

THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

June 16, 2015

MINUTES

EDA Members Present: Chub Whitten, James Kelly, George Sterling, Adam Hamilton, Hope Taylor, Peter Robinson, Ed Jeungst, Cy Gregg and Jeff Crocker.

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 May.

Minutes:

A motion was made/seconded (Robinson/Henry) to approve the Minutes of May 19, 2015 as written with all in favor.

EDA Workgroups Updates:

Marketing Workgroup

Mr. Robinson reported Oliver Strube of 350 Media, LLC (DBA Abel Twitchell) was working on the new website. "We hope to have it ready for Thursday's meeting (7:30 a.m. BOS Meeting Room) to review it and make sure we are headed in the right direction" he said. He also noted several leads in businesses moving to Peterborough noting "it is pretty encouraging."

Mr. Throop asked "in terms of content for the web site, do you have everything you need?" Mr. Robinson replied "yes, right now we are focusing on the quality of life and what is available here." Mr. Throop noted the GIS Specialist has a lot of content that could be used when appropriate. Mr. Whitten interjected the existing contact information on the town website should be updated. This sparked Mr. Robinson to ask the members for their input on a contact person. "Should it be one person? Any committee member? Or a designated member each month?" he asked. After a brief discussion the members agreed it should be one individual with a consistent story.

Mr. Whitten volunteered Chair Sterling. "He is an excellent representative and it gives the impression you are going straight to the top" he said. Ms. Taylor interjected "I agree with Chubb. That is very positive" and Mr. Kelly noted "I like the idea of George leading it."

Chair Sterling accepted and went on to agenda item IV which was a vote to recommend an expenditure of \$2500.00 to hire a web design consultant. “This is to hire Abel Twitchell” he said. He went on to thank the Town Administrator for finding the committee funds for the website project. “This will not affect the \$5000.00 in our budget for next year” he said. Mr. Robinson briefly reviewed how Abel Twitchell was chosen. “We had three proposals, one proposal was free, one was for \$2500.00 and one was for \$5000.00.” He noted the free proposal was an *as time allows* scenario and that the school did not support the software to be used. He went on to say “the \$5000.00 proposal was very nice but Able Twitchell was in the middle and we really liked his work so we chose him.”

A motion was made/seconded (Hamilton/Taylor) to recommend the expenditure of \$2500.00 to hire a web design consultant with all in favor.

Outreach Workgroup

Mr. Whitten reported “nothing much has changed” adding we have a company on the line but we are awaiting proper material for them.” He reiterated a bit of information on a publishing company that “has 100+ jobs and is running out of employees and space” adding “we are waiting for the marketing tools.”

Chair Sterling reported a meeting he’d had with Emma Johnson from New Hampshire Ball Bearing and reiterated the need for affordable housing (in the area of \$600.00 per month) and high speed internet. He also noted young workforce people want to have their own living space with no extra bills “sort of like an upscale dormitory living situation” he said. He went onto say the reputation of Riverview and Prescott Hill precede themselves.”

Mr. Throop briefly reviewed the Planning Board’s review and re-write of the Open Space Residential Development ordinance as well as the whole discussion on housing needs, increased density in established neighborhoods and the zoning changes necessary to accommodate it all. He noted the Vision Forum and follow-up survey “clearly states a priority is to attract and maintain young people and housing is a big part of that.” Mr. Whitten asked “is the NHBB in a position to offer anything?” Chair Sterling replied “they are not in a positon.”

Mr. Throop told the members he had also had a discussion with the Police Chief about the reputation of some of the current housing. “He told me in some cases the reputation was true and in other cases it was not true.” He noted the apartments that had a manager on site and that were maintained had few problems and again touched on the implications for zoning or whether the zoning could be structures to be successful with people wanting to live in them. Ms. Taylor advocated a

collaboration of business and the town for housing. Mr. Throop mentioned several previous studies including work by the New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority and various workforce housing task forces.

Broadband Workgroup

Mr. Whitten told the members “it is about to get really exciting” as he went on to update the members about having been contacted by both Fair Point and Comcast. “Peterborough needs fiber” he said adding “bringing in a couple of core customers may build a system at no cost to the subscriber. We are getting the attention of the people we need to have.” The members agreed the meeting with Fair Point and Comcast be separate and well publicized for good attendance. Chair Sterling credited Carol Monroe for her direction and assistance. Mr. Throop noted Ms. Monroe was an excellent resource and would remain on the committee. He also told the members he had met with Jeanne Dietsch who is considering taking on the role of Chairman of the Broadband Workgroup. “I met with her yesterday. She is excited and has lots of energy and good ideas” he said. Chair Sterling noted the Broadband Workgroup could use another one or two members. It was noted the legislative bill being written by Representative Peter Leishman was moving along. “It just takes time” said Chair Sterling.

Personal Reflections:

Each member gave a brief statement on the goals and accomplishments as well as their personal insight of the EDA. Chair Sterling began with “I am tickled with how things are going and I am excited about moving forward. What we have accomplished in six months is phenomenal.” Mr. Kelly interjected “I agree completely.” Mr. Jeungst told the members he had just moved back to town after a 10-year absence. “I am very excited about it” he said adding “I am noticing a change about business, talking about growth and expansion with the three major initiatives (marketing, outreach and broadband). I am excited to be a part of this and I am willing to help in any way.” Mr. Hamilton simply said “we’ve got work to do that is all I have to say.”

A brief discussion of how the economic factors have changed over the past ten years followed. Mr. Robinson noted the success of the town depends on people coming to the town and business growing above the conservation side of things. “Our inventory availability (42%) is a more critical factor now than a decade ago” he said and wondered if the attitude of the community had changed over time. Mr. Crocker agreed noting a different kind of conversation about open land development and zoning. “In terms of understanding the attitude of the community, we are in a different economic time now that we can take advantage of” he said. With a smile Mr. Whitten interjected “never let a good crisis go to waste.” He went

on to note school enrollment was down “which is scary” he said. Agreeing, Mr. Throop replied “the recession does play on people’s psyche.” Mr. Throop then spoke briefly about the Planning Board efforts to look at growth and increasing density within the downtown and within village nodes in other parts of town.

As the members discussed affordable housing and attracting a younger population Mr. Crocker noted “we are an agency of the town, an investor. We need a diversified portfolio of businesses” adding “not like Berlin (N.H.) with a single industry.” He noted the boom of that city through the 1950s and 1960s “but look what has happened to that city, what a tragedy, what a devastation to the community” he said. Mr. Whitten interjected some of the town’s diversification by listing “industrial, office, retail. Our inventory goes across the board.”

Mr. Hamilton asked Mr. Gregg what his thoughts were with Mr. Gregg replying “I am impressed with the energy and specific undertakings gong on.” He reiterated the problem of losing young people as an ongoing cycle.

Mr. Kelly mentioned the maker space project now had a home in the Monadnock Plaza and noted he was pleased with the connection to ConVal. “I am glad they are involved in our marketing updates, I hope it is a good collaboration” adding “I am very impressed with Brian (Pickering).”

Other Business – Updates:

Chamber of Commerce:

Chair Sterling told the members the Chamber of Commerce had a very successful transition year with their new Director Sean Ryan. “He is packed full of enthusiasm and energy, it is looking really good” he said.

Planning Board:

Mr. Throop noted “Jerry (Galus) is our Planning Board rep and he is not able to be here this morning. He proceeded to briefly review some of the items on the Board’s plate including a discussion on land use ordinance changes and vision work and how that translates into how people feel about the town and how all the pieces fit together. He also gave the members an update on a Preliminary Review with Global Montello Group (Mr. Mike’s Convenience Store and Gas Station). “They have been very good to work with so far with input from town staff and administration. They have really listened. That is the way we like to see development happen” he said.

Master Plan Steering Committee:

Mr. Throop told the members this Committee would meet next week. “They are moving along with the draft of the Vision Chapter” he said adding “and then they will review the *Economic Vitality* and other Chapters to be sure they are consistent with what the Vision Chapter is saying.”

Monadnock Art X Tech:

Mr. Kelly reiterated the location of their new home and that they were working hard at moving things forward.

CCX Conference:

Mr. Throop briefly described the conference he and Rodney Bartlett recently attended and presented at. He told the members the conference was about a community creative economy (how the arts can play a role in the community and where to place your best efforts).

Monadnock Regional Vision:

The members had a brief discussion about thinking more as a region and collaboration with other towns to complement each other. Mr. Crocker noted “the name of the game is regional thinking” adding “look at all the non-profit worlds and their consolidations and joint ventures, they are no longer separate sphere.” He noted the theater in Jaffrey and the proposed theater for ConVal and noted “they have not even talked to each other.” Ms. Taylor interjected “maybe we should introduce them.” A brief discussion about duplication of effort, overlooked partnership potential and economies of scale followed.

Future Topics and Speakers:

The members discussed potential future speakers with one member suggesting they have an economist come in to speak about housing trends. “The more information we can get (practical versus academic) the better” said Mr. Hamilton.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton,
Administrative Assistant