealing with Milleniels, a totally different group of people who think differently and want different things, including flexibility. They want to invest in short term living and not be tied to anything.” When a member asked what heh starting pay for the entry level jobs was Ms. Hanley replied “\$12.00 to \$17.00 dollars an hour with most starting at \$13.00an hour.

Referring to the discussion on changing the zoning regulations Chair Sterling suggested the impediments may be mislabeled. “It may not be zoning at all, it may be BOCA (Building Officials Code Administrators)” he said. Mr. Throop agree

noting “zoning is most frequently attacked but the town cannot tell a developer what goes on his lot, he has got to get his return on investment.” Mr. Throop then spoke briefly about incentive regulation such as the Traditional Neighborhood Overlay District (TND I, which has been adopted by the town) and Traditional Neighborhood Overlay District II (currently going through public hearings).

Ms. Taylor suggested a meeting with representatives from the EDA, The Zoning Board of Adjustment and the Planning Board. “Let’s get them together to discuss this and develop other solutions” she said. Mr. Throop noted the update of the Housing Chapter of the Master Plan had a start date as soon as January and that development of a regional housing coalition may be an option.

From the audience Tyler Ward suggested that problem may be out of the Town’s control. “I would love to see a place like the Guernsey Building be setup for micro-housing, but the definition of affordable housing needs to be clear.”

Mr. Garland noting navigating the code was difficult. “How to change things and how the people are informed as well as how people can use power as citizens for change is difficult. You can educate yourself but how the town works if confusing. I want to change things but I do not know where to go” he said. Mr. Throop replied “we spend most of our time trying to help people through that, we are accessible, please take that to heart.”

Ms. Miller asked about land trusts, how they were formed and if one existed in Peterborough. Mr. Throop replied “not today, the closest thing is the Contoocook Valley Housing Trust (CVHT) which was set up 30 years ago (coincidentally by the EDA trying to do what we are doing now).”

Ms. Taylor interjected “their mission is to accommodate the big employers and keep our kids in the area but they have not bought a house in 10 years.” A brief discussion about how the organization was funded (501-C3 status, grants and donations) followed. Mr. Robinson noted that if the CVHT had not bought a house in 10 years it may have missed opportunities in investing in their future. Ms. Taylor again suggested a meeting to “figure out a way to make it work” while Chair Sterling suggested a more formal town vision on implantation.

Mr. Ryan briefly reviewed the implications of Eastern Mountain Sports (EMS) closing and noted a repercussion of that is that LL Bean has recruited one family (who has left the area) with three more families (a total of 17 children) leaving. “It is a brain drain from here” he said.

Mr. Ward noted the importance of being able to navigate the town regulations with web searches and key words.

Communications Proposal Discussion:

Mr. Throop briefly reviewed the Communications Proposal Scope of Work completed December 12, 2016. This included the development, editing and publishing of at least three EDA-related articles per month for the EDA page of the Peterborough Town Website or the NEWS Section of the PeterboroughWorks.com site. To that end the proposal also stated Peterborough's Welcome Team member Karen Hatcher will work with the EDA Chairman and Town Staff create a quarterly newsletter and determine the content to be published; review related background materials to build content as needed; edit articles from Town Committees and community members and create and post article teasers (including edited articles, related photographs, graphics and videos) to the respective websites. The cost of this proposal was an estimated 10 hours a month at \$40.00 an hour. (\$4800.00/year).

When Chair Sterling asked "will we see other proposals as well?" Mr. Throop replied "yes, we need to get three." Mr. Hamilton noted his concern about the newsletter being the right medium and suggested "a start, a finish and an assessment" to see if it reached the desired audiences. Ms. Dietsch felt the proposal was "for a much more robust organization than what we have" adding "it seems appropriate if you are running a non-profit but we have a bunch of volunteers. 10-hours a month is a lot, I think it is too much. I would suggest every other month or one article per month." "I second that" echoed Mr. Garland adding "I question the traffic it will get as well." Ms. Dietsch went on to say "and it has a cost of \$4800.00 a year which is a concern. Our budget is \$5000.00 a year, for *everything.*"

A brief discussion about the demand for such a product and whether or not the money to support it would be well spent followed. Chair Sterling acknowledged the concerns but concluded "I have the exact opposite opinion. This would be a consistent outreach with content for general growth and support of the town." Mr. Garland noted he was willing to donate one hour a month for an article. He suggested he could use the minutes and add various topics.

From the audience Ms. Schaefer spoke about building a repository that is proactive. "Newsletters fall flat on their faces very quickly" she said and suggested other forums such as social media outreach for target populations. This led to a brief discussion about what Millennials want. Mr. Garland noted a great way to reach the Millennial population is via a simple Tweet. Ms. Dietsch concluding "this

is a newsletter for the residents of town, it is not focused on what Milleniels want. I am in favor of the project but I move we cut the budget in half.” Chair Sterling replied “you cannot move on anything.” Ms. Dietsch replied “then I would suggest one of you move to cut the budget in half.” She also noted “putting the minutes out to the public is not what this is about.” She briefly reviewed the format of putting a sidebar on every newsletter that revisits the goals of the EDA. “You have a brief article about something exciting going on in town, reinforcing the goals” she said adding “a good example is housing with the housing goals in the sidebar, the next month you move it along with something else.” She also noted that the newsletter could conform to all media outlets (paper, tweet, Facebook, blogs). Ms. Taylor interjected “just make it short and sweet using bullet points.” Chair Sterling asked “is there any motion regarding this?” Mr. Garland replied “I move we talk about it some more.” Mr. Hamilton agreed adding “I am not sure about the medium.”

Mr. Ryan asked “was this a Request for Proposal (RFP)?” Mr. Throop replied “no, this came out of a small meeting we’d had to make sure we were not clashing with anything else being done.” He went on to reiterate “we will need to get three RFPs.”

“Sounds like we need more time with this” said Chair Sterling as he suggested they continue the discussion at their meeting on the 24th. He concluded by encouraging Mr. Garland, Mr. Hamilton and all the members to hammer out their ideas so they could get to something everyone is comfortable with.

Main Street Bridge Closure:

“This is slated for 2018 and will have a significant impact on the Downtown merchants and general public as well” said Chair Sterling. Ms. Miller told the members and the audience that the Board of Selectmen would be addressing the subject at their meeting tonight. She mentioned discussion would revolve around four options (scenarios) “two with pedestrian bridges, one with a wider bridge and one-sided sidewalk and the last with a two-sided sidewalk.” When Mr. Kelly asked if the bridge would be closed entirely Ms. Miller replied “yes, if we close the bridge completely it will only take one construction season and be a lot less painful for the town overall. There will also be a cost saving, but we are highly concerned with the merchants, they are a big priority.”

Mr. Ryan cited a meeting with United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) on January 12th to discuss the possibility of securing a business retention grant (a source of Chamber income to accelerate the promotion and development of tourism, infrastructure and business) It is a specific type of money” he said as he noted that they had also been in in contact with other towns who had faced the

similar situation (Middlebury, VT and Portsmouth, NH) of a main corridor being shut down. He also noted the Onlyinyourstate.com webpage that listed Peterborough as the first of “The 10 Towns you need to visit in New Hampshire in 2017.”



Peterborough is the perfect place to kick up your feet after a hike on the famous Mount Monadnock. The tourist town in southern New Hampshire is gorgeous and full of great local businesses.

“We need to build on that” he said adding “people hear the construction and detour around it, we need to make it a curiosity.” Ms. Schaefer agreed suggesting the group start their campaign to change that mentality *now*. Mr. Ryan reviewed some of Portsmouth’s and Middlebury’s strategies concluding they need to increase the flow of visitation to town so when it drops due to construction “we do not drop below our necessity.”

Community College Update:

Mr. Throop began with “the last I heard there have been lots of calls to the Chancellor of the Community College System.” Ms. Dietsch interjected “and now he is coming to visit.” She also noted a meeting in Concord where Nashua

Community College's President Ms. Jordon would be presenting additional data of building costs etc.

Other Business:

Ms. Dietsch gave a brief overview of two meetings in Concord on January 12th "One is at 2:00 p.m. and the other is at 2:30 p.m. The first meeting is to delay the second bill (allowing municipalities to bond Broadband) the second bill is to allow bonding."

A brief discussion about bonding, Comcast's network, quality of lines, percentage of coverage and how to gain more negotiating leverage (contract is up for renewal in 2018) followed. Mr. Throop noted the Recreation Department's van was available to transport interested supporters (12 seats). The members also briefly discussed individuals they would reach out to in the surrounding communities of Dublin, Hancock, Jaffrey, Antrim, Greenfield and Harrisville.

Mr. Ryan concluded the meeting by noting there were 17 Hiway/Biway loops in New Hampshire "and not a single one in the Monadnock area." He reviewed the Chamber's plan to rectify that.

Next Meeting:

January 24, 2017 at 7:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton
Administrative Assistant