

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

March 28, 2017

MINUTES

Present: James Kelly, George Sterling, Jerry Galus, Jason Garland, Barbara Miller, Adam Hamilton, Dave Smith, and Chubb Whitton

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. and followed with introductions.

Minutes:

A motion was made/seconded (Hamilton/Kelly) to approve the Minutes of March 7, 2017 as written with all in favor.

West Peterborough TIF Advisory Committee Recommendation:

Mr. Galus, as Chair of the WPTIF Advisory Committee, gave a brief review of the latest WPTIF Advisory Board meeting held two weeks ago. He noted the purpose of the meeting was to review the financial position of the TIF and due to changes in legislation decide if some of the TIF funds should be earmarked for TIF project maintenance costs. "It is well financed" he said adding "it continues to collect \$129,000 to \$130,000 a year and runs to 2024. The money is tax incremental saving (pre-tax) so it gets a lot of bang for the buck."

Mr. Galus noted the estimated maintenance fees would be \$71,500 for the 2018 Fiscal Year. He told the EDA members the TIF Advisory Board had voted to allocate the \$71,500 from the WPTIF fund to cover WPTIF maintenance for FY 2018 and requested the EDA recommend the same to the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Galus reiterated this would be just for Fiscal Year 2018 and that the Advisory Board was going to sponsor a meet and greet for the West Peterborough residents for input on additional projects in the District. He told the members the Board had discussed paying off the debt "but this is a greater use of the money" he said.

A motion was made/seconded (Galus/Kelly) to advise the Board of Selectmen to recommend the expenditure of \$71,500.00 from the West Peterborough TIF District funds for the purpose of maintenance of current and future District projects for the Fiscal Year of 2018 with all in favor.

Downtown Vitality during the Bridge Closure:

Rodney Bartlett explained that while bridge work would start in 2018 the vast amount of construction would take place during the 2019 calendar year.

Chair Sterling then presented a very poignant overview of the potential ramifications to the Downtown which extended right out to West Peterborough as he reviewed directional routes and traffic flow (detours) to the construction. He noted the importance of creating events that would attract youth, young families and millennials; involve local business owners; attract and retain college students and graduates, offer affordable housing, and support business incubators to maintaining the glue of the town culture.

Chair Sterling noted that between US Route 101 and 202 approximately 25,000 vehicle would be changing their travel patterns every day. On a projected graphic Chair Sterling pointed out detour of south and east/west bound traffic being rerouted up Parmelee Drive and over Old Street Road. "All of the Downtown is completely avoided" he said. Chair Sterling went on to note north bound traffic would be re-routed over Summer Street to Hunt Road. "There is really no opportunity for traffic to pop off and visit the Downtown" he said adding "and even bigger than that is that this extends all the way into West Peterborough." He concluded by noting signage would be paramount, "we have about a year to be proactive and protect the downtown all the way out to West Peterborough."

A brief discussion about single-lane construction, phased construction, alternative detours, traffic delays, the staging of the construction equipment and materials in the Library's parking and the concern for a pedestrian bridge (temporary or permanent) followed. "Nothing is cast in stone" said Chair Sterling with Mr. Bartlett adding "how we manage the traffic pattern will have an impact, there is no question about that." Mr. Bartlett went on to say "positive management of the traffic can certainly provide a positive thing for Downtown. We do not want a "the sky is falling" response because the Main Street Bridge is closed, that will portray a negative impact."

Mr. Throop briefly referred to the Economic Vitality Chapter and Chair Sterling's presentation on how to maintain the glue of the community by making the Downtown a destination location.

Sean Ryan spoke briefly about how the communities of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Turner Falls, Massachusetts and Middlebury, Vermont had found themselves in a similar position and how they had faced similar challenges to their downtowns because of construction or bridge closures. He briefly explained how

they were successful in keeping their downtowns a destination location during the construction. “We need to look to them for direction, we don’t need to re-invent the wheel. We don’t have time” he said.

Mr. Ryan noted signage was crucial for those communities “the biggest thing was signage” he said. Mr. Ryan spoke briefly about branding and noted Peterborough was known as “Our Town” and a quintessential New England Town. He suggested the branding of “America’s Original Grover’s Corner” essentially creating a destination within the destination to attract people. He concluded by noting the Chamber was working with other towns to see what worked for them, “we are already behind the 8-Ball” he said adding “Turner Falls had to re-invent the wheel, we will try to benefit from the research they have done.”

Ms. Miller asked about support from local residents during the construction year. Mr. Ryan told her “people avoid construction, they look for convenience. They will change their routes, it is a nice thing to think we would want to do a good deed but then life takes over and we go with the flow.”

From the audience Ms. Taylor noted EDA Minutes from several years ago indicate awareness of the construction and ideas of how to handle this impact to the Downtown. Citing the Route 101 Bridge immediately following the Main Street Bridge, Mr. Bartlett reminded the members 2019, 2020 and 2021 are going to be difficult. “We are looking at three years of traffic control problems” he said. When the question of rebuilding the bridge one lane at a time versus closing it entirely Mr. Bartlett noted the additional cost would be approximately 1.5 million dollars more with a two-year construction season.

In closing Mr. Smith asked “who manages this project?” Mr. Bartlett replied “for better or worse it is us” adding “we are the managing partner, but we have buy-in from federal highway and NH DOT.”

Economic Vitality Master Plan Status and New Steps:

Ms. Dietsch gave a brief review of the Economic Vitality Chapter of the Master Plan. She began with a graphic that compared how business people perceive Peterborough now and in the year 2027. She pointed out *quaint, friendly, safe, unique and quintessential* for the present and *community, learning engaged, business sustainable and vibrant* in the year 2027.

Ms. Dietsch went on to review three planning documents and their hierarchy. These consisted of the Master Plan Vision Statement, the Master Plan Economic Vitality Chapter and the EDA’s Strategic Plan. “These three documents are all in

synch” she said. She went on to cite the chief challenges identified in the Vision Statement which guided the work of the EDA. She spoke briefly about the assessment of the current business climate in town and the interviews conducted with business owners/leaders. Themes for those interviews were then presented at a community forum and the forum was used to validate those themes and add context to the understanding of the town’s economy. Lastly she explained follow-up interviews with the businesses would be done for baseline understanding and an ongoing system and metrics to measure economic vitality. With regards to Peterborough’s branding she told the members “we need a community conversation about that” and suggested they include other communities. Ms. Dietsch concluded by reviewing the chapter’s statements about attracting workforce (a younger target population); nurturing competitive advantages; expedition of town processes; broadening the tourist customer base and maintaining Downtown vitality.

From the audience Bill Little asked “isn’t one big problem housing costs?” Ms. Dietsch replied “yes, that is one of our goals” adding “and 40% of the housing in town is without Internet connections. We need to address the Broadband issue and get a larger collection of housing people want to live in.”

Mr. Throop interjected a bit of information about the Housing Chapter of the Master Plan and the subcommittee kick-off meeting tomorrow at 5:45 in the Board of Selectmen’s meeting Room. “They will be looking at housing segments and how to meet the needs of those different segments” he said.

Sanctuary Town:

Chair Sterling began by noting “this is educational forum not a debate forum, please direct all questions, comments or concerns to the Chairman.”

Chair Sterling recognized Hope Taylor as a citizen who wished to speak. Ms. Taylor began by noting her concern about what the long term consequences may be. “There is the possibility of losing federal monies” she said adding her concerns regarding the impacts on housing and potentially tourism. “I think we should put out the welcome flag but not jeopardize ourselves” she said.

Cathy Lanigan introduced herself and noted the research she had done regarding sanctuary cities. Citing a study conducted by Political Scientist Tom Wong she said “they tend to be safer for everyone.” She noted his research also revealed that smaller, more rural counties experienced the most significant impact from sanctuary policies on their crime rates (lower) and economies (stronger). She told the members “immigrants are entrepreneurs, we should be a welcoming place for

people.” She noted Warrant Articles 9, 10 and 11 (by Petition) that urge the Town to institute the following measures:

Article 9. Resolution to Protect the Rights of Individuals: In order to ensure that (Peterborough) is a safe and welcoming community for all, employees of the town of Peterborough shall not inquire about, report, or act upon any person’s immigration status under any circumstances while performing their duties.

Article 10. Resolution to Protect the Rights of Individuals The town of (Peterborough) affirms its commitment to the rights ensured by the First and Fourth Amendments to the Constitution of the United States of America and declares that in the town of (Peterborough) no person shall be required to declare their religious or philosophical belief or affiliation, nor to sign a registry for any belief or affiliation.

Article 11. Warrant Article: In order to ensure that Peterborough remain a safe and welcoming community for immigrants and be a Sanctuary City, the Town will direct that police officers and other town officials, in the performance of their routine duties in Peterborough will not ask any person about his or her immigration status and will refuse to share such information regarding any person with the United States Immigration and Customs (ICE) except in cases involving violent criminal activity or for violation of NH felony laws.

The objective of this Town policy is to: reserve resources of local law enforcement to the functions properly assigned to them; encourage cooperation with law enforcement personnel by victims, witnesses and suspects of criminal activity, irrespective of their immigration status; serve the interests of economic development of our Town; and preserve our diverse local cultural characteristics and avoid undermining community relationships and family breakups.

Ms. Lanigan concluded by noting she would attempt to secure the Tom Wong Study for the member’s review. “NPR (National Public Radio), Mother Jones (Independent News Organization) and Forbes (business and financial news magazine) are all quoting him” she said.

Andrea Cadwell introduced herself and noted “there would not be a registry based on religious or philosophical belief or affiliation. This is not an arm of ICE.” Ms. Lanigan interjected the type of federal funding that could be taken away is not the type of funding the town receives. “We ask for Block Grants and they cannot be taken away” she said.

Sarah Steinberg Heller introduced herself and reiterated “Articles 9 and 10 are not for a sanctuary city but for policies to make our town safer. We don’t want to live in a town that does not back up its slogan of a good, safe place to live.

From the audience Ms. Taylor asked what the EDA’s position was. Chair Sterling replied “we are not going to poll the members, this Board will take no action.” Barbara Miller told the members and audience “we are a welcoming town.” She cautioned against confusing refugees and immigrants (legal and resettled) to those who were illegal. She reiterated “we are a welcoming Town but we cannot jeopardize federal funding for the Main Street Bridge. That is the position of the Selectmen.” Ms. Heller replied the funds were not an issue with Ms. Miller concluding “we don’t want to be a test case.”

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 a.m.

Next Meeting:

April 25, 2017 at 7:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton
Administrative Assistant