

# THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

February 23, 2016

## MINUTES

**Present:** Cy Gregg, Hope Taylor, James Kelly, George Sterling, and Jeanne Dietsch.

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

Chair Sterling called the meeting to order at 7:35 a.m.

### **Minutes:**

No Quorum, postponed to March

Chair Sterling began with a brief presentation of the **10 Basic Responsibilities of an EDA Member**. This PowerPoint included *General Expectations* (knowing the vision, mission and objectives, performing duties responsibly and honestly, suggesting suitable nominees for the EDA, attending meetings, avoiding conflicts and maintaining independence while expanding collaboration), *Recruitment and Orientation of new Board Members* (invite potential new members to meeting or committee work, explain what an ideal Board would look like); *Expectations* (to establish and approve a long-term strategic plan with annual review, educate the townspeople and take leadership roles in the committee on a project); *Review the Strategic Plan* (understand the strengths, weaknesses threats and opportunities of Peterborough's economy); *Organizational Planning* (consulting with stakeholders, providing business plan and budget recommendations to the Board of Selectmen, invention and retirement of committees as appropriate to implement the business plan); *Business Resources/Acumen* (expansion of EDA outreach and networking skills, providing personal expert advice when called upon). Chair Sterling then reviewed the 2015 projects (Broadband, Outreach, Marketing & Website, Strategic Planning, hiring an Economic Development Specialist) as well as potential projects for 2016 (Rural Development and Community Development Block Grants, revolving loan fund, starter worker housing, blogger, tax rate lobbying in Concord). He spoke about the Committee's public standing and the EDA member's role as an ambassador, booster and advocate to ensure a healthy and accurate public image. He noted the importance of members identifying themselves as resident (not EDA members) when speaking publically on town issues. He concluded with *Transparency and Accountability* (publish and annual report, post all public meetings) *Membership Development and Sponsorship*

(always on the lookout for new members), and *Governance Principles* (fairness, transparency, effectiveness, sensitivity, remaining non-partisan).

When Ms. Taylor asked if there had been any interest from new people, Chair Sterling replying “I have made a few inquiries but have not heard back, we need to fill your spot and Jeff’s (Crocker) spot.”

Mr. Kelly told the members he was a member of the Monadnock United Way (meeting in Keene). “The number one purpose is to create collaboration to up economic gain. That is the number one goal of the Committee” he said. He spoke briefly about identifying and using capabilities in the region and participating in that group as a representative of *this* committee. He asked “do you want me to continue to do so? Or is it a waste of time?” Ms. Taylor interjected “it is certainly not a waste of time, not at all.” Mr. Kelly noted the group was seeking fundamental improvement from the bottom up and not the top down in areas of energy and food consumption. “We are not looking for just any old business to come and up our hiring and improve the performance of our community” he said adding “we need to create something new here.” Mr. Throop encouraged the members to be ambassadors to committees like this one. “Focus on Peterborough but do not act as an island” he said. Chair Sterling added “we unilaterally endorse the idea of any EDA member being on a committee like this and speaking to EDA goals and objectives.” The members agreed there were *too* many committees and groups with overlap. Ms. Dietsch noted “to the point you have trouble getting people to meetings” adding “and that brings us to the topic most critical to our plan and that is achievement in the hiring process.”

Mr. Throop updated the members on the petition warrant article for an Economic Development Specialist. He noted the Town Administrator and the Board of Selectmen were looking for input on whether to file for a full time position with a salary of \$70,000 or a contract position at a salary of \$40,000. Mr. Throop questioned how successful a \$70,000 ask would be noting “the smaller amount may have a better chance of going through the Town Meeting process.” Ms. Dietsch interjected “it is important the position is for more than one year” adding “and I think we should up it to \$48,000. It (the amount) doesn’t look that different and it is a more reasonable amount to get a good person in.” Ms. Miller asked “is it part time?” Mr. Throop replied “that is not stipulated, it is project based.” Ms. Miller cautioned about how the position was worded citing labor laws and potential audits. “I think that is why we went with Jack Dugan, he was a contractor” she said. A very brief discussion about contractors versus employee versus level of direction for tasks followed.

A motion was made/seconded (Dietsch/Taylor) to file the petition for an ask of \$48,000 for a minimum two-year position with all in favor. Mr. Throop noted that since there wasn't a quorum, an informal recommendation would be appropriate and he would draft the petition and return it to the Chair to obtain the required signatures. All present were in agreement and Chair Sterling suggested the petition be forwarded to all members of all town Boards and Committees.

Ms. Dietsch went on to review the expectations of what can happen at their meetings. "It is sort of a reporting meeting now, I would like to see us move to working meetings" she said adding "achieve goals by breaking into committees during the meeting, during our time together. If we do we will make more progress and achieve what we are trying to do." She noted the importance of guest speakers. "They are valuable" she said "I don't want to diminish that but after they talk for 40 minutes not much else can get done." Chair Sterling replied "I think that is a very good idea. We can still have committee reports delivered as a short white paper and part of a Consent Agenda." Mr. Gregg noted "or dedicate a good portion of the meeting to a particular committee to report out" with Ms. Dietsch adding "that would require them to meet and accomplish something beforehand." With a smile Mr. Gregg replied "under the gun so to speak."

Ms. Miller disagreed about the guest speakers and as an example cited the Transcript Dam. "About breaching it, opinions are strong" she said adding "but perhaps we could get someone in to speak about hydropower and producing electricity from the dam to sway the Board of Selectmen." Ms. Dietsch noted the Community Conversations programming sponsored by the Monadnock Center of History & Culture and noted the discussions in meetings should be like those "but business oriented for the EDA." Mr. Kelly interjected "business specificity" with Ms. Taylor adding "Peterborough-centric." Ms. Miller told the members a dam/hydropower specialist could be invited specifically to a Board of Selectmen's meeting but felt the information should be vetted elsewhere as well. Without missing a beat but not realizing what she said Ms. Dietsch replied "I am interested in this dam idea!" getting a chuckle from the members.

Ms. Dietsch went on to tell the members about an educational and networking event she had attended sponsored by *Arts Alive!* She told them the state's Division of Travel and Tourism (an extension of DRED) was there to offer suggestions for regional businesses and organizations on how to partner and promote themselves, with event packages through the state's resources to build their business skills and capacity to network with other groups in the community. "We have so many capabilities" she said adding ""we need to get the broader community in the habit of coming together."

“I agree” interjected Mr. Kelly. Ms. Dietsch also noted the travel agent services of Alexander and Roberts located in Keene. “They do elite tours” she said adding “for years they have brought Americans to Europe and now they are bringing Europeans to America.” She gave an example of how a tourist may enjoy a day package/specialty tour in Peterborough (a play at the Peterborough Players, a tour of The Basket Factory, attending an auction with Charlie Cobb). Mr. Throop suggested creating a list of potential participants and getting the list to DRED so they may come in and work with them. “A stranger tourist may fall in love with our area and want to invest in it” he said. Ms. Dietsch interjected “I have a different idea of what our role is” adding “the EDA knows the needs, we have to talk to each other to identify the opportunities and take advantage of them ourselves.” “Act as a convener” suggested Mr. Throop with Ms. Dietsch replying “yes, exactly.”

Ms. Miller asked “is that the sort of work the EDA Coordinator would be doing?” Ms. Dietsch replied “yes, working with DRED.” She went on to note “Sean (Ryan, Chamber of Commerce Director) is working on it as well.” A brief discussion that included everyone being on the same page with specific roles for research and marketing work, collaborative efforts and outreach followed.

Moving along Chair Sterling asked Ms. Dietsch for an update of Broadband. Ms. Dietsch spoke briefly about Representative Peter Leishman’s effort to reconsider House Bill 1180 (an act relative to the authority of towns to issue bonds for the extension of Internet service). “It did not go through the committee” she said.

When Ms. Taylor asked for some history of the process, of how it came to be that municipalities could not bond this type of service a brief discussion about RSAs, the logic of politics, lobbying powers of current providers (“it is the nature of a monopoly to protect itself at all cost” said Mr. Throop), Home Rule *and* the Constitution followed.

Noting two recent state-wide outages experienced by Comcast Mr. Throop told the members “SDE was still up so FastRoads was up.” Ms. Dietsch added DSL was not effected either.” Mr. Kelly asked “where are we in that effort? Can you give us just a headline of an update?” Mr. Throop replied Mr. Gallus and Mr. Hubberman were working on a request for information that would go out to four or five providers so we will wait to see what they come back with” he said. “That is a great next step” said Ms. Miller adding “it makes good sense.” Ms. Dietsch wrapped up her report by noting an open letter she wrote to the Business & Industries Association as well as the members (9) of the NH House Committee on Municipal and County Government who voted to deny HB 1180. “I sent it to the

Union Leader, the Concord Monitor and the Keene Sentinel but I haven't seen in printed yet" she said.

In conclusion Mr. Throop noted the need for a special joint meeting with the West Peterborough TIF Committee (WPTIF). The Committee had been re-appointed by the Select Board and was scheduled to meet March 1<sup>st</sup> at 7:30 a.m. "We want to request additional funds from West Peterborough TIF fund to cover the Town's 20% contribution associated with the Town's share of an increase in project costs for the Union Street Bridge Replacement Project. "We expect the amount of the request to be between \$45 and \$60 thousand dollars" he said adding "the WPTIF will be asked to make a recommendation to the EDA who will in turn make a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen to do so." He also noted a special meeting with the Greater Downtown TIF Committee. He explained that because of other proposed budget expenditures in Fiscal Year 2017 the Budget Committee has recommended that the Storm Water and Sewer System Separation project (generally funded to the amount of \$30,000 from the general fund) be eliminated for Fiscal Year 2017. "In the interest of keeping the project moving forward, the DPW is requesting \$20,000 from Greater Downtown TIF funds to apply to this project" he said.

Ms. Miller added "and it is timely because the Board of Selectmen meet that night."

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 a.m.

**Next Meeting:**

April 13, 2016

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton  
Administrative Assistant