

**JOINT MEETING OF
THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
AND
THE GREATER DOWNTOWN TAX INCREMENT FINANCE DISTRICT
ADVISORY BOARD**

December 16, 2014

MINUTES

EDA Members Present: Hope Taylor, Cy Gregg, James Kelly, Peter Robinson, George Sterling, Chub Whitten, Jeffrey Crocker, Jerry Galus and Adam Harrington. In the audience was Gary Carpenter, a potential nominee for Alternate.

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

Mr. Crocker called the meeting to order at 7:32 a.m.

Election of Officers:

Mr. Crocker looked around and asked “do I have any nominations or volunteers for Chairman?” Mr. Sterling replied “I will volunteer for Chairman or Vice Chairman” followed by Mr. Robinson who said “I will be the Vice Chair if George will be Chairman.” “I support that” interjected Mr. Whitten. Mr. Crocker asked “so approved by acclamation?” with the members answering “yes.”

Mr. Throop introduced Gary Carpenter who is interested in participating on the Board. Mr. Carpenter gave a brief biography noting he had been living in town for 20 years, had seven children and was the founder/owner of *Mind Whistle*, offering rehabilitation and substance abuse training and coaching services for veterans and people with disabilities and/or addictions. He concluded by noting he was on staff part-time at Phoenix House. “I would very much like to be an alternate” he said.

A motion was made/seconded (Galus/Robinson) to nominate Gary Carpenter to the Economic Development Authority as alternate member pending Board of Selectmen appointment with all in favor.

Mr. Throop noted another gentleman who was unable to be present was also interested in joining the Board. “His name is Michael Henry and he is a former Planning Board member.”

A motion was made/seconded (Galus/Taylor) to nominate Michael Henry to the Economic Development Authority as alternate member pending Board of Selectmen appointment with all in favor.

Minutes:

A motion was made/seconded (Robinson/Sterling) to approve the Minutes of November 11, 2014 as written with all in favor.

EDA Plan of Work: Goals, Priorities and Tasks

Chair Sterling began with “this will be the nuts and bolts of what we are trying to accomplish in the next year” adding “we need to review actionable items.” Mr. Robinson interjected “we want to attract business as soon as possible, we want to keep young people in town while also attracting more retirees.” Mr. Robinson went on to say “we also need to explore options for broadband internet because Fairpoint is a disaster.”

He looked around the table and asked “do we have the infrastructure businesses need to grow? Are we a great place to start a business?” Ms. Taylor asked about the role of the Master Plan Steering Committee noting “those are the two entities, the Master Plan Steering Committee and us.” Mr. Throop assured the members the Master Plan Steering Committee “was hoping for your leadership and participation for the update to the Economic Vitality chapter of the Master Plan.”

Mr. Crocker cited John Vance for his work on the economic vitality chapter of the Master Plan done years earlier. He went on to say “it is time to drill down to the next level” adding “we need to prioritize what types of businesses we want to come here.” The members briefly discussed other things they should be thinking about which included the tax base and people being able to live in town. Mr. Crocker noted that there was no inventory of land set aside for specific types of manufacturing uses and said “the question becomes should we be looking at that from a zoning point of view?” He gave an example of a widget company coming into town. “They find a piece of land but then have to come to the land use board in addition to the Planning Board for approval.” He noted a study and report on that subject by former OCD Director Peter Ryner. He said “maybe we should identify and set aside land for industrial use. Say this is where it is going to go so that when someone interested comes in they just have to do the site plan process.”

Mr. Whitten interjected “I am an independent developer” adding “in my experience I have not found the zoning to be an impediment.” He went on to say the Office of Community Development and Code Enforcement Offices have been quite helpful. Mr. Cocker asked “do you think we presently have enough (land) inventory?” Mr. Whitten relied “yes, I think we have enough existing inventory for the jobs we hope to create for the next five years.” He went on to note the existing space in the Brookstone and Guernsey Buildings were good examples. Mr. Whitten then reiterated “I have said it before, this community is phenomenal, I am almost preaching it. I know about it but no one else does that is why you have to design a web presence and project out beyond our region. It is an important role of this community.” Mr. Galus asked “what are we projecting?” Mr. Whitten replied “your inventory, the half million square feet of space that is available. You are one or two CEOs away from a new niche, you just have to find them.” Mr. Whitten noted the old New England charm and character of the town and said “but we need a tool kit to do so and eventually we will need a person to market our town on our behalf.”

Mr. Kelly suggested they document the advantages and disadvantages to being a business in this town. “What are the issues?” he asked adding “so we know the pluses and minuses and can address them.” He again noted the numerous individual organizations in town all working without collaboration. “We need to put them on the table and see if we need to do a better job of dealing with them collectively so they are not all working individually.”

Ms. Taylor agreed adding “we need to take a look and think about consolidation, I just hope we don’t end up in a fight between us and the Master Plan Steering Committee.” Mr. Kelly replied “oh no, the Master Plan Steering Committee is dependent on us.” Mr. Carpenter noted that the Veteran’s Administration Hospital in Manchester was looking into a satellite facility “and I am pushing for Peterborough.” He also noted the potential inventory of 72 acres located behind the landfill. Mr. Crocker suggested the identification and organization of ideas and incentives. “We need to prioritize and then identify the action items needed to follow each one” adding “starting with the infill of existing inventory.”

A brief discussion about marketing tools such as a website and brochures as well as recruiting followed. One member suggested they look at the tax base to see how the town compares with other communities. Mr. Crocker reiterated the need to identify land for future use and zone it to allow manufacturing or industry. “So it is available without a royal battle in the future available without a battle royal in the future” he said. The members then briefly discussed similar reports that had been done over the years and agreed that in the past the town has had the general perception of being anti-business. Mr. Sterling interjected “well that was then and this is now.” He also mentioned collaboration with the local Chamber of Commerce and the Department of Resources and Economic Development (DRED) in Concord. “Hopefully they can help us get back on the map for business recruitment” he said. Mr. Whitten suggested they ask Fast Tracks, a local design and marketing website developer for an estimate.

Mr. Throop suggested inviting the various groups of stakeholders to a meeting “and then assign them tasks that they are good at. “That might be a way to start to generate a unified group going forward” he said. Mr. Crocker noted former Office of Development Director Peter Ryner had done research that was reflected in a report “somewhere.” He went on to say “it listed sites identified as available but I believe the conclusion was there were not a lot of choices.” Mr. Hamilton reiterated the importance of the infill of existing buildings as well.

With a sigh Mr. Gregg replied “we have heard it all before, what could be done, what should be done” adding “the question is *getting* it done.” Mr. Gregg was quick to add that there have been good efforts along the way that eventually faded out. He also expressed his concern that DRED had little or no promotional information about the town. “We missed the boat on that” he said adding “we need to get organized.” Ms. Taylor agreed as she expressed her approval of the new faces at the table. “Organization is the name e of the game” she said. “And networking” interjected Mr. Sterling. Mr. Gregg also agreed the group’s direction was changing. “In the past we have been an Ad Hoc committee that would address a problem if one came up but other than that we did not do much” he said.

As the members discussed the existing infrastructure and the potential for an enhanced broadband fiber network. Mr. Whitten noted “these are actionable items that will make a change for the good.” Ms. Taylor interjected “we need to get a sense of who needs what.” Mr. Whitten noted that while committees were fine, “they seem to stall” and suggested they create a task force with actionable items to get things done. He noted “identify a problem, identify the people to solve it and move on. That is the successful approach.” Mr. Sterling emphasized they encourage a broadband capital fund and reach out to new businesses. “I envision smaller action committees as we go along” he said.

In summary Mr. Robinson reviewed the suggestions for a website presence and a printed brochure. He also noted involvement of the new Director of the Chamber of Commerce and “working together for the same goals.” He reiterated “and we need to be aggressive about a budget, it is an investment the town needs to make in order to flourish.”

Mr. Crocker suggested that it may be useful to look at other models and other towns “to see how they approach it, to see the tools in their toolbox and how they attract and assist new business.” He noted the town of Jaffrey employed a dedicated individual to recruit new business and work at improving the infrastructure and asked “what tools did he have? We should talk to him and ask him how it worked and what did.”

Mr. Throop briefly reviewed a grant from the National Endowment of the Arts that led to the Duncan Webb study and report. He also reviewed the role Jack Dugan played in town several years ago. “Jack’s organization is an economic authority but is no longer affiliated with the town” he said. Mr. Crocker noted the development in the downtown adding as he looked at Mr. Gregg “It is all private which is fine” adding “but that is not the *only* way it can be done.” He cited the importance of public, municipality and private driven efforts working together.

Budget Request: Promotion, Materials and Placement

Mr. Robinson began with “I think we need to be aggressive.” When asked how much he felt the Committee should request for a budget he replied “they can always say no, so \$100,000.00” adding “I know it sounds crazy but we have to do something.” Ms. Taylor asked “how would we get it? Through taxes?”

Mr. Throop replied “I would not recommend you put that request in this year” adding the members needed to develop a purpose statement “build your allies and your relationship with the Board of Selectmen and people who are influencers in town. Then you begin to create a dialogue leading into your request.”

Mr. Throop noted he felt they could request \$500.00 to \$1,000.00 successfully for brochure printing and a website presence. “You need to outline where the money is going to go” he said adding “I am not saying it cannot be done, but you have to present credibility for it with defined priorities and goals. Next year you should be in a much stronger position with an updated economic vitality chapter.”

Mr. Robinson asked about use of Downtown TIF funds with Mr. Throop replying “those funds are very specific to the TIF District, not general economic development.” Mr. Gregg spoke briefly on promoting business “that is the forerunner” he said. He asked about Mr. Dugan involvement and the status of the former NCR Building (now the Whiton Business Complex) located on Route 202. He noted it was his recollection that the building had been turned over to Mr. Dugan “who in turn, would do things for us.” Mr. Gregg went on to say “I assume the building is generating income” and asked “where is that money going?” Mr. Whitten reported that building had been sold to an entrepreneur from Lawrence Massachusetts.

In re-direction to the budget issue Mr. Throop reiterated the request for \$500.00 to \$1,000.00 would get the members started by developing and printing promotional materials. “We can get that going” he said. He also suggested hosting a roundtable breakfast to share ideas and goals and how to best coordinate working together. He suggested three or so members get together to

coordinate who to invite. Mr. Galus interjected “it is a start” adding “I would be happy to do some of the leg work.” With a smile Mr. Crocker added “yes, and we just saved the town \$99,000.00”

Mr. Throop asked for a vote on the budget request. *A motion was made/seconded (Gregg/Taylor) to request a \$1000.00 budget for EDA promotional use with all in favor.*

A brief discussion of who should be invited followed including the new Director of the Chamber of Commerce, key organizations all working independently to build the local economy and veterans groups.

Broadband Presentation:

Mr. Throop noted this presentation by Carol Monroe needed a least a half hour with an additional half hour for questions and discussion and suggested she be invited to the February or March meeting. Mr. Whitten asked Mr. Kelly to read off the list of independent organizations he had identified. Mr. Kelly replied “the Business Support Group of the Chamber of Commerce, Monadnock Economic Development (Jack Dugan), ConVal’s School-to-Work Program, Monadnock Developmental Services, a new business incubator space at Brookstone, the Maker Space at the Guernsey Building and several manufacturing extension partnerships coordinated by local businessman David DeWitt and the Veteran’s group suggested by Mr. Carpenter.” Mr. Throop added the Monadnock Center for History & Culture. Mr. Whitten asked about any retail organizations and Mr. Galus asked about any healthcare organizations, specifically Monadnock Community Hospital.

Other Business: Meeting Schedule

The members agreed to continue to meet on the third Tuesday of the month at 7:30 a.m. Mr. Throop confirmed the next meeting to be January 20, 2015.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton
Administrative Assistant