

## *DRAFT MINUTES*

**Exeter Economic Development Commission**

**August 30, 2011**

### **1. Call Meeting to Order**

Chairman Barry Sandberg convened the meeting at 8:30 am in the Nowak Room of the Town Office Building. Members present were: Vice Chair Caroline Amport, Committee Secretary Beth MacDonald, Town Manager Russ Dean, Building Inspector Doug Eastman, Town Planner Sylvia von Aulock, Selectmen's Rep. Julie Gilman, Planning Board Rep. Kathy Corson, Christine Davis, Brian Lortie, Brandon Stauber, Madeleine Hamel, Alison Field, and Don Briselden.

### **2. Approval of Minutes**

The minutes for the August 16, 2011 meeting were not available for this meeting.

### **3. Discussion**

Ms. Davis stated NHDRED is looking for input from businesses impacted by tropical storm Irene. If members were aware of any such businesses they should contact the agency.

Mr. Dean reported the BoatofGarten proposal for a 140,000 SF addition and parking lot expansion at 11 Continental Drive was approved at a recent Planning Board meeting. With this expansion there is the potential for 130-140 new jobs. Ms. von Aulock stated working with the design team and her Office from the onset on what compliances would be required of the applicant certainly made for the application to proceed smoothly and resulted in positive results for both the company and the Town. Ms. Corson agreed the process did go smoothly and suggested they be invited to a future meeting. The impression received was that they will be growing beyond the present plans and this is an opportunity to expand on positive feedback.

Mr. Dean further commented he and Ms. von Aulock are working on draft language for an ER Zone application. It is still in the preliminary stage of investigation and research to ensure the necessary criteria are met. One area being looked at is Epping Road where presently the Meeting Place housing units and other non-profit organizations are located. The approval of the EDC will be needed before being finalized.

#### **a. New Business**

i. Mr. Sandberg welcomed Mr. Stuart Arnett of the Arnett Development Group from Concord, NH. Mr. Arnett expressed his appreciation for being chosen to conduct the EDC Visioning Session on September 12. Mr. Arnett then proceeded to provide some background information on his group. For the EDC session Mr. Roger Clark, former chair of PlanNH, will be the facilitator. His role will be that of a coach at this half-day session and will focus on the responses received from the pre-session questionnaire to guide the discussions. Referring to the distributed handout, Mr. Arnett reviewed the three categories that will be the basis of the Visioning Session: ideas from the survey, introduction to economic development-who are the players and how do they work and lastly, what do we do now. From the submitted responses the Arnett Group will be able determine before the actual session where there is consensus and where there is not. For this session the focus will then be on areas of consensus for action and leave the undetermined areas to be resolved at a later time. Following the session a final draft report will be prepared and put into a form suitable for a power point presentation that can be shared if so desired.

Mr. Arnett stressed the replies on the survey are confidential and be emailed or mailed to the Arnett Development Group (email and mailing addresses provided at end of questionnaire). He did ask that the responses be returned by Friday, September 2, 2011.

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Ms. von Aulock asked if Visioning Session was just for EDC or was it open to general public. Was it a public hearing and if the business community is invited how do we get them there? Further discussion established it was a public meeting and the business community is welcomed but they will be working participants. This is not to be an open forum: verbal testimonies are not part of the agenda. It was stressed this is the EDC's day for training. It may be determined as a result of the Visioning Session the EDC may wish to host roundtable discussions for the business community.

With no further questions or comments, Mr. Sandberg thanked Mr. Arnett for coming and expressed the Commission's eagerness for the upcoming event.

### **b. Old Business**

Mr. Sandberg took this opportunity to thank Mr. Briselden and his subcommittee for the extensive work on the TIF and the Train Station project, much work has been taking place behind the scenes assembling information from various sources, assembling data, talking with other professionals and documenting the current businesses in Town. Mr. Briselden strongly suggested to review the preliminary report (TIF District Assessment Statement) prepared and electronically mailed to the members prior to attending the Visioning Session.

### **4. EDC Subcommittee/work group**

Mr. Sandburg acknowledged another subcommittee hard at work between the meetings: Ms. Hamel and the Business Retention and Recruitment subcommittee. Mr. Sandberg felt all these efforts help prepare the EDC for any questions that come to the Town. For this meeting, Ms. Hamel was presenting an overview of the Business Retention and Recruitment subcommittee and their activities.

Initially, Ms. Hamel introduced the members: Christine Davis, Ken Knowles, Brandon Stauber, Mike Schidlovsky, Russ Dean and herself. In March of 2011 the subcommittee was formed and immediately set out to initiate goals and develop a plan for outreach to the business and industrial community. The group felt it necessary to conduct: a general economic analysis to establish baseline data to identify and assess Exeter's assets and liabilities, project future needs, measure progress and success, identify industries best suited to Exeter and identify project criteria to evaluate proposals within scope of Master Plan. Of equal importance was to retain and expand Exeter business and industry. And lastly, the goal was outlined to attract and recruit business and industry to Exeter by developing a marketing program and strategies to accomplish the task.

Ms. Hamel proceeded with a Power Point presentation to accompany the handout documenting the groups' activities from the months of April through July 2011. An agenda and summary for each of the monthly meetings were prepared and Ms. Hamel reviewed the activities: collected and researched existing agencies of resources and meeting with Town and area business people. After hearing from a local realtor several issues of urgency seemed to emerge: utility firms should be brought on board and a need to obtain more information from DRED on state incentives and their economic development programs. There was agreement that Epping Road should be a priority since the West Ex project has support and some funding in place.

The need for staffing, be it volunteers, interns or Town employees, appeared to be paramount in completing the list of tasks and objectives set down by the group in particular data entry. Mr. Dean has been in contact with UNH's MPA program and a scope of work and tasks for the intern has been completed.

Ms. Hamel continued to list the outcome of each of the monthly meetings and suggestions included, but not limited to:

- Develop a letter of introduction to prospective entrepreneurs

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- Host a Business Roundtable for an exchange of ideas between the businesses and the committee
- Develop an Outreach program
- Use the Town government television channel to acquaint the community of their work
- Look to nearby communities with similar goals at attributes and their efforts at economic development
- Create an Ambassador Board made up of community leaders; this group could act as a sounding board and relate their experiences
- Develop a new web site (Mr. Stauber volunteered to head this task and meetings with Mr. Dean and the Town IT manager are to be arranged)

In the July 2011 meeting the group, working from the previous months accomplishments, outlined their Goals and Objectives to focus on what they wished to get done; what were they going to work on. And it seemed imperative it be in place before the Visioning Session. Most likely it will be fine-tuned after the Session.

Summarizing, Ms. Hamel referenced the three (3) Main Topics/tasks of the Goals and Objectives list for their future plan of action. Work will continue, with the assistance of Ms. Field and Mr. Schidlovsky of the Chamber of Commerce to compile data on the existing businesses within the Town. Mr. Dean requested employment data be included in the information gathering.

Mr. Sandberg thanked Ms. Hamel and her group for their comprehensive work over these past six months but did caution not to move forward too quickly but to wait for the Visioning Session to develop a blueprint and give the group more direction.

Ms. Fields distributed a brochure developed by the Chamber that perhaps could be incorporated as a marketing tool. Ms. Field also spoke enthusiastically on a Clean Tech center she visited recently in Newburyport, MA. They are renting out empty industrial buildings to clean tech businesses and the tenants also share in some of the common spaces. Resources on markets, funding sources, information gathering are services provided so as to not duplicate one another's efforts. In speaking with the director of project she expressed a willingness to come and speak to the EDC. Ms. Field was very excited about the concept and the businesses represented. She thought it might be a concept we could adopt for our vacant or underutilized industrial buildings.

### **5. Next Scheduled Meeting September 12, 2011 Visioning Session**

Mr. Sandberg asked for a consensus on the site of the Visioning Session as both the Library and the Conference Suite of the Hampton Inn were available. The decision to accept the Hampton Inn's offer was accepted as they were a new business to Town and felt they would reach out and accept their hospitality. As for food, the Inn could offer what they make available for breakfast to their guests but did not have the facilities for lunch service. Mr. Arnett reminded the group a "working lunch" was on the agenda for the Session. After some discussion on possible arrangements the consensus was to allow the Commission to arrange provisions for lunch.

### **6. Adjournment**

Mr. Sandberg adjourned the meeting at 9:40 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Ginny Raub, Recording Secretary