

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

April 24, 2018

MINUTES

Present: George Sterling, Adam Hamilton, Nate Morison, Martha Schaefer and James Kelly

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. “Welcome to the April meeting of the EDA, let’s start with the Committee Updates” he said.

Mr. Throop noted Mr. Galus had sent in his update on the *Workforce Development Committee*:

“On April 9th, a luncheon was hosted by Lara Shook, CEO of Scott-Farrar for Employers' Forum representatives from ConVal, Franklin Pierce University, Scott-Farrar, the Town of Peterborough, and the EDA. A similar luncheon was held on April 10th with the Forum representative from Monadnock Paper Mills. Out-reach is underway to include the Forum's representative from Monadnock Community Hospital. In addition, Val Zancuck, President/Owner of Graphicast has agreed to act as an external adviser to this working committee because of his extensive connections with State and National organizations aligned with the Fora concept. This "Advisory Group" discussed the Forum efforts to-date and how they and their organizations can lend support to planning, designing, and presenting future Fora.”

Telecommunications Committee: Jeanne Dietsch began with “amazingly it looks like we might be making progress and SB 170 is likely to pass.” She noted the bill had not been acted on yet “but the House Hearing and Study Committee indicate it needs to pass.” Ms. Dietsch explained “basically the bill allows municipalities to create private/public partnerships with Comcast.” She also noted the resuscitation of an old telecom tax “that would provide 40 million more dollars earmarked for further private/public partnerships with money they will need to get going.” A brief discussion about a betterment assessment for development of broadband followed.

Communication Committee: Christine Dennler reported their committee was meeting tomorrow to work on direction, guidance and policies for the social media content for the online promotional campaign to be up and running for May 1st. Mr. Throop interjected “and a contract for online promotion has been signed.” Ms. Dietsch publicly thanked Ms. Dennler for bringing this project to fruition.

Reconstruction of the Main Street Bridge: Karen Hatcher reported this project has been named “the Year of the Bridge.” She went on to describe three key elements in branding the community and maintaining its “stickiness” throughout the bridge renovation. “It is like a Peterborough Pride Campaign” she said noting *marketing*,

grant writing and *social events* were the elements identified. The marketing would be in the form of a brochure she said adding “we will need people for that.” Chamber of Commerce Director Sean Ryan told the members he had found a writer and graphic designer (Sullivan Graphics) willing to do the work gratis. “That is terrific” interjected Barbara Miller. Mr. Ryan also noted a full-page advertisement in Yankee Magazine that would run monthly. “It will be sponsored by local businesses and will need a project manager” he said adding “and we do have confirmation of a JPP Grant of up to \$10,000 for the ads.

Ms. Hacker noted four *grants* that could fund events during the closure had been identified and that *by events* she meant something going on every Saturday throughout 2019 (and) “we’ll need a committee for that as well.” Mr. Ryan interjected Kevin Dremel of Jack’s Crackers has volunteered to be a part of the effort and will assist with the events. It was also noted there was a meeting scheduled for this Friday for an update of the bridge with representatives from Hoyle and Tanner present. Town Administrator Rodney Bartlett reviewed a schedule of securing final design in June, having the bidding process completed by December with the bridge closed and construction initiated in February/March of 2019 (and) an anticipated finish date of May 2020. Ms. Miller replied, “we all know the timeline is a moving target.”

A brief discussion about signage and the construction of a pedestrian bridge on the north side of the construction zone followed.

Ms. Dietsch requested the members address Agenda Item VIII B. *Business Retention Process* before the arrival of Dawn Wivell and her SWOT review. Hope Taylor asked about the future of the Affordable Housing Committee with Mr. Throop clarifying that a subcommittee had been meeting in the past year, but that a specific, viable project had not been identified.

Business Retention Process: Ms. Dietsch briefly reviewed the plight of a local businessman who was having trouble keeping workers at his manufacturing company here and was thinking of moving his business to Florida. “He was bussing them in from Lowell, Massachusetts but that is not working anymore.” She noted he was willing to hire six workers and she had contacted Crotched Mountain Rehabilitation Center to discuss temporary housing. “We have a meeting May 18th at 2:000 p.m. at the Library” she said. Ms. Dietsch also mentioned Beth and Ray Cote and their intent to create low-cost housing in one of their buildings “but that takes time” she said.

Board Member Recruitment: Mr. Throop noted one vacancy on the Committee for a full member and two alternates. He indicated that Mr. Morison’s nomination could go before the select Board for appointment to the full member seat.

Strategic Marketing/Branding Project - Review of SWOT Analysis: Dawn Wivell noted in preparation of creating her SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis Report and Action Plan (*and*) the development of the Peterborough Ecosystem Group (the second deliverable) she reviewed materials gathered by the EDA Committee, the town, and the sub-committee working on the project. She noted she had reached out and had simultaneously conducted interviews and information/data gathering and research; inclusive of stakeholders, potential resources, outside influencers and opinions. She noted interviews both in person and by phone in Peterborough, Boston and even the West Coast. “I would like to review what the people have said and I would like this to be a working session with input from you” she said.

Strengths: Ms. Wivell reviewed several pages of strengths as stated in her interviews. These included Peterborough being a beautiful and safe place to live, filled with history and culture and a diversity of engagement ranging from farm potlucks to world class art and theater to endurance hiking and outdoor sports. Noting MacDowell Colony, Sharon Arts Center, Peterborough Players, Cornucopia, the Mariposa Museum, Monadnock Music, Arts Festivals (The Thing in the Spring and Children and the Arts) Peterborough Town Library (the first free, tax supported Library in the country) Rosaly’s Farm stand (the first organic farm in the United States) and the birth of MxT (makerspace), Our Town Capital and Community Conversations in recent years. With a smile Mr. Ryan interjected “we need to start bragging.” Ms. Dietsch noted a statement by Entrepreneur Dean Kamen that went something like “as a state New Hampshire has the lowest self-esteem I know of.”

Weaknesses: Ms. Wivell went on to review weaknesses as stated. “I got a lot of feedback on the school system and none of it was good” she said adding “people noted poor teacher pay (leading to turnover and an increase in first year teachers) and a lack of leadership and innovative thinking.” Ms. Dietsch offered argument to those statements and suggested offering more factual statements. Mr. Ryan reminded the members and audience that the input was people’s perception and cautioned them not to take comments personally. Karen Hatcher interjected the misconceptions were actually opportunities to address these perceptions and re-educate people. Mr. Throop agreed adding “there will be a lot of embedded opportunities we are going to want to mine.”

A brief discussion of what Ms. Wivell referred to as visceral response to the school district followed with Mr. Ryan noting “there is no perfect utopia between the good and the bad. Ms. Hatcher suggested they use sensitivity to the perceptions and use facts like a new leadership is on board or how the school system ranks in

the State when the document is published. Hope Taylor agreed adding “new leadership gives opportunity for change.” Citing the size of the sample (50 people) Ms. Miller asked, “is that big enough?” Ms. Wivell replied she thought it was and it was time to move on to the next phase.

Ms. Wivell continued with other weaknesses (*lack of* parking, night life, a hotel, a community college, public transportation and events geared to the younger demographic) as well as complaints about high tax rates, undefined tourism goals, minimal collaboration between profit and nonprofit as well as nonprofit to nonprofit organizations. Ms. Wivell noted comments about affordable housing, broadband coverage and extension, the town’s anti-business reputation and the need for a pipeline for up and coming businesses. When she mentioned a disconnect with the area youth a brief discussion of the definition of youth and generation cauterizations (baby-boomer, Gen X, Millennials and Gen Z) followed. Mr. Morison interjected he thought a specific issue was that younger people did not know about the opportunities to be involved. “We need to educate kids on that” he said adding “from my eyes I see my peers actively engaged in national issues.” A brief discussion on the age perimeters of Baby-boomer, GenX, Millennials and GenZ as well as how to engage each group followed. The members briefly discussed the theory of *county divides* and the *island theory* of town versus town when discussing collaborations amongst non-profit organizations and supporting a pipeline for future entrepreneurs.

The members concluded this discussion by examining the role of the New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development and their players (Mollie Kaylor, Business Resource Specialist and Michael Bergeron and Cynthia Harrington, Business Development Managers) and how to better those relationships.

Opportunities: Ms. Wivell continued with opportunities as stated noting an outreach to young people with a local community college facility or collaboration as well as opportunities for training and financial aid for vocational programs to keep students local. She cited local business incubation and new business support, improvement in the school system, B2B partnerships, regional manufacturing coalitions, environmentally friendly public transportation, home sharing programs with potential refugee workforces, cooperative advertising and branding, increasing renewable energy and sustainability, support for local farming and amplification of the cultural programs and events and developing that pipeline of new businesses at all stages of the business cycle by cultivating ecosystems around diverse industries.

Threats: Ms. Wivell concluded with the threats as stated including a shortage of high-speed internet services, an aging population, the physical and geographical

isolation of the town, decreased quality of public education, the economy in general (ebb and flow of business cycles), limited ethnic diversity, lack of support from the State and the exodus of the town's youth for higher wages, warmer climates, socialization and night life. Several members felt some of the information (specifically on broadband and first year teachers) gathered was purely perception and facts existed to denounce them. Ms. Hatcher interjected "again an opportunity to re-educate."

Immediate Actions: Ms. Wivell reviewed the immediate action of establishing an official ecosystem, developing priorities and deciding what can be fixed and what cannot be fixed while communicating the actions towards a unified vision where all stakeholders see their specific and particular issues addressed. She told the members "the goal is to establish as group that represents a network, process and a system of interconnecting and interacting parts to ensure optimum communication" adding "and the obligation is for each member to represent the grouping or organization, not their individual issues or agenda. The members must be willing to be a voice for their sector/stakeholder group and communicate with that group openly."

Ms. Wivell concluded by noting "these are the voices of the Retailers, Merchant's Associational, Tourism, Chamber of Commerce, Realtors, Farmers, EDA Committee, Cornucopia (SKITTLE), Town Administration, MAXT, Our Town Capital and VCs, Arts, Entertainment, Service Organizations, SBDC, Retirement Communities, Museums, Medical (traditional and alternative practitioners), BEA (former DRED) Library, the School System and lastly particular individuals in the community. "that is your Ecosystem" she said. Ms. Hatcher interjected "so the question is do they have a role to take in economic development?" with Mr. Throop concluding "that is the question to ask."

Other Business: None

Next Meeting: May 22, 2018

The meeting adjourned at 10:05 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton Administrative Assistant