

# THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

May 19, 2015

## MINUTES

**EDA Members Present:** Chub Whitten, James Kelly, George Sterling, Adam Hamilton, Hope Taylor, Michael Henry and Peter Robinson,

**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. noting the first order of business was approval of the Minutes from March.

### **Minutes:**

A motion was made/seconded (Robinson/Henry) to approve the Minutes of April 21, 2015 and April 28, 2015 as written with all in favor.

Chair Sterling reminded the members of the importance of recording their workgroup minutes. He cited the Committee Report Worksheet that had been created and said “just fill in the blanks and take rough notes. This points out the value of the work we are doing and may lead to a larger budget for us next year” adding “and it will let everyone else know what we are doing and cut down on the redundancy.”

### **Presentation /Discussion on the Peterborough Commercial Atlas:**

GIS Specialist Fash Farashahi gave the members an overview of the Commercial Atlas created in 2004 by the Office of Community Development. This Atlas documents of all the properties in Peterborough that are zoned for commercial use. He noted the Atlas was last updated in 2013 with aerial photography from 2010. He told the members it had been sent to DRED and business entities around the state. Mr. Farashahi told the members the information was general in nature (acreage and frontage) and owner identities and natural resources were not listed. “This is phenomenal base work” interjected Mr. Whitten adding “it might be important to know the square footage and who is where” adding “as well as what type of business is in what location.” He went on to say “we can use the vacancy rate as a positive not a negative and once established we can have a local realtor keep it updated.” Mr. Throop noted the potential difficulty of maintaining an accurate accounting of square footage given the changes and reconfigurations that may occur when a tenant moves in.

NHBB Controller Donna Hanley introduced herself and agreed having this kind of information readily available is a valuable tool. “It was a challenge for us to find available space” she said adding “it was a challenge even through the realtors.” Mr. Throop noted that the *gross* square footage could be easily attained by tallying up the individual sections and noted “there have not been any new subdivisions or re-zonings that would have an impact on this.” Mr. Throop went on to briefly review a preliminary review presented to the Planning Board to enlarge and reconfigure the Mr. Mike’s Convenience Store and Gas Station on Jaffrey Road.

### **EDA Work Group Updates:**

*Marketing Work Group:* Mr. Robinson began by announcing a website discussion would take place immediately following this meeting. He went on to say the Marketing Group was developing its own website to be concise and once built, students at ConVal will manage it. “Which is the heavy lifting part of things” he said adding “the students will have goals, objectives and strategies to work on and will be graded on it.” He told the member the group hoped to have the project completed by June 1<sup>st</sup> for review and discussion at the June 16<sup>th</sup> meeting.

*Outreach Work Group:* “Thank you” interjected Mr. Whitten. “That is an incredible start.” Mr. Whitten briefly discussed meeting with a broker from a company he represents explaining “it is a publishing company who is running out of employees and this place is perfect for them.” He told the members “we are going to go to them and make a presentation on our history in publishing and all the great reasons to be in Peterborough. We are going to make our 45 minutes count” adding “this is not a training mission. It is very important to get in front of the decision makers and we hope to do this with in the next six weeks.”

Ms. Taylor replied “that is great what do you need?” “The right reps” answered Mr. Whitten. Ms. Hanley interjected “we are running out of employees too, we have 50-60 positions but we need to be able to offer affordable housing and rents.” When Mr. Whitten asked about what was considered a reasonable commuting distance Ms. Hanley replied “45 minutes and it is still cheaper than living in Peterborough.”

A brief discussion about the market driven issues of housing, emerging from a recession, entry level housing and federally mandated tax credits for development of affordable housing followed. “This is not a new problem” said Ms. Taylor with Mr. Whitten pointing out *all* income groups need to be satisfied. He also qualified “this is not a Peterborough-specific problem.” From the audience Dennis Calcutt said he agreed “but from the sound of it this is screaming urgent” he said.

Mr. Throop noted the quality workforce housing Southwest Community Services had facilitated in the Keene area. "It may be worth talking to Keith Thibault (Chief Development Officer)" he said. Mr. Throop then spoke briefly about the challenges of redevelopment often being too high to accomplish affordable housing, citing the Granite Block as an example. The members then briefly discussed acquiring block grants, involvement with MEDC (Keene, NH) and the potential of many years going by before seeing a shovel in the ground. Mr. Whitten assured the members "there are a lot of people who do this and do it very well."

In closing the Work Group report Chair Sterling suggested an EDA representative attend the ZBA and Planning Board meetings on a regular basis.

*Broad Band Work Group:* Chair Sterling told the members "we have had an organizational meeting but we do not have a Chairman yet." He asked the members to think about a good candidate for this Work Group. It was noted that Ms. Miller is presently working on writing a grant for funding. "It is fascinating how complicated this is, not just stringing wires and turning a switch" observed Chair Sterling.

#### **Other Business:**

*Planning Board:* Mr. Throop gave a brief review of the Planning Board's activity including a preliminary review of the redesign/reconfiguration of Mr. Mike's Convenience Store and Gas Station. "They will need relief from the Zoning Board" he said adding "then they will come back for Site Plan Review."

*Monadnock Art X Tech:* Mr. Kelly reported "we are working hard to get started." He told the members "we need to build the membership and the activities not the building. We need to work on the content of our membership."

In closing the members discussed the approach to their outreach work with Chair Sterling noting the EDA should respond as a Committee with their website supplying all the supportive information. Mr. Throop added "you (one person) cannot tell everyone everything that you have." Chair Sterling interjected "we need to be consistent and united in our story. It will take some time to work on it but more importantly we'll know we all agree with it and the town agrees with it." Mr. Kelly asked about an individual contact person. "Who is it?" he asked pointing out the personal side of communication. "That is extremely important" he said. Mr. Whitten agreed noting the website would have content and contact pages with information readily available for people to reach out.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton,  
Administrative Assistant