

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

July 26, 2016

## MINUTES

**Present:** James Kelly, George Sterling, Peter Robinson, Adam Hamilton and Cy Gregg

**Also Present:** Laura Norton, Administrative Assistant, Office of Community Development and Jason Garland, a young entrepreneur (creator of Ga-Zing, a service company) who is interested in joining the EDA.

Chair Sterling called the meeting to order at 7:33 noting the first item on the agenda was the approval of last month's minutes.

### **Minutes:**

A motion was made/seconded (Hamilton/Kelly) to approve the Minutes of June 28, 2016 as written with all in favor.

Chair Sterling then skipped to Other Business to welcome Mr. Garland and asked him to give short biography. Mr. Garland noted he grew up in the area and graduated for ConVal. He noted his new business in town and expressed his interest in the economic development of Peterborough by growing local business and keeping young people in town.

A motion was made/seconded (Robinson/Kelly) to recommend to the Board of Selectmen that Mr. Garland be considered as a member of the EDA with all in favor. "It will be good to get a millennium in here" said Mr. Robinson with a smile. Mr. Kelly added "I agree completely."

### **Subcommittee Updates:**

#### *Marketing Work Group*

Mr. Robinson asked Ms. Dietsch to give an update. She began by reviewing the redevelopment of the website as well as a tri-fold brochure (which would be something supplemental in print about Peterborough) and a video for You Tube and Google inquiries. "We will also be getting more press releases out" she said "to get some buzz on the Town's plans for the future." She also noted they would be getting more out on Nashua Community College and the greater integration with ConVal and local businesses that a community college provides. Mr. Robinson noted Mr. Whitton (who was not present) was the point man on Nashua Community College. "I assume we are moving forward on that" he said.

Ms. Dietsch described the tri-fold brochure but was unable to show the graphic due to a wifi issue at the Town House. Mr. Kelly interjected "I have seen it, it is very nice." Ms. Dietsch also explained the video noting she hoped to show it to the members at the next meeting.

#### *EDA Strategic Planning Committee*

A brief discussion on how to apply the \$70,000 allotted for the EDA Coordinator followed. The focus of which was working on communication and targeting goals, as well as setting expectations to show the progress and updating the list of existing businesses and classifying them by industry sector. "Some of which is already done" interjected Ms. Dietsch adding "we would not have to use the money for that." She also noted the *real* work is retaining what we have and growing businesses and the most help needed is in the form of members' hands on. "The relationships need to be with the people in town. It is a great temptation but hiring an outside contractor does not make sense" she said.

Mr. Robinson asked if there would be a script as such for the members so that everyone was on the same page, reaching out the same way. "There will be" replied Ms. Dietsch who went on to say "there will be a needs assessment where the questions will be developed by someone like the UNH Cooperative Extension or Jack Dugan but the actual survey and talking will be done by members of our team here and other members of the town. It is a more robust system in the end." Ms. Dietsch reviewed branding and marketing for both workforce and small business attraction and developing projects and RFPs based on the results and priorities identified in the market research. She noted the importance of an ongoing search engine for optimization and management and that Joe Ierna suggested he had a contact for training. "We encourage businesses to do their own marketing as well" she said adding "we have had a marketing seminar that we need to follow up. It needs a lot more work."

Mr. Hamilton asked where the bulk of the money would be spent. "Good question" replied Ms. Dietsch as she explained "with branding and marketing you can spend as much as you want, but larger projects will depend on Requests for Proposals (RFPs) based on the need assessment process." She suggested determining the level of marketing (spending modestly at first) and then see what the needs assessment comes up with." Mr. Robinson asked "what are the goals for review? Quarterly? Yearly?" Ms. Dietsch replied "another good question" adding "we have not discussed it." Mr. Robinson asked that members receive a copy of her summary of the Strategic Planning meeting regarding the Contract work so that they could review it and have further discussion at the next meeting. Mr. Kelly interjected he had received it, with Ms. Dietsch noting she may have sent it to just

the Strategic Planning subcommittee and that she would resend it to all members. She concluded with “this is still a plan in process, there are no contracts” adding “we are not committed to spending \$70,000, we are committed to the approach. We are committed and willing to go out and talk to businesses with these five steps to see if we are going in the right direction.”

Dennis Calcutt asked Ms. Dietsch to review the five steps she mentioned. Ms. Dietsch in turn asked Chari Sterling to read the five key points the subcommittee had come up with (hire contractor to develop a communication strategy target the whole town and business community; develop/update the inventory of existing businesses and classify by industry sector; retention and business growth focus (a needs assessment); workforce and small business focus (branding and marketing) and finally the development of RFPs).

A brief discussion that the foundation of sustaining and growing existing businesses was a far more likely successful endeavor to follow. Ms. Dietsch noted the importance of branding and marketing pieces as well as ongoing collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce, businesses and other organizations “seeding the attraction on why to move to town in the first place.” Mr. Calcutt interjected his concern on things *other* than business related areas. “A strong school system is essential” he said adding “and strong social networks able and willing to respond to the vulnerable in our community.” In agreement Chair Sterling suggested they make education a sixth point. Mr. Robinson and Mr. Kelly disagreed noting the retention and business growth, business needs assessment and business relationship building will raise those things. “Peterborough is a great place to live and the quality of life is exceptional” said Mr. Robinson with Mr. Kelly adding “affordable housing, social, educational and training needs should arise from those discussions with businesses.” Mr. Calcutt cautioned that if specific things were not specified they may *not* be identified. “We don’t want to rely on what people *might* identify, we should say certain things explicitly and then see what rises. Say strong school system” he said.

Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Kelly both noted nothing was carved stone. “This five-point strategy is not the definitive strategy, it is a process to get the RFPS out there” said Mr. Kelly. From the audience Nicole MacStay noted the mix of work being done by the Master Plan Steering Committee (update of the Economic Vitality Chapter and other chapters) as well.

A motion was made/seconded (Sterling/Kelly) to accept the five-point strategic plan with flexibility for adaptations in the future with all in favor.

### *Broadband Work Group*

Ms. Dietsch gave the members a brief review of the broadband status which included meeting with an attorney and reviewing the process, what to expect and how to prepare for negotiating a franchise agreement. She also noted “we also reviewed the limitation, which are substantial.” Ms. MacStay explained “it is not about broadband, it is about cable television. The distribution of cable television.” She told the members a review of the current agreement was being conducted to ensure the contract was being fulfilled, “and then we will start up negotiations for the next contract” she said adding “we may be looking at bridge money and betterment assessments for certain neighborhoods to create expansion that way. We are talking about a few different mechanisms.”

Ms. MacStay concluded with a brief history of cable and its buildout. “Universal coverage was never guaranteed, the franchise agreement is how cable is distributed throughout the town and is controlled by federal law.” Chair Sterling asked about competition with Ms. MacStay replying “Aerial, Dish Network, and Direct TV.”

Ms. Dietsch told the members “we are pretty much at their whim” but encouraged the members and audience to follow service. “75 down and 19 up is the basic ComCast now” she said adding “but you could find 85 down and 6 up which is rotten for business and people trying to upload. This will require a group effort.” It was noted that consumer and business packages came with different obligations “consumer is 75 down and at least 2 up where business is 100 down and 10 up” said Ms. Dietsch adding “we’re reviewing the contract and overall customer satisfaction (and) the squeaky wheel does seem to work with ComCast. All said and done it is a community issue not a neighborhood issue.”

### *Affordable Housing Work Group*

Discussion began with the potential stigma of *affordable housing* and terms like starter housing and were suggested. “Something else” said Mr. Robinson with Chair Sterling adding “the title is the truth but it has the wrong vibe attached with it.”

Ms. Taylor told the members the subcommittee was meeting weekly and a focus has been a plan to absorb empty buildings in town. She noted their mission statement with a tag line of *Rehab for Peterborough* but noting the current drug crisis “it may not be the best.” Other suggestions were *Home Rehab for Peterborough*, *Habitat for Peterborough* and *Starter Homes for Peterborough*. She told the members there were several pro bono professionals on board to help, they were creating handout and a simple web page “to let people know who is on the project and recognize it is something to be a part of.” She concluded by noting the

interest was in small to medium sized buildings (not all in one place) with a focus on green and a mix of population (veterans, retirees and younger families). Ms. Dietsch noted a sustainable building program located in Keene. “Bill Gurney” she said.

Mr. Robinson mentioned the property on Condi Road taken for back taxes. Ms. Miller interjected “that building had been assessed at \$172,000 and the Town is seeking to reclaim about \$50,000 owed in back taxes.” She quickly added “we want to sell that property, we do not want to be in the business of property management.” Ms. Taylor replied “we would not be interested in the Town owning it but perhaps it could help facilitate it.” Ms. Taylor also talked about initial steps to collaborate with MAPS and acquiring a portion of the former River Center property. Ms. Miller concluded “the first step is a business plan.”

**Community College Update:**

Mr. Whitten was not present for this update.

**Economic Vitality Chapter of the Master Plan Update:**

Mr. Kelly gave the members a summary of the Committee’s progress. “We have studied the existing chapter to determine the pros and cons associated with it and we have heard the strategic planning from Jeanne” he said adding “and we are less focused on hiring one person to come in and change our economy.” He also told the members he hoped they would have an outline of the chapter at the next meeting.

**Letter of Support for the Hydro Dam:**

Chair Sterling distributed a draft of a letter of support from the EDA for Lori Barg of Community Hydro in an effort to secure a grant to get a hydroelectric dam located on River Street up and going.

The meeting adjourned at 8:33 a.m.

**Next Meeting:**

August 23, 2016

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton  
Administrative Assistant