

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

January 23, 2018

MINUTES

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

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

Vice Chair Hamilton called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m. “I don’t believe introductions are necessary” he said.

Minutes:

A motion was made/seconded (Whitten/Kelly) to approve the Minutes of January 9, 2018 as written with all in favor.

Communication Subcommittee Update and Review of RFQ:

Ms. Dietsch reviewed the decision made last meeting to make people more aware of our video and website by having a daily posting to social media (Facebook and Twitter) for greater visibility. “This will consist of a daily blurb and a 60-90 second video quarterly” she said. When asked about potential redundancy and people opting-out Ms. Dietsch replied “not *more* than one, not *less* than one posting daily and the quarterly video.” As Ms. Dietsch told the members an RFQ for the development of the social media promotional site was being developed someone asked if a salary range had been determined. Mr. Throop noting “that will depend on the qualifications, we’ll get a sense of it then” adding once we select the top candidates we will refine the proposal.” A brief discussion about tracking opt-outs followed. Karen Hatcher noted Facebook was evolving and business-related content was taking more a back seat to people orientation. Ms. Hatcher asked if the individual responsible for the daily posting might monitor the traffic and opt-outs. “That is not a good match of responsibility” interjected Ms. Dietsch adding “besides, that is what Christine (Halverson) does.” “So do we need to vote?” asked Mr. Hamilton with Ms. Dietsch replying “that would be lovely.”

A motion was made/seconded (Kelly/Smith) to approve an RFQ to implement a social media program consisting of a daily blurb and a 60-90 second video quarterly with all in favor.

Before moving on to the next agenda item Mr. Gregg noted two items. He announced SOLPAC (a CPAP cleaning device) was moving their call/support center to town (perhaps in the recently vacated SDE building, perhaps in the Vose

Farm Road Business Park) “I am not sure where” he said adding “but either way this is good news and says a lot about Peterborough being business friendly.” He also noted recent press coverage on the Planning Board’s amendment to the zoning ordinance and the adoption of Form-Based Code which included a ban on *all* drive-thrus in town (currently drive-thrus are permitted for pharmacies and banks). Mr. Gregg noted “I don’t think it does us any good to ban all drive-thrus” and added Planning Board Chairman Ivy Vann had indicated the Planning Board was going to withdraw the drive-thru ban from the new ordinance “but bring it back next year as a standalone.” He added “we should be looking at this, I don’t think it is particularly good.” Mr. Throop noted the Planning Board had a Workshop on Saturday and was scheduled to meet again on Monday, January 29th “and we expect them to remove drive-thrus for the final draft” adding “the message has been heard, the drive-thrus will come out and they will go with the original language.” He concluded the first public hearing on the new ordinance is scheduled for February 19th.

Strategic Marketing/Branding Project:

Fire Brand International’s Dawn Wivell presented Power point slides that reviewed Phase I of her economic development branding and marketing project, a SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats). Current *strength* responses included being the greenest town in New Hampshire (“this needs substantiation” she interjected). Mr. Whitton noted an EPA Green Power Partnership and New Hampshire Wood Energy Council awards for the state’s largest municipal solar array with a purchase agreement with town for renewables and conversion to pellets stove heating. Also noted were the town’s intellectual capital, vast opportunities to be involved in the community and the Chamber of Commerce’s strong presence and vitality. “Peterborough is a beautiful, safe New England town that has sustained itself through financial hardships. There is a sense of peace and pride here” she said. A brief discussion about the unique culture, lifestyle and diversity of the town followed.

Ms. Wivell continued with a review of current *weaknesses* (insufficient workforce housing, mediocre school system, lack of collaboration between businesses and the arts) and discussed how to get more people engaged with suggestions for an arts council, a home sharing program and getting parents engaged in innovative thinking, leadership at the policy making at the school level. The members discussed the disconnect between the older decision makers and attracting young families, a lack of event, hotel and conference space and the lack of collaboration

between the many arts organizations “instead they are competing against each other” said Ms. Wivell.

The members went on to discuss vision and communication as potential weaknesses as well as the lack of a pipeline of up and coming businesses. A brief discussion about the role of the MAXT, incubator spaces and other businesses that harbor smaller retailers followed. It was noted the workforce situation comes up over and over again. “It is a chicken and egg kind of thing” said Ms. Wivell adding “and it is not just a Peterborough problem.” The members then briefly discussed efforts to collaborate with the school system and area and regional businesses for programs preparing graduating students entering the workforce. “The group is working on addressing the soft skills these kids lack” said Mr. Throop. Ms. Dietsch suggested they continue their efforts with the local business interviews adding “you have to chase the seedling businesses.” Ms. Hatcher pointed out the non-profit community have not been recognized. “We are businesses” she said.

Current *opportunities* included the renewable energies already mentioned as well as light manufacturing, healthcare and food manufacturing. Lori Barg’s hydro power plant and the Cornucopia/SKITTL project were recognized as was a five-star Recycling rollout by the Town coming in April.

The members discussed the potential for the adoption of form based code at Town Meeting, the Complete Street program and walkable neighborhoods. Mr. Gregg noted the TIF Districts with Mr. Throop advising those funds may be used to upgrade pedestrian and bike accesses.

The members concluded with current *threats*. Ms. Hatcher noted a lack of collaboration between the arts and the town and the competition versus the collaboration between art groups. Ms. Wivell noted the lack of high speed internet in certain areas of town, the lack of continuing education opportunities, the physical location of the town in relation to trucking routes and the general economy and loss of businesses. These losses lead to empty office spaces and absentee landlords.

Ms. Schaefer told the members a Downtown Merchant’s Group had been formed and had met to address the Main Street Bridge project. She noted apathy and negativity amongst some of the merchants and a reluctance by some to open their establishments on Sundays. “I am not sure how to change that attitude” she said adding “it is like extending a helping hand and the door slams.” Mr. Gregg explained that some of the merchants were sole proprietors who are not interested in change.

In closing, the members discussed a different take on the internet problem the town experiences. Ms. Dietsch noted three internet providers with excellent service in town. “It is the extension to the rural areas that is difficult” she said adding “we don’t want people to think *oh Peterborough had terrible internet service* and not want to move here. We may have done ourselves a disservice.” Ms. Hatcher agreed noting a different take on the problem by emphasizing focus to expand the internet service. “Shifting the story will make a lot of difference” she said.

Ms. Wivell summarized by emphasizing the opportunities and the importance of incubation, how small at home business have been supported and have grown large enough to move into retail and office spaces in town. “We need more stories like that” she said.

Other Business:

Ms. Dietsch noted there would be a request of the EDA for a \$2000.00 sponsorship for Greenerboro in the spring “but we can talk about that next time” she said.

Next Meeting: February 27, 2018

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton

Administrative Assistant