

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

May 24, 2016

MINUTES

Present: James Kelly, George Sterling, Peter Robinson, Adam Harrington and Chub Whitten

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

Chair Sterling called the meeting to order at 7:30 with member introductions. Chair Sterling interjected he would like to thank Dennis (Calcutt) for keeping hydroelectric opportunities on the table. “It was not intentionally pushed aside” he said as he introduced Lori Barg. Ms. Barg gave a brief biography (founder and CEO of Community Hydro with expertise in hydrology, fluvial geomorphology and riverine processes) and told the members she was present to discuss the possibility of restarting an old hydroelectric plant in Peterborough. “Energy is one thing all businesses are looking for to stay or move into an area” she said adding “it is an economic stimulant.” She noted the solar array in town and said hydroelectric may have the same effect.” She noted Peterborough had at least five hydro dams in town. She told the members she had been a member of the Board of Selectmen in her home town in Vermont (which had a hydroelectric dam) and that when it was inspected for chances of being a liability the inspector reported it was a not a liability but a resource, “a *great* dam” she said. She went on to say there were 1200 dams in Vermont of which 80 were producing power and there were 77,000 dams nation-wide of which 2000 were producing power. “We were born of electric power” she said adding “it is an engine of economic development and I started Community Hydro to light up the dams.”

Ms. Barg compared hydro power to solar power noting 100 kilowatts of water equals approximately 500 kilowatts of solar. “It is a 1:5 ratio on energy” she said adding “and I am sitting next to the owner of one of the best opportunities in town, Ellie King’s dam.” She went on to explain the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission process for licensing and exemption as well as perpetual licenses. “Ellie had almost all she needs to interact with the grid interconnection” she said adding “your best opportunity is right there.” She went to explain that whether you are building the Hoover Dam or a dam to light a single light bulb “it is still the same amount of paperwork.” She did note that the process was changing. “Developing conduits is changing and it is getting easier to get conduit

exemptions” she said. She reiterated “77,000 dams in country, 75000 do not have power and it costs money to remove them.”

Citing the regulatory environment and absence of affordable equipment, Ms. Barg went on to briefly review the site specific design of Ms. King’s dam. She explained how her two sites were leased and managed as well as her *go hydro power plug and play* model and estimated Ms. King’s dam could produce a half-million kilowatts a year. “And right now the economic are good if you get into the que” she said.

Ms. King spoke briefly about the dam site. “Hydro is why my father moved here” she said adding he’d done quite a bit of work on the site to bring the hydro power back. She noted the electrical system was shot (“it is all ruined” she said) and that the machinery would have to be replaced “but the structure is still there.” Mr. Robinson asked about replacement costs Ms. King replied “I don’t know.” Ms. Barg reiterated the importance of getting into the que. “Put us in the que immediately and work out the other stuff (legal, energy buyers, and costs) later” she said adding there were plenty of big users wanting to become green, supportive *and* save on the electric bill. “This is a great way to do it” she said.

Ms. Barg briefly discussed how variable speed and power had completely changed wind power “and now it is changing hydro power” she said. Mr. Whitten interjected “simplification of the regulations needs to be made” adding “when it gets so confusing that the experts cannot follow it. It seems like as efficiency gets better the regulations penalize it.”

Chair Sterling redirected by asking “so what can we do to help?” Ms. Barg replied “Ellie has a fabulous site” as she went on to list the basics. “Everything has to have a legal structure and a lease of some sort must be created to operate the site.” She told the members she leases both of her sites (one from the State of New Hampshire and the other from the Town of Contoocook) and that she would investigate the site to see what needs to be done. She concurred with Ms. King that the electrical system was shot “but her Dad did a great job.” She estimated the site could produce a half million kilowatts a year (service for 80 houses or a larger energy taker like the school system or New Hampshire Ball Bearing) and the cost would be in the area of \$250,000.00. “It is a great time to get in line (into the que) because Ellie is already exempt. It seems like a lot but comparatively Ellie’s site is a piece of cake.”

Mr. Robinson asked “what can we do now?” Ms. Barg replied “get into the que, and start the implementation of a legal structure would be a great start as well as thinking about the who could use the energy, “and of course the money” she said.

Mr. Throop suggested creating checklist on how to sell the power and identifying a major energy buyer (for instance Monadnock Community Hospital or New Hampshire Ball Bearing). The members briefly discussed grant opportunities and loans. Ms. Barg noted she would be assessing the amount of generation possible at the King site. She told members head or flow changes effect the speed of the generator to its maximum performance. Ms. King noted she was interested in restoring the infrastructure of the dam and that her legal right to do that could be taken away if it is not in compliance. Ms. Dietsch interjected “the Army Corps of Engineers controls the flow right?” Ms. King replied “yes and we have nothing to say about what they do but they *have* been very good, we have worked with them in the past.” Ms. King concluded by noting her motivation is nothing more than to keep the dam intact.

Mr. Throop noted the timing of the upcoming repairs the North Dam and Transcript Dam should be considered as well as how changes in the regulations may coincide with these projects.

Minutes:

A motion was made/seconded (Sterling/Harrington) to approve the Minutes of April 26, 2016 as written with all in favor.

Election of Officers: Chairman, Vice Chairman and Treasurer

Chair Sterling told the members he was content to serve another term as Chairman, as was Mr. Robinson as Vice Chairman (although he would entertain and support an alternate for the position). He also noted Mr. Hamilton was willing to step up and be the Treasurer. “We have never had a Treasurer before said Chair Sterling adding “but now with a budget it is quite prudent.”

A motion was made/seconded (Kelly/Whitten) to re-elect George Sterling as Chairman, Peter Robinson as Vice Chairman and Adam Hamilton as Treasurer of the Economic Development Authority with all in favor.

Subcommittee Updates:

Town Meeting Results

Mr. Throop briefly reviewed the results. He noted the meeting was recorded (videotaped) and was available for review on the town’s website. Turning to the EDA Contractor he noted the mixed reaction of increasing the budget “but there were positive comments as well” he said. With regards to recruitment the members also all agreed they should be in touch with DRED’s Carmen Lorentz (Director, Division of Economic Development).

Broadband Subcommittee

Mr. Throop reported on the interpretations of the map and negotiations with Comcast. Ms. Dietsch interjected “they have to research what they can do and what it will cost but it makes good business sense for Comcast.” Mr. Throop also noted a fair amount of interpretation of the specificity of the contracts “especially the 20 units per mile” he said. He spoke briefly about the options of bridging the gaps or contributing to pole replacement. Ms. Dietsch noted “there are different ways of looking at it but they (Comcast) really do want to get to Greenfield.” She also noted the importance of negotiating from a business point of view rather than a legal one. Mr. Harrington asked “what happens when contract runs out?” he went on to say “they won’t interrupt service that is not an option but we have to think about how to create leverage.” Chair Sterling told the members he noticed a billboard that had sprung up on Route 101 headed east into Peterborough for TDS (an all fiber network service provider). “It is a very interesting placement at a very unique time” he said.

Marketing Subcommittee

Mr. Robinson spoke briefly about the EDA Contractor being an individual or an agency. He also suggested their approach be a bit different in that they avoid the “*this is how much we have to spend what can you do for us*” and go for “*this is the job we want done, how will you do it and how much will it cost.*” He also noted “just because we have the extra money doesn’t mean we have to run out and spend it.” He suggested the members consider a hire on a 6-month basis with a review. A brief review of the operating budget, fee structure and potential bonus incentive followed.

Update of Affordable Housing

Ms. Taylor was not present but Mr. Hamilton told the members he had hooked her up with the Contoocook Housing Trust. “They are already doing what she is talking about’ he said. From the audience Pelagia Vincent interjected “conversations are happening I just don’t have an update.”

Propose Nominations (2) for the Greater Downtown TIF to Board of Selectmen:

Mr. Robinson mentioned two potential candidates (Laura Ackerly and Jim Albridge) that were considering appointment.

Discussion: What’s next?

Noting the workgroups and the success at Town Meeting for an EDA Consultant Mr. Robinson suggested this agenda item was premature and should be postponed. “It is just too early to talk about it” he said.

Future Meeting Topics:

Mr. Throop told the members they had a potential guest for the next meeting. “We are holding a spot for them” he said. When asked, Mr. Throop explained how he would encumber the budget to cover projects initiated this year that would be completed next year. Ms. Dietsch noted they were getting down to the wire on marketing ideas. “We seem uncertain about what we want to do” she said.

Robinson interjected “there is no reason to spend money if we spend it foolishly.” Mr. Throop noted “to get the best return on your investment you may find that a shotgun approach is not as effective as a targeted approach.” He went onto note “the market today consists of retired people coming in from other areas *imports* if you will. That is what is happening.” He also mentioned a brochure the Chamber of Commerce created on *why to move to Peterborough*. Mr. Calcutt noted “I think we need to be getting beyond giving a brochure” with Mr. Robinson briefly reporting how they are working on Google hits.

In closing Ms. Dietsch told the members she had a group lunch scheduled for later in the day. She told them it was a group of entrepreneurs and telecommuters (“they are everywhere”) who work from home. “It is at the Library and is a group lunch to meet other people and create a connection which creates the stickiness we have talked about” she said.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 a.m.

Next Meeting:

June 20, 2016

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton
Administrative Assistant