

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

February 26, 2019

MINUTES

Present: Christine Dennler, Nate Morison, James Kelly, Jerry Gallus, Jeanne Dietsch and Karen Hatcher

Also Present: Peter Throop, Laura Norton and Kristin Bixby, Office of Community Development

Vice Chairman Morison (Mr. Morison) called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. without a need for introductions.

Minutes:

A motion was made/seconded (Kelly/Dennler) to approve the Minutes of January 22, 2018 as written. All were in favor but Mr. Galus who abstained without prejudice.

Presentation/Discussion, Firebrand Action Plan:

Dawn Wivell was present to review the outcome of the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis and how it has been integrated into a Hub and Spoke System. She also handed out a copy of the Economic Ecosystems Playbook.

In opening she said “I am only going to hit the highlights but the first thing I have to say is that you have to articulate what you are doing in expressing the unique culture of your community” adding “you don’t have any braggers, you are not promoting all the cool things happening and that is unusual.”

Ms. Wivell suggested designating the Ecosystem members as ambassadors. She spoke of a *collective we*, a *connected mantra* (“as that is the way you really *do* live it”), branding and establishing a pipeline for communication for regional collaboration. She expressed the need for the Spokes to articulate what they are accomplishing while all staying on the same page.

Ms. Wivell spoke about the entrepreneurial community and recommended this with other sectors be promoted as a focus for economic development and branding and marketing purposes. She noted the development of market foci including specialty foods, sustainability (the Spoke exists but seems to be focused on the issues of sustainability rather than its economic opportunities. “It has not done much to develop new business” she said), conscious living and technology (Ms. Wivell acknowledged Mr. Kelly for his efforts in this area), and business and professional services. She noted the need to develop a plan for workforce housing

using new as well as alternative ideas for affordable housing that have already been suggested. “It is a hard nut to crack” she said adding “but it is a major obstacle and must be addressed. I suggest you develop a Spoke to look at alternatives.” From the audience Pelagia Vincent noted a new concerted and collaborative effort with the Town of Jaffrey to address this problem. “There are real estate agents, developers, builders and state representatives involved” she said adding “it is a dynamic start.” Ms. Hatcher interjected “there is the potential for your housing Spoke but moreover this is a regional collaborative.” Ms. Dietsch offered to speak with Jaffrey’s JoAnne Carr and subsequently relay information. “Informal communication is how ecosystems fall apart” she said adding “it won’t always be this group, people leave, things change.” Mr. Throop noted the solution “is beyond individual towns and this is a really good start at building bridges.”

Ms. Wivell went on to review the Economic Ecosystem Playbook she’d created to continue the success of the Ecosystem. “It is hard to create Spokes, but you have done it and now you need to keep it going” she said. She went on to note a logo should be designed for the Ecosystem and noted that while the Ecosystem has determined that it does not need a leader it should have one. “Without a leader there is a danger that the Ecosystem can lose its structure” she said. She suggested revolving, short-term (3 to 6 month) commitments would be appropriate.

Ms. Wivell briefly reviewed her thoughts on bridging ongoing efforts to weaving marketing, education, housing, diversity and social inclusion, to ensure duplication of efforts did not occur and to make sure the community is aware of their existence. She also encouraged the creation of new Spokes. A brief discussion of the overlay of current Spokes followed with Ms. Dietsch noting “marketing is a central function, so it is different.” Mr. Kelly mentioned an entrepreneur group that has been meeting twice a month and asked, “should that be a Spoke?” “Yes” replied several Members with Mr. Throop noting “that seems like a really good idea.”

Ms. Wivell concluded by briefly reviewing the importance of community communication and outreach. “It is critical to develop a centralized means for posting events” she said. As a brief discussion about town email blasts and other venues for posting events ensued Ms. Dietsch interjected “there is no way we should be reducing the viability of our town newspaper.” Ms. Wivell replied, “communication is important, we are talking about leveraging not competing.”

Ms. Wivell went on to note the inclusion of State and Federal agencies that can provide resources the Ecosystem may use, and finally branding. “Everyone must

be on the same page when it comes to branding” she said. She suggested the Narrative could be adapted or modified to accentuate specific themes or target audiences. She noted most importantly “these efforts and resources need to be *communicated to* and *deployed by* the entire Ecosystem.” Ms. Hatcher noted the numerous volunteers and groups in town and the apparent need for a part-time position or intern “to keep all the pieces moving for all those groups.”

Finally, Ms. Wivell noted the need to draw people to town throughout the year and that an intriguing idea is hold Night Markets (very popular in Asia and popping up over the United States). “Things don’t have to be dead in winter” she said adding “as the saying goes *there is no bad weather, only bad clothing choices.*”

Ms. Wivell concluded by expressing the importance of an individual to be responsible to watch over the interactions, communication, collaboration, requisite actions and fluidity of all the working parts of the Ecosystem (“the man behind the curtain”) to ensure important actions do not fall through the cracks and all involved are on the same page.

Ms. Vincent raised her hand and announced Depot Square was in the initial planning stages of hosting a Night Market for August of this year.

Other Business:

Ms. Hatcher gave a brief review of the Welcome Committee. She noted statistical data on the group since its inception in 2016 (approximately 500 guests having attended Meet & Greet events; 160 inquiries and 125 gift baskets given out to new residents; 52 Business and Community Partners; 16 volunteers since inception with 9 active volunteers). She told the Members the next event was scheduled for April 11th at the Monadnock Center for History & Culture. Ms. Hatcher noted they have been obtaining information from new residents including *where* they came from and *why* they chose Peterborough.

In closing Mr. Throop noted Town Meeting was coming up and it would be wise to “take the opportunity to come up with a presentation of all the things we have accomplished” adding “we should talk about how to use Town Meeting as a venue to highlight these things.” Suggestions included a single-page newsletter, live interactions and discussion with Spoke representatives and a closed-loop Powerpoint presentation highlighting all the different initiatives accomplished. Ms. Hatcher suggested whatever is created it be very visual in nature. From the audience Pelagia Vincent suggested having something to help the townspeople understand affordable housing and help to change the stereotype images of neglected and downtrodden properties. “Affordable housing is a good thing and a

critical thing” she said adding “we need a way to start this process and educate the people” she said.

Ms. Wivell agreed adding and emphasized connectivity in putting a whole presentation together. Ms. Hatcher agreed as well noting the need for a central point to it all. Mr. Morison interjected “a need for a stronger marketing engine” with Ms. Wivell “it has to be identified, it has to be defined.” Ms. Hatcher suggested each Spoke contribute 1 or 2 slides conveying their accomplishments for a closed-loop Powerpoint. Ms. Vincent suggested an informational table with literature on workforce housing.

Ms. Hatcher concluded by noting an action step she would take and bring this conversation to the Board of Selectmen meeting this evening. “Calling it *Celebrating our Vibrant Community* to show all the good work that has been done through the EDA’s efforts to support economic development in town” adding “and if they support if we will form a small group from the EDA to pull it together.”

Next Meeting: March 26th, 2019 at 12:00 Noon

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton

Administrative Assistant