

DRAFT MINUTES

EDC MEETING MINUTES

May 17, 2011

1. Call Meeting to Order

Chairman Barry Sandberg convened the meeting at 8:20 am in the Nowak Room of the Town Office Building. Other members present were: Vice Chair Caroline Amport, Committee Secretary Beth MacDonald, Town Manager Russ Dean, Building Inspector Doug Eastman, Selectmen's Rep. Julie Gilman, Planning Board Rep. Kathy Corson, Christine Davis, Brian Lortie, Brandon Stauber, and Chamber Representative Mike Schidlovsky.

2. Approval of minutes

The members offered several small amendments to the draft minutes.

Ms. Gilman moved to approve the minutes of the April 19, 2011 meeting as amended. Ms. Amport seconded. Vote: Unanimous.

3. Exeter Town/Committee Reports

4. Discussion/Action Items

a. New Business

i. Preparations for EDC Visioning Meeting/Master Plan presentation

Ms. Amport asked the members of the commission to respond to her recently emailed questions regarding the hiring of a facilitator for the visioning session. She will then compile the answers and distribute it to the group. Mr. Stauber is opposed to spending money on a facilitator and thinks the group should meet first and see if they can work out the vision. Ms. Amport noted that the commission had discussed the idea of the facilitator at a prior meeting and there was support for the idea and that the value of having a skilled facilitator would help to save time and keep focus. Since everyone will be answering the list of questions, the group will all have their say on whether or not to hire the facilitator. Mr. Dean noted that the facilitator would not be a participant, and if anyone in the commission tried to facilitate, it would not enable them to fully participate. Mr. Sandberg would like to discuss this further at the next meeting after everyone's answers have been compiled.

Presentation: Peter Francese, New England Economic Partnership

Mr. Sandberg introduced Peter Francese, who is a demographer, is here to talk about the demographic information that he has gathered regarding the Town of Exeter, and what it could mean for the future of economic development in the area.

Mr. Francese reported that the population of the State of New Hampshire is aging rapidly, and that New Hampshire is currently the 4th oldest state in the country. As for the New England area, he says that there are 200,000 less children in the region than there were 10 years ago, owing partly to the trend of building age restricted housing and zoning against affordable housing for young families. He says that there is a rule in demography that states that when you stop growing, you start aging, which is happening here in Exeter. The median age here is 45 years old, which is older than the national average. In 1990, New Hampshire's median age was the same as the national numbers, but now we are over that. He notes that one in four voters in Exeter is over 65 years old.

Mr. Dean asked if the growth trends are the same in other SAU16 town, and Mr. Francese said that Brentwood has grown 40% in recent years and that Newfields had similar growth in the 1990's, but then

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stopped. Mr. Francese urged the members to research the 10 surrounding towns for examples of the fact that each town operates independently, therefore expensively. Pooling resources is a way to keep costs lower and in turn taxes could be lowered if town are willing to work cooperatively.

Mr. Francese also noted that the number of rental units in Exeter has decreased in Exeter in the past 10 years, and the effect of that is that fewer young people and families with children have rental units to live in, thus eliminating young people. The number of dwellings in Exeter is virtually unchanged from 10 years ago (6107 in 2000, 6114 in 2010), which is an example of a lack of growth. He also noted that only 1 in 5 households in Exeter is a married couple with children and one in every three people in Exeter lives alone.

Ms. MacDonald said that New Hampshire seems to actively seek retirees through an absence of taxes such as income tax, estate tax, property tax breaks, as well as other incentives for retirees. Mr. Francese said that \$34 million of the Exeter tax base was exempt to elderly residents last year, and that some towns court the elderly as a way to decrease the school expenses, but there is really no 'per child cost' to public schools because so many of the costs are fixed and not dependent upon the number of students in each school. This concept is not accepted by many communities, though, preferring to see each additional child as an additional cost to taxpayers. Mr. Francese gave the example of Newmarket, which has its own K-12 school system. Recently they tried to get into a regional school system but had no luck. Mr. Schidlovsky said that Oyster River schools identify a 'per child cost' of \$18,000, but only charges \$12,000 to tuition students.

Mr. Schidlovsky invited the members to the next Chamber of Commerce meeting on Tuesday, May 24 at 7:30am where Mr. Francese will give a more detailed report of the demographics in the region. Mr. Francese also noted that the public must be better informed about the problems in the area and that public officials need to find ways to communicate better.

Mr. Francese believes that the solution to many of the problems in New Hampshire towns is a regional approach, which is unpopular, and when communities do work together, they do so reluctantly. He suggests that the EDC start to gather information in three distinct areas in an effort to begin growth again:

1. Survey the largest employers in Town to see what they see as their needs for the future and what type of employees they want to attract to the area, as well as their plans for expansion in the future.
2. Research impediments to economic development in Exeter in terms of community resistance. Understanding the attitude and wants of the community will make it easier to get support.
3. Survey voters at random and ask what sort of development they want and what they would support. See what economic development they think would be in harmony with the community.

Ms. Davis said that she attended a meeting last week at which a number of people made negative comments about Exeter's willingness to welcome new businesses to town. Mr. Eastman said that Exeter is selective, but that we are cooperative with developers to create good projects. Ms. Davis noted that perception becomes reality in people's minds, so public relations with regard to economic development will be very important.

b. Old Business

West/Ex Project update

Mr. Dean said that the West Ex group met on Tuesday regarding the grant for the baggage building. They reviewed the history of the station and thought of ways to divide it from the current Gerry's

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Market. The meeting was a productive planning session. The grant funds may not be available until October, which is a few months later than originally expected, so that will delay the project a bit.

6. EDC Subcommittee Reports

a. Executive- None

b. Finance- Brian Lortie handed out an accounting of the EDC bank account for the past 10 years, noting that the current balance of the account is \$25,333.01 and the funds are deposited in People's United Bank.

Mr. Stauber asked where this money originated, and Mr. Lortie said that it was his understanding that a very proactive EDC back in the 1980's purchased land off of Epping Road and then sold it for a profit. That profit became the EDC's funds. Mr. Stauber asked why the money has been left in this account and never been returned to the taxpayers, to which a number of the commission members said that the funds are not tax dollars, they are funds raised for the purpose of economic development by a private source.

c. Governance and Regulations- None.

d. Public Programs- None.

e. Marketing and Communications- None

f. Business Retention & Recruitment-

7. Meeting Schedule Review

The next meeting will be in two weeks, Tuesday, May 31, 2011 at 8:15am.

8. Announcements-

Mr. Sandberg offered copies of a brochure that was created by the Historic Exeter Retail Owners Network (HERON), which he received when he attended their May meeting. They are available at downtown shops.

9. Adjournment

Ms. Gilman moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:35. Ms. Amport seconded. Vote: Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelly Geis
Recording Secretary