

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
WORKING GROUP**

May 31, 2019

**MINUTES**

**Present:** Nate Morison, James Kelly, Jerry Galus, and Karen Hatcher

**Also Present:** Kristin Bixby, Office of Community Development; Lara Shea (Scott Farrar)

Interim Chair Nate Morison opened the meeting at 10:35 AM.

Mr. Morison explained that the goal of this meeting was for the working group to have a more detailed discussion on the future of the Economic Development Authority, with consideration of its structure, its mission/purpose and goals, and its leadership. Those present were given copies of Firebrand's SWOT Analysis and Action Plan, and the EDA's current Strategic Plan document for reference. The outline of the meeting would follow a process identified by following five steps: *purpose, priorities, projects, people, and performance.*

**Purpose:**

Mr. Morison referenced that the mission currently stated on the Strategic Plan says, "*The EDA's mission is to strengthen the economic vitality of the town while retaining and enhancing the physical, cultural, social, recreational, and environmental character of the Town.*"

- Those present noted that this mission is broad and seems to be very close to the mission of the newly established Economic Ecosystem [*noted hereon as "Hub"*]. If these groups are to remain separate, there needs to be much more separation in their mission.
- Mr. Morison added that he would like it mentioned in the EDA's purpose that the EDA will foster collaboration between town entities, to establish economic vitality.

The group then looked to the scope of authority for the group's purpose, which states, "*The specific mission of the EDA is to foster economic and industrial development, consistent with state statutes and the Town's planning objectives. The EDA is also responsible, in conjunction with the Office of Community Development Director, for administering the three Tax Increment Finance (TIF) Plans currently in effect – one for the Greater Downtown, one for West Peterborough, and one for South Peterborough.*"

- Ms. Hatcher noted that the word "foster" needs to be defined. Foster to what end? How can you tangibly measure results on whether you fostered something to happen?

**Priorities:**

The biggest priority at the moment is to sit down with those involved in the Hub so the EDA can better determine how to support that group, or whether these efforts could be combined in some way. There was discussion on how the EDA should be simplifying this process instead of duplicating it, and with the Hub evolving, many of the projects that used to come to them are going straight to the Hub. There was also discussion on how consistent leadership between these groups would be helpful, and one meeting a month is less of a commitment for members who go to both meetings. It was agreed upon that none of this could be decided until a joint meeting was held, where the pros and cons of a merge were weighed, and a working structure for a merger could be developed.

After there is better clarification on where the Hub and EDA stand, Mr. Morison suggests that the EDA look more heavily at the deliverables provided by their consultant from Firebrand International and see how to best capitalize on what has been produced.

**Projects:**

Mr. Kelly pointed to affordable housing projects and a micro-grid, energy-related project. Ms. Hatcher suggested that these ideas needed to be integrated into other existing efforts and groups with missions that align with those causes or needed to be taken to the Select Board. There was discussion on how the EDA can certainly support initiatives, but only in ways in which they align with economic development. It was also discussed that the EDA may not want to seek out large initiative until they are better organized as a group.

The question was raised on whether it was the job of the EDA to actually execute projects at all, or whether it was really in their authority to grant funding and/or support the efforts of other groups that would produce something that would contribute to economic development. Going back to the discussion on how the EDAs mission was to “foster development”, it was agreed upon that the EDA is merely there to support, not drive or implement. For clarity, there is no reason that anyone can’t come to the EDA looking for support in implementation of a project, but the EDA would not take over in carrying out a project themselves. HOWEVER, the Authority does need to establish guidelines on how they will be spending EDA funds.

**People:**

It was agreed-upon that there needs to be a better vetting process for membership, that weighed items like availability, influence, and leadership qualities. The Authority needs a formal process and purpose for each nomination, that should be written up and presented to the Select Board before appointments are made. Ms. Hatcher noted that this should set a standard for all appointed positions, not just the EDA.

It was suggested by Ms. Hatcher that Spoke leaders could be approached on whether they would like to fill vacant seats on the EDA.

**Performance:**

The group did not have time to spend on this part of the discussion but did reiterate that there does need to be metrics on how economic development has improved through the work of the EDA. As mentioned by Ms. Hatcher above, “how can you tangibly measure results on whether you fostered something to happen?”

**Tentative Next Meeting:** June 10, 2019 at 12:00 Noon

*[EDIT: This meeting was canceled due to scheduling conflicts. A joint meeting will be held on Monday, June 14<sup>th</sup> at noon]*

The meeting adjourned at 11:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristin Bixby

Assistant Planner