

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

January 31, 2017

MINUTES

Present: James Kelly, George Sterling, Jason Garland, Martha Schaefer, Adam Hamilton, Chubb Whitton, Barbara Miller 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 a.m. “Good Morning, I don’t believe introductions are necessary this morning so let’s start.” As he looked around he noted “we do not have a full Board so I will appoint Martha Schaefer to sit.”

Minutes:

A motion was made/seconded (Hamilton/Kelly) to approve the Minutes of January 10, 2017 as written **with** all in favor.

Economic Vitality Forum Reminder:

Mr. Throop reminded the members and audience of the forum scheduled for Thursday, February 2nd. “We currently have 84 RSVPs” he said. “What a great turn out” replied Mr. Whitten.

Request for Support - Peterborough Tourism Promotion:

Peterborough Chamber of Commerce Director Sean Ryan began by citing 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).

Mr. Ryan also spoke about attending The *Discover New England Annual Tourism Summit and International Marketplace*. He told the group “this is the only New England travel trade event where New England hospitality businesses are able to meet directly with international tour operators and receptive operators who arrange trips for tens of thousands of international travelers annually.” He went on to say meetings between international buyers and New England suppliers have been arranged and each year Discover New England (DNE) hosts 80+ international tour operators and US receptive operators. These individuals meet with New England tourism representatives representing lodging properties, attractions, destination marketing organizations and state tourism offices to learn about travel products, establish relationships and initiate contracts for both group tours and foreign

independent travelers. Mr. Ryan told the group “DNE is a joint promotional program between the six New England States” adding “and this year it is meeting in New Hampshire at the Omni Mount Washington Resort in Bretton Woods.”

Referring to the DNE Summit handouts he had distributed, Mr. Ryan noted a list of the 2016 Summit *Buyer* attendees and the Summit *Supplier* attendees. “Those highlighted on the Buyer list are coming to town on February 8th for a visit and to tour of our town” he said adding “they are interested in us as a destination.” Mr. Ryan pointed out one of the visitors is Virgin Holidays Ltd. (UK) was a transatlantic tour company within the Sir Richard Branson’s Virgin Group and his contact, Alison Leslie (with whom he will be meeting) reports directly to him.

Mr. Ryan told the members only three towns in New Hampshire (Portsmouth, Meredith and Hillsborough) have an actual booth for distributing information at this type of trade event. He told the members his request was for \$1095.00 to purchase a tradeshow booth to promote Peterborough’s tourism, lodging, retail and restaurants. “I can give you more in writing if you need it” he said. From the audience Barbara Miller asked “is this a shared (Town and Chamber) expense?” Mr. Ryan replied the request would cover the cost of the booth and having a representative to man it. He noted he would be at the event but his time would be spent in mini 15-minute meetings with the international companies and corporations. With a smile he noted “it is almost like speed dating.” He concluded by noting the Chamber would pay for his hotel and \$650.00 registration fee. When Mr. Whitten asked when the event was Mr. Ryan replied “the event is April 24-26 “but we have to have payment in by February 24th.

Jeanne Dietsch stood and spoke in favor of this request. Citing the handout she had distributed at the beginning of the meeting she said “the items on the agenda for today’s meeting are in blue and follow the goal or task they are related to.” She then pointed out the goal of increasing tourism revenues by 25% “is a very important goal” and that she strongly recommended the purchase of a booth. Barbara Miller echoed that with “I personally agree.”

Mr. Ryan told the members “we need to have identified the concept of what we are about and what we can handle before the (Main Street) Bridge goes down. Our primary focus is being a fit for the foreign independent travelers. They stay longer, looking to mix into that quintessential New England feel. They want to take a bit of New Hampshire back with them and they come here with money.” Noting a timing issue with their next scheduled meeting, Mr. Whitten interjected “this is an action item for today.” Mr. Ryan agree noting not only was the EDA meeting schedule an issue “they limit the booths to 15 spaces and 9 of them are gone.”

A motion was made/seconded (Hamilton/Kelly) to approve the request for \$1095.00 to purchase an event/trade booth with funds from the appropriate source with all in favor. "Thank you for this investment" said Mr. Ryan.

Main Street Bridge Closure Discussion:

Mr. Ryan told the members he'd been working with the Small Business Association (SBA) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) on a business retention program. "When the bridge goes down it cuts off a life line to the Downtown" he said adding "we are looking to promote the businesses on the shoulder and off season months (November 1st to April 30th). He invited the members to assist in developing programs and joining a committee at the Chamber. He noted several small businesses were struggling, some behind on their Chamber dues. "We're holding on to them to keep them connected" he said. Mr. Ryan concluded by noting they had met with Senator Jeanne Shaheen's Office and is in the process of applying for a USDA business retention grant.

Request for Support - Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for Website and Video Promotion:

Ms. Dietsch spoke briefly about the RFQ as the Town is seeking the service of an Internet Marketing Services Provider to assist with the development and implementation of a Search Engine Optimization program.

The *Contract Value and Terms* portion of the RFQ had been left blank with Ms. Dietsch explaining she was not quite sure about the appropriate amount of money to spend. She suggested they speak to a specialist about the return on investment adding "but I would say \$12,000 would be the number for this target market which is aimed at the vibrant home and telecommuter population generating new business in town." She concluded by noting the town video had been completed and could be seen at Peterboroughworks.com

Ms. Dietsch then asked Mr. Throop what their next course of action should be. Mr. Throop replied "an endorsement." Mr. Whitten asked "and leave the *Contract Value and Terms* blank?"

A brief discussion about the budget followed. Ms. Dietsch noted there were some funds from last year's budget and reiterated she thought \$12,000 would be an appropriate number. Mr. Whitton cautioned "on setting a bar" and asked again "are we going to leave it (*Contract Value and Terms*) blank?" "it is up to the committee" replied Mr. Throop.

When Ms. Miller asked if consideration would be given to local providers Ms. Dietsch replied “consideration will be given to *good* providers.” Ms. Schaefer asked about the time frame (calendar or fiscal year) so that a money framework could be established. Ms. Dietsch noted the setup would be expensive but they also needed to consider ongoing expenses. Mr. Kelly noted it may have behooved the members to get the handout in advance and when he asked what was meant by ongoing expenses Ms. Dietsch gave an example that included search engine optimization using artificial intelligence and constantly changing algorithms. She concluded “it is like running an ad in a magazine, it costs money.”

Ms. Dietsch apologized for not having sent the handout to the members prior to the meeting “but we have been talking about this since building the website last May.”

Mr. Hamilton noted the RFQ was just that, a request. “We send it out and get proposals but there is no commitment” he said. Mr. Throop agreed adding “and there is no obligation to accept any of them.”

A motion was made/seconded (Garland/Hamilton) to endorse the RFQ as written with all in favor.

Mr. Throop suggested thinking about a small committee to review RFQ noting “Steve (Lipofsky) is willing to help.”

Strategic Marketing Plan RFQ Discussion:

Ms. Dietsch told the members “this is not ready to discuss, we hope to have it pulled together for next month.”

EDA Communications Discussion:

Chair Sterling began by noting “I don’t think I articulated what it was we are looking for.” He noted the best way to describe it was through the example of a similar small town’s website. “The town is McMinnville, Oregon, near Portland” he said adding “they have a newsletter and a blog and tweet out information to multiple media outlets. It is very compelling and interesting.”

Ms. Dietsch noted she had the authority to make anyone an author on Peterborough’s Facebook page. “Anyone can post to the page but it shows up you are an author” she said. She suggested everyone keep that mind “until we get something more elaborate.” Mr. Whitten cautioned about letting a blog take away from the EDA website. “I know I am one of the last holdouts but I am not a Facebook user” he said.

Mr. Kelly asked about the RFQ from Karen Hatcher they had reviewed last month. Mr. Sterling noted Ms. Hatcher has taken a new job. Mr. Throop said that he had spoken with Ms. Hatcher and she indicated she would not be able to take on the project.

Affordable Housing Discussion:

Chair Sterling began “it says affordable housing but I am going to refer to it as sustainable housing.” He then asked Hope Taylor to give the members an update. Ms. Taylor first thanked Chair Sterling for the clarification. “Changing *affordable* to *sustainable* is a semantics matter.” She went on to note while the subcommittee had been quite busy “it may have been too little, too late.” She told the members they had met with New Hampshire Ball Bearings (NHBB) to discuss what they really needed in terms of housing as well as the potential use of the land around the plant that could be used for housing. “We got word back that they are not interested in being landlords, not alone or in collaboration with others” she said. Mr. Taylor then spoke about the efforts and good work of the Contoocook Housing Trust (which was created by the EDA 30 years ago) “but they have not bought a house in 10 years.”

Ms. Taylor also noted Great Bridge Properties (providing housing for working families and seniors and NeighborWorks (creating opportunities for people to live in sustainable homes) “but we just found out NeighborWorks is not interested.” Mr. Throop interjected “sustainable housing is a regional issue and we need to start looking at it that way.” He added “there are funds available to draw on but it makes sense to reach out to other partners.” He suggested a regional collation of housing groups and businesses to address the need.” He noted “there are some altruistic developers out there but you need to find the land and put the project together. Do not expect the market to do it for you.” Mr. Throop went on to speak briefly about public /private partnerships to identify and work on a specific project, that might involve employers in town, possibly a community land trust, and other stakeholders. He concluded by noting “there are a number of these types of coalitions in the state and some have had good success” mentioning the Upper Valley as an example. “We may not have to reinvent the wheel” He said.

When Mr. Whitten asked about NHBB’s potential to donate land for housing a brief discussion about the two parcels the business owns on either side of their plant followed. It was noted the parcels are zoned Business/Industrial and that there may be a reluctance to take away land allocated for business and industry. There was also a brief discussion about the permitted uses in the district, changing the zoning to allow housing specific to employees, how to enforce said housing, and ownership and management of the units. As Mr. Throop began to note “one

possible issue we need to work around is...” both he and Mr. Whitten said “spot zoning” at the same time.

Noting the idea was worth discussing Mr. Throop told the members the deadline for petition articles was February 8th and added “but there could be special town meeting to consider this later in the year.”

Mr. Ryan noted a multi-purpose compound (office, retail, lodging and residential) created in 1999 in Lebanon, New Hampshire. “The land is owned by Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center and Dartmouth College” he said. “It is called Centerra Park and is managed by Centerra Park Ltd. Who has a 99-year lease.” Chair Sterling interjected “we have another great model right here in town.” He spoke briefly about Akhil Garland’s small housing development at the Well School. “It is just the cutest thing, tiny little houses that all face each other. It is a true community.” EDA member Jason Garland (Akhil’s son) offered to show the members around.

Community College Update:

Mr. Whitten told the members he had some information that he was not authorized to share. “They have done a complete plan of the facility, it is great, I’m sorry I can’t share any more with you” he said.

Mr. Whitten confessed he was used to things happening “a lot quicker.” “The good news is that they have spent money and have a regionally local contractor. That is all I have right now. Your outreach to Ross Gitell (Chancellor of the Community College System of New Hampshire) has delivered some fruit but the progress has been painfully slow for me.” Chair Sterling interjected “but positive.”

New EDA Membership Discussion:

Mr. Throop asked the members to begin to think about recruitment of potential new members. Mr. Hamilton asked “are we looking for people a particular skill set?” Chair Sterling replied “we are looking for those who are committed and enthusiastic.” Mr. Throop added “someone with marketing skills would not be bad.”

Ms. Miller suggested David Hansel a gentleman who just moved to Legacy Woods in Town, “he is very community oriented” she said. Mr. Ryan asked “specifics?” Chair Sterling replied “a high-tech manufacturer” with Mr. Whitten noting “a larger player would be great.” Ms. Miller relied “how about Donna Hanley?” (NHBB).

From the audience Joe Ierna asked if he may make a suggestion. He went on to note agenda items 6 through 8 were all interconnected.

VI: Request for support: RFQ for Website and Video promotion

VII: Discussion: Strategic Marketing Plan RFQ

VIII: Discussion: EDA Communications

“I suggest you use a model I have seen where you bring in a consultant to train town employees to institutionalize the use of social media and marketing so it is consistent (on your own).” He told the members “that would be better than having a consultant in for a time and then having them gone.” Mr. Throop noted the problem was that the Town House is not heavily staffed to begin with. “It is a question of how much more the staff can do with current responsibilities without looking for more resources” he said adding “it is not that this is not a priority, we just have to make sure we have the capacity to do that.”

Also from the audience Tracy Messer introduced himself and thanked the members for their good work. He briefly noted the importance of coordinating the Mobile Walking Tour of the Downtown with goals of the future as well as the past. He also noted the Thornton Wilder Society and the plan for their Third International Conference to be held in Peterborough in 2018.

Mr. Messer told the members he had a great interest in community colleges and he’s researched the history of Monadnock Community College (established in 1965). Chair Sterling asked if Nashua Community College was aware of this history with Mr. Whitten replying “I am not sure, I will check.”

From the audience Dennis Calcutt suggested Dan Weisick for the membership. “He is a social marketing/strategic Marketing expert” he said.

In closing Mr. Ryan noted Nancy DuBosque, Regional Director of the New Hampshire Small Business Center was a guest speaker at their Breakfast Forum (Thursday, Feb.2 at 8:00 a.m.) and invited all to attend.

Next Meeting:

February 28, 2017 at 7:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton, Administrative Assistant