

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

March 7, 2017

MINUTES

Present: James Kelly, George Sterling, 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 a.m.

Minutes:

A motion was made/seconded (Kelly/Schaefer) to approve the Minutes of January 31, 2017 as written with all in favor.

Discussion: Regional Branding Initiative

Guest speaker and Yankee Magazine Publisher Jamie Trowbridge began by telling the audience EDA member Adam Hamilton had asked him to speak about Discover Monadnock and the work that has been accomplished through their Regional Branding Task-Force. He then looked to the members and asked “anything specific today?” Chair Sterling replied “I think we are trying to create a cohesive unit with the arts, business, education and other initiatives and come out with an understanding of how a region creates its own identity.”

“OK” replied Mr. Trowbridge “briefly the regional branding idea grew out of and coalesced from the Monadnock XX website. “We found it was more than a website, it was a regional brand” he said. He went on to note he facilitated the subcommittee consisting of 14 participants with representatives from local arts, education, business and government. “Adam (Hamilton) and Sean (Ryan) are members” he said adding “and we explore the marketing initiative in the Monadnock region and how to attract students, businesses and new residents.” He noted they started with knowledge that the *awareness* of what the region is and what it offers is low.” He told the members that local EDAs, the Monadnock Travel Council and others are working to improve that awareness “but it is hard to get to Depot Square, in Peterborough, in the Monadnock Region if you don’t know where that is.” He noted the fact that it is in everyone’s interest to promote the whole of the community and what it has to offer. “Everyone has their own interests, New Hampshire Ball Bearings is looking for employees, Monadnock Community Hospital is looking for doctors, Keene State College is looking for students. We are seeking how to collectively agree on the best way to market them all together” he said and suggested “10% of individual marketing budgets devoted

to a regional marketing budget is not just good for the region, it is good for you. *What it is and how to say what the benefits are* that is what branding is, the meaning around the logo. That is where we are as an organization and we are starting to work more collaboratively.” He concluded “a collective marketing plan for the region is small steps but it is a start. It is not just making a logo and having one on everybody’s website, it is so much more than that. We are still very much in the process and need your support to make it a reality.”

A brief discussion of examples of how collective marketing was done (and who was doing it) dating back as far as the 1930s followed. Mr. Trowbridge noted “this is not a new idea” adding “and the parallel is eerie, they existed all over the country.” Noting literature from the defunct *Monadnock Regional Association* discovered at Noone’s Falls he said “and they existed here.”

Mr. Trowbridge cited the model “New Hampshire Grand” out of Coos County which plays off all the grand hotels they are known for and their “Ride the Wilds” program (a 1000-plus mile interconnected AVT trail system). He noted the amount of work put into the strength of this (with) the thought you lead with that strength building all the smaller businesses into the brand as you go along. Mr. Trowbridge also noted the importance of an extremely strong media. “The importance of pushing out the messaging, effectiveness is very low if you don’t have a strong media push once the consultant it gone” he said.

Mr. Trowbridge also mentioned the Berkshires in Massachusetts. “It is the largest county in Massachusetts with 30 or so towns that has a Chamber of Commerce, some version of an EDA and independent art and tourism organizations. He noted it had taken them ten or more years to do it but they are working more collaboratively. They are an example of doing this well” he said explaining each entity wanted to be the center of attention and each was holding their cards close to their chest adding, looking out for number one. He went on to say “then they had an exhale and started looking out for one another. Another good example is the Cape, he said, with their ability to pool their resources to promote their collectivity. It is not an either/or.”

Mr. Sterling asked if there was an infrastructure of organizations (Monadnock Travel Council, Arts Alive!, Monadnock Local Buy, Local Chambers of Commerce and others) in place to bring the entities together. Mr. Trowbridge replied “no and that is part of the problem” adding “we have given some thought on how to create this but just have *not* landed. We don’t want to a flash in the pan.” He went on to say “it is the chicken/egg thing, do we wrestle with organization then funding or funding then organization.”

Ms. Schaefer asked “how do you gauge awareness?” Mr. Trowbridge replied “well with “New Hampshire Grand” bring the Division of Economic Development and Bureau of Tourism to Coos County” adding with a smile “which in itself is a challenge because you have to go a *long* way to get to Coos County.” He went on to say “the Ride the Wilds program is onto something. They still struggle financially but people are coming from Russia to ride in the woods.”

Mr. Trowbridge noted a launch should be done incrementally and able to prove its worth as it grows. He noted vision or structure and told the members he felt the right argument would be for organization first.

From the audience Joe Inera interjected “the institutional basis for what you are looking for exists, it just needs to be adjusted.” He went on to explain how the Southwest Regional Planning Commission (made up of thirty-odd communities) assists those communities with decision making for the conservation and effective management of natural, cultural and economic resources. He spoke specifically about a centralized purchasing initiative that saved thousands for communities. “It is very attractive” he said adding “and it is already place you would just have to add a layer and make it stronger with chief elected officials.”

Mr. Trowbridge noted Southwest Regional Planning was not on the Taskforce. Mr. Ierna suggested “if you approach them they would be receptive.” He went on to say that getting anything going statutorily through the legislation needed the cooperation of all the town. “But this is done all over the country, it has been done here, it is nothing new.”

Karen Hatcher introduced herself and cited a similar municipality purchasing center for approximately 132 towns in New Jersey. “It was a state-wide funding plan” she said adding “but buy-in is important.”

Mr. Ryan gave a brief history of the Monadnock Regional Association that existed years ago. “27 towns were represented and Erland Goyette was the Director for a while back in the 1930s” he said. Mr. Ryan went on to note “that was when what is now DRED was a business council division of the State. The point is historically we have done this before and it worked. It stopped when the State pulled their money and put it into DRED.”

Mr. Trowbridge concluded “I am delighted you are interested and although we do not have legitimate authority we are open to any input and direction you would like us to follow.”

Discussion: New EDA Membership

Chair Sterling began “we are always interested in new members” adding “at this time we have a full Board but would like to introduce Dave Smith who is interested in becoming an alternate.”

After a brief biography of his credentials a motion was made/seconded (Hamilton/Gregg) to appoint Mr. Smith as an alternate with all in favor.

Chair Sterling told the members and audience the alternate position was very important. “Their main function is to participate at an equal level and become a voting member when another Board member is absent” he said.

Meeting of Regional Employers:

Mr. Galus noted he had met Mr. Smith during the interviewing process of regional employers for the Economic Vitality Chapter. “But I got an idea to create a meeting for employers like New Hampshire Ball Bearings and others employers and representatives like them and support the creation of a meeting of regional employers. “I would like to propose the EDA support a meeting” he said adding and asked “do I need anything to do that?”

Mr. Throop replied “you don’t need approval but reaching out to the Board (like you are doing) is appropriate to get a statement of support.” Chair Sterling interjected “I am excited about it, it is great to get people together.”

Economic Vitality Forum Debrief:

Mr. Throop began by asking the members who had attended to give share their experience and any priorities they felt came out of it.

Jeanne Dietsch said she was impressed with number of qualified attendees. “It was impressive and I am pleased with the results” she said.

Chair Sterling told the members he’d been on the Downtown Vitality discussion and discovered “the Downtown is rally much larger than described in the zoning” and that there seemed to be a lack of interest in the condition of the Downtown once the Main Street Bridge work started. “It is off in the future but we should be talking about it today” he said.

Mr. Kelly reported his table discussed incubations. “I was disappointed there wasn’t more engagement. We only had three or four but it was not highly supported. We need more committed to that topic” he said.

Mr. Ryan told the members he only had four people at his table “but when we went around with the dot exercise we got a lot of dots.” Mr. Ryan also noted the lack of Millennials and suggested they take the same program to the High School and repeat the process. “Peterborough’s future is their future” he said adding “we need to know what would keep them here to work and live.”

Ms. Dietsch agreed adding “maybe a bit older than Seniors in High School” and noted a program for young adults around the region scheduled for April 11, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. at the Monadnock Center for History & Culture

Mr. Ierna briefly spoke about the arts group and the need for a local arts council. He described his experience in Hartford where the businesses got behind the idea of forming a council because they were being overwhelmed by uncoordinated requests for support.

Status: Website /Video Promotion RFQ:

Mr. Throop told the members the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) had been sent out and was scheduled to close Friday. He noted two local providers had declined, one regarding financials, the other with a full plate. When asked what the money range was Mr. Throop replied “it looks like a \$32,000 minimum would be needed to start up and get going.” Ms. Dietsch interjected “it really breaks down to \$32,000 in consulting and a minimum of \$12,000 and then a maintenance cost of about \$1,500 a month. Chair Sterling concluded “\$32,000 sounds like a deal breaker to me.”

Status: Strategic Marketing Plan RFQ:

Ms. Dietsch began with a brief review of strategic planning and how marketing fits in. “Right now we have no one with a marketing background leading the effort. We have willing volunteers but no real direction in marketing, which someone could easily spend ten hours a week on.” She went on to note the duties of on-line market buys and search engine maximization. She then looked around the room and said “maybe we need to get a generalist on board to do the part time work.” She reiterated volunteers and staff could do the hands-on. “We really need someone to lead the effort.” She briefly reviewed the goals of maintaining the website and website video, EDA promotions, writing and distributing EDA communications, working with the Chamber of Commerce, local attractions and the skills of the local merchants. She did note the current Website had been updated with a news feed. “It refreshes it so it gets a higher Google rating” she said.

Chair Sterling asked “so we are revisiting the generalist idea?” Ms. Dietsch replied they were “we have a functioning marketing committee to do the work, we are looking for more direction.” “Well it *has* gone quiet that is for sure” interjected Mr. Kelly. Mr. Throop noted “you need to decide where to spend the money you have, that is an important next step.” Ms. Dietsch replied “we have a pot of money but it is a one-time pot of money.” Mr. Hamilton interjected he was hesitant to spend money without a clear plan.

Chair Sterling suggested they find out when Mr. Robinson was due back “and do some momentum building.” Adding “it is bad to do too much but equally bad to do nothing.” Mr. Hamilton added “and we seem to be stuck right in the center of it.” Chair Sterling concluded “we need to work on getting marketing going again.”

On-line Computer Training for Volunteers:

Jeanne Dietsch reported that Mary Hubbard was the new assistant at the Library and was able and available to provide training to Town House staff and volunteers for the Peterborough Works Website. “There is *Doodle* for scheduling meetings, *Google Docs* for sharing and another one I have forgotten but they are online tools that will be helpful” she said. A brief discussion about the timing and duration of the training followed. Ms. Dietsch noted the entire training would take less than an hour. Mr. Hamilton suggested they take the training in lieu of a meeting or add it on to the end of one of their regular meetings.

Chair Sterling replied “I am interested, anyone else?” “I am” replied Mr. Hamilton as well did Mr. Kelly with Ms. Dietsch adding “Barbara Miller is interested as well.”

Other Business:

Master Plan Chapter Update: *Sustainable Workforce Housing*

Hope Taylor began with “I am thrilled to see Dave Smith getting on the EDA. There is constant chatter about housing and now the EDA has a major employer in town on this issue.” She noted her concern and asked about discussing Peterborough as a Sanctuary City before the May Town Meeting “to figure out the long term effects on what everyone is trying to do here.”

Community College Update:

Mr. Throop told the members there was no breaking new on this agenda item.

Promoting Arts: Building on Recent Rankings

Ms. Dietsch reminded the members that amongst other things Peterborough was named one of America's most artistic towns by Expedia Travel Blog. From the audience Pelagia Vincent interjected "we *are* seen as a major center of the arts. If we are going to pick something we do well, let's pick *this*, we do *this* well." She went on to recommend "let's take this and run with it throughout all the things that we do. It is a terrific award and recognition, let's use it." Citing the MacDowell Colony, Ms. Taylor interjected "we are nationally known" with Ms. Vincent adding "and already branded."

Mr. Ryan told the members the top things that drew people to the Monadnock area are Mount Monadnock (the second most hiked mountain in the world, the food and the artisans (including the performing arts). "We have been referred to as New Hampshire's Lower West Side" (referring to the quirky, oddball, new thing around every corner type of setting). "Not one genre but a whole entire mixed media" he said.

Broadband Update:

Noting she would not go down the long list of details Ms. Dietsch told the members and the audience that an amended version of SB 170 was in the Senate and was expected to be voted on this week. She went on to say the amendment would allow a municipality to bond broadband but not become an ISP (Internet Service Provider). She suggested people contact State Senator Sanborn. "I understand Comcast is on board with the amendment but Fairpoint is still fighting it" she said concluding "I am not sure it will pass with the amendment."

Just before adjournment Mr. Ryan stood and announced the Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce 2017 Community Awards Gala scheduled for March 30th. He cited awards for Legends of Business (noting previous recipients Walter Peterson, Wayne Green, Edward Dell and Faith Pettigrew) and said "we are bringing this award back after a 7-year hiatus and awarding it to four recipients including our own Cy Gregg, Stan Fry and Charles "Chubb" Whitten for breathing new vitality back into Peterborough."

Next Meeting:

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

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton
Administrative Assistant