

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

May 22, 2018

MINUTES

Present: George Sterling, Adam Hamilton, Nate Morison, Martha Schaefer, Chubb Whitten and James Kelly

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. “I don’t believe introductions will be necessary” he said with a smile.

Minutes:

A motion was made/seconded (Sterling/Kelly) to approve the Minutes of April 24, 2018 as written with all in favor.

Membership Changes and Election of Officers:

Chair Sterling began by announcing the resignation of Cy Gregg. “He has been on the Board 15 or more years and he believes it is time to move on” he said. Chair Sterling asked the members to think about new members. “Some of people who sit in the audience may be interested” he said. Chair Sterling then announced he also would be stepping down. “I will remain Chairman until May 31st that is the end of my term” he said. The members had a very brief discussion about potential new members and did not elect new Officers. When Mr. Kelly suggested they nominate Ms. Dietsch as a member Mr. Throop explained the Board would make recommendations to the Board of Selectmen for the appointment of a new member. “Well then I suggest we recommend Jeanne” replied Mr. Kelly. Ms. Dietsch was in the audience and because of schedule restraints told the members she would consider an alternate position.

A motion was made/seconded (Kelly/Morison) to recommend Jeanne Dietsch to an alternate position on the Economic Development Authority with all in favor.

Mr. Throop told the members Christine Dennler may also consider becoming an alternate “but I won’t speak for her” he said.

Request Letter of Support for Rail Line: (a letter to Cynthia Brown, Office of Proceedings, Surface Transportation Board in Washington, DC to oppose Pam Am Railways application for adverse discontinuation of the Milford-Bennington Railroad’s operations from Wilton to Milford, New Hampshire).

Confirming all had read the request Chair. Sterling asked for discussion and a motion. Mr. Kelly replied “yes, I think a letter is a given.” Mr. Whitten interjected he did not want to do wordsmithing but suggested the reference to the success of

the economy of Europe based on commercial railroads be removed and the second paragraph be tightened up. “Just a thought, a shorter message is always a better message” he said. After a brief discussion the members agreed to support the letter as written. A motion was made/seconded (Kelly/Schaefer) to approve the letter of support for the Rail Line with all in favor.

Workforce Development – Employer Forums Update:

Mr. Galus was not present, so Mr. Throop gave a brief update on what the Advisory Committee was putting together the fourth Monadnock Area Employer’s Forum. “The next one will be in July” he said adding “all the responses have been positive and enthusiastic. They are working on the agenda which will include a focus on membership and apprentice programs offered by large manufacturing firms such as Hitchner’s and Millipore as well as looking into state, federal and nonprofit resources relating to work force development programs.” He concluded by noting the next forum would also review the updates on action items identified over the first three forums.

Ms. Dietsch briefly noted that a local Knowledge Network Group was working on bringing Puerto Ricans to the area for work at the Peterborough Basket Company. (Owner) “Wayne Dodds says he can use 6-8 workers right now” she said adding “it involves churches and the Mariposa Museum as well and James (Mr. Kelly) is checking on a house-sharing group.” She noted the merit of shared housing to create housing affordability and to allow seniors to stay in their homes with more able-bodied housemates to assist with the daily, weekly and seasonal chores.

Telecommunications Committee - Broadband Update:

Ms. Dietsch reported SB 170 had passed. “Essentially this will enable municipalities, towns or counties to bond for infrastructure and subsequently contract for services (in this case, broadband) at a level they feel is necessary. Bonding for broadband would be no different than any other municipal infrastructure and would be structured in a private/public partnership where we could negotiate contracts.”

Communications Committee – Social Media Contract Update:

Mr. Morison reported a contract with a social media agency had been signed. “The first few weeks were rocky, but things are smoothing out” he said. Mr. Morison then detailed a working guideline for determining what organizations and events to promote as a town “because they are tax-payer sponsored.”

Mr. Morison went on to note they’d come up with four criteria “and the organization or event must hit two of them to be considered for promotion.” That

criteria included 1. *Is it a part of the fabric of Peterborough?* 2. *Is it of interest to those living out of the area in that they would be motivated to visit or even move here?* 3. *Does it show what it is like to live in Peterborough?* And 4. *Is it unique?*

Mr. Hamilton asked “so do you (as a Committee) have a specific ask from the Board? Mr. Morison replied, “just your feedback on the criteria.” He added “we have promoted Greenerboro and Children and the Arts so far.” A brief discussion about *who* and *how* to promote followed. From the audience Palagia Vincent interjected a protest when how to promote restaurants was discussed. “You should not eliminate certain businesses because there are more of them” she said. Mr. Whitten noted “it is part of our mission to promote *all* of them. They should all get a turn.” In the end the consensus was an agreement with Mr. Whitten. Mr. Throop noted problems with retail and event websites in the past that had not been kept up to date. “We do not have the staff to maintain them” he said adding “so there was a town policy introduced that there would be no promotion of businesses by their name.” He went on to say “the EDA has its own webpage, but we need administrative support to respond questions or concerns raised and to make changes and updates. It is not a legal issue until someone raises it as such. Promotion where everyone gets a shot is not as easy as it sounds, you need a mechanism, a point person that calls can be forwarded to.” Mr. Whitten replied, “so use Facebook, Instagram and the EDA platforms, not the town website so you can promote businesses and celebrate our employers as news comes up.” The discussion ended with a consensus that all businesses, organizations and events be promoted equally.

Town Center during the Reconstruction of the Main Street Bridge Update:

Ms. Shaefer reported the outcome of a meeting with bridge engineers from Hoyle & Tanner. She reviewed a website that they would be launching early summer with a tentative name of Peterboroughnhbridge.com noting the website was strictly providing information on the process of the bridge. “It is all the engineering information and they will have a person dedicated to it” she said.

Ms. Schaefer reviewed what other committee members were doing including marketing, communications and organizing events. “We sent out a questionnaire to determine the busiest times of the day, week and year and want to concentrate on a motto of sorts (noting Peterborough Pride as an example). “People live here, work here, they go to school here and we want them to support their local businesses as well” she said. Ms. Dietsch suggested a daycare in the Downtown would draw people in with Ms. Vincent adding the Mariposa Museum has been contemplating offering children’s programming. Mr. Throop reminded the members the Main Street bridge project was not just a Downtown merchant’s problem “It is more than

a town center issue” he said adding “it effects the plazas and businesses along Routes 101 and 202, it effects *all* businesses. We need to keep that in mind when we are thinking about town solutions.”

Strategic Marketing/Branding Project Update:

Ms. Dietsch reported they were working on events with strong local orientation and noted they had contacted Monadnock Buy Local to help them strengthen their campaign. She spoke briefly about identifying local attractions, service businesses and retailers and businesses that do and do not depend on visitors and the life’s blood they support. She went on to say, “and to make lemons out of lemonade we want to get teachers involved with a curriculum on the history of the town and sites to visit, including the bridge project.”

Mr. Throop noted this was the first of two bridge projects “so we have use this time to get effort going before all this hits us and need to have it last two to possible three years. We will be living with this for quite a period of time.”

Workforce Housing:

Mr. Throop told the members on May 18th Kristin Bixby attended the 2018 Multi-family Housing Conference hosted by New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority. The conference title was “New Approaches to Affordable Housing Finance with presentations and a panel discussion on Impact Investing and Housing Finance.

Strategic Marketing /Branding Project Update:

Chair Sterling welcomed Dawn Wivell from Firebrand International. Ms. Wivell began with a brief review of her SWAT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis Report and a narrative and recap that incorporated changes made on the comments for the last meeting (and) the Action Plan at the end. “It was an interesting process” she said noting the review of materials gathered by the EDA Committee, the town, and the sub-committee working on the project. She reiterated she had reached out and had simultaneously conducted interviews and information/data gathering and research; inclusive of stakeholders, potential resources, outside influencers and opinions. She noted interviews both in person and by phone in Peterborough, on the state and regional level, Boston and even the West Coast to get an impression of how we are seen. “You have a great story, it is fun to tell it and what makes up the fabric of Peterborough” she said adding “the next step is to create an Ecosystem.”

Ms. Wivell went on to distribute a hub and spoke style Ecosystem Chart to the members. “The focus is on economic development and creating an Overarching

Committee that consists of Peter Throop (Director, OCD), Nate Morison (EDA Member), Jeanne Dietsch (Citizen), Sean Ryan (Director, Chamber of Commerce), Michelle Voto (ConVal School System), and herself “for a confluence of activities with communication amongst everyone.”



Looking to the members Ms. Wivell asked “is anything missing? We want to make *weaknesses* strengths.” Mr. Whitten asked, “what about education?” “That would be represented by Michelle Voto (ConVal School District)” replied Ms. Wivell. Ms. Dietsch cautioned the Overarching Committee not get too large “we have to have staff support for this” she said. Ms. Schaefer noted a significant number of alternative schools beside the ConVal School system should be included in the education sector.

Ms. Wivell told the members they would all work toward the same goal to market the town and each other with open dialogue and communication. She told the members the weaknesses noted in the school system “were no longer weaknesses because they were being taken care of.” Ms. Schaefer interjected “but no one knows about it. The consensus about the schools is from the town not knowing all the things this group is doing. Communication is key.” Ms. Schaefer also suggested they start with the groups listed before adding to them. “They are populated already” she said with Ms. Wivell replying “exactly.”

Noting recruitment of volunteers Ms. Dietsch asked about meeting requirements. Ms. Wivell replied, “they should meet at least monthly, but that is up to them.” Ms.

Dietsch then told the members Karen Hatcher would like to be on the committee and focus on communication. Ms. Schaefer reiterated her concern with the educational sector noting other alternative schools (Mountain Shadows, Well School, High Mowing) and organizations (Town Library, Mariposa Museum, Monadnock Center for History & Culture). “We need to reach beyond the traditional” she said. Ms. Wivell noted they would most likely discover other industry sectors not represented in the graphic as they moved forward. She also noted “sectors have needs as they grow and will go to other sectors for support. It is all connected.” Noting the changes in demographics Mr. Throop interjected “we need to think about how things have shifted, who we are, where we are headed and what we want.” Adding “do we cater to a wealthy older population or growing young families? Or do we do both?”

Mr. Kelly asked, “where is housing?” Ms. Dietsch replied, “it cuts across the sectors.” A brief discussion about the need for more housing and a more vibrant Downtown followed with Ms. Wivell noting “Downtown is awesome, but it seems it is asleep half the time.” Mr. Throop noted the non-support of the zoning amendment and a mindset of how to approach the housing issue. Ms. Dietsch interjected “It is mainly the T4 Residential and its specifics. I think over all people support the idea.”

Mr. Throop summarized by noting “getting back to the question of understanding the value of the process of what Dawn is doing” he added. “the Overarching Committee, kick off goals and objectives, communication, branding, ambassadorship and getting organized.” Ms. Dietsch replied, “for starters should we put education into Tourism?” Mr. Schaefer replied “I’d think it would be marginalized if I were an educator.”

Mr. Throop spoke briefly about Downtown vitality and the Main Street Bridge project. Ms. Schaefer suggested a communication vehicle “and then around that decide how to keep the Downtown vital. We don’t want people to get into the mindset that they don’t want to go Downtown because it is a mess.” Ms. Wivell added the issue of merchants not able or willing to open their shops on Sunday. “It is a chicken and egg thing” concluded Ms. Dietsch.

As the discussion wound up several individuals’ names were suggested as being pursued as Overarching Committee members (Liz and Bill Littles, Peter Robinson, Laura Gingras) and getting the Contoocook Housing Trust involved and engaged.

Other Business:

Mr. Kelly noted for the record that Alex Walker from the Agriculture Committee would like to come in and speak to the group at their next meeting. The would like to print a 3/fold pamphlet to promote local Farms, farm stands and CSA's.

Next Meeting:

June 27, 2018 at 12:00 p.m.

In conclusion Mr. Whitton acknowledged Chair Sterling's service and said, "a hearty thank you George."

Vice Chair Hamilton also thanked Chair Sterling for all he has done. "Thank you for getting the EDA restarted a few years ago and thanks to Cy for his long standing on the Committee and his many years of service" he said

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton

Administrative Assistant