

Exeter Economic Development Commission

November 8, 2011

1. Call Meeting to Order

Chairman Barry Sandberg convened the meeting at 8:18 am in the Nowak Room of the Town Office Building. Members present were Don Briselden, Caroline Amport, Lizabeth MacDonald, Christine Davis, Brandon Stauber, Madeleine Hamel, Town Manager Russ Dean, Town Planner Sylvia von Aulock, Building Inspector Doug Eastman, Selectwoman Julie Gilman, Planning Board rep. Kathy Corson, Chamber of Commerce rep. Allison Field and Selectman Don Clement.

2. Approval of minutes of 10/25/11 meeting

In asking members to review the draft minutes, Ms. Field offered clarification to her correspondence to the Chair regarding attendance at EEDC meetings. She apologized for any misunderstanding as it wasn't her intent to stop being a courtesy member but to advise the group she may not always be available to attend every scheduled meeting. She did indeed support the Commission and intended to stay involved. But did add if the group wished to have a Chamber representative that was also an Exeter resident that could be a voting member she certainly understood. Mr. Sandberg welcomed Ms. Field as a rotating member and to come when her schedule permitted and her communication with the Chamber and expertise were always welcomed.

It was noted again the resignation of Karel Kunz thus creating an open seat. Ms. Gilman stated the BOS will be looking at candidates to fill the vacancy and applications are available through the Town Manager's office. The Chair offered his willingness and that of the Executive committee to meet with any individual interested in joining the Commission to discuss the group's goals and objectives and explain the workings of the group. Responding to a question, Ms. Gilman stated the vacancies would be filled as needed. Mr. Sandberg noted there are at present 11 sitting members and able to conduct business.

With no other comments, Ms. Amport made the motion to approve the minutes as drafted for the October 25, 2011 meeting: seconded by Ms. Corson. Motion carried. Ms. Gilman and Mr. Briselden abstained from the vote.

3. Discussion/Action Items

Ms. Gilman was asked for a recap of actions taken at the previous night's BOS meeting. She replied the Board in reviewing the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) as proposed voted to delete some projects including the funds for the Epping Road TIF proposal and the request for Streetscape parking meters. Mr. Dean added further discussions may be had on the deleted CIP projects and if they might belong someplace else in the budget.

Mr. Clement stated it was his intent in voting off the projects that they would not be moved forward on the 2012 warrant.

In continuing, Mr. Dean did state his office was essentially the sponsor for both the TIF and parking meters. He thanked Town Planner, Sylvia von Aulock for all her efforts in providing the supporting details for the projects in the presentations. The Chair asked for recognition and acknowledgement to Ms. von Aulock and the Planning Department staff for their work in preparing the presentations.

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Mr. Dean added the TIF project was self-explanatory and felt the need for the Commission to explore the proposal further and possibly look at different sources of funding. As for the parking meters, he conceded it was a divisive issue but felt there were some sensible arguments for support. The proposal appeared to get bogged down between the train station and the downtown. This approach to funding has a demonstrated history and encouraged the EDC to take up the issue as it has the potential as a source for additional revenue. Ms. Gilman stated by being deferred it won't appear on the 2012 warrant but hopefully the issue is on the table for further discussion and a proposal may be ready for the 2013 warrant.

A point of order was raised by Mr. Stauber: was it appropriate for the Town Manager to lobby specifically for a proposal that the Commission should be taking up because he/they are behind it. The Chair replied it is seen as a revenue enhancer and group could decide if it wanted to debate the project or not. Mr. Stauber stated it was just of point of order. Secondly, he felt after talking with others, instead of selected sites for meters the focus ought to be on the Town as a whole and come up with a more comprehensive report.

Ms. Gilman said the parking meter proposal has her support but noted because of the present CIP presentation schedule, the public only sees the final figures and isn't aware of the efforts given a proposal. A proposal such as this needs more exposure and marketing before the presentation.

- **Presentation:** *Town of Exeter, CIP proposal*

Ms. von Aulock was prepared to give a power point presentation on the Town 2012 Capital Improvement Program but in light of the Selectmen's actions the previous night modified the presentation by referring to a previously prepared handout distributed to the members. Commencing with an overview of the 2012 projects the major portion of the presentation went into detail the impetus behind the TIF and the Streetscape Improvement Program: how can Exeter maintain and improve its infrastructure without burdening tax and rate payers while encouraging development in Exeter's commercial district. Two methods emerged with proven success records: revenue from parking permits or metering and tax increment financing (TIF). The RSA stating what the derived-revenues can be used for was listed. On a personal note, Ms. von Aulock personally spoke with several neighboring towns verifying the fees charged for downtown parking and DownEaster train stations and those figures were noted.

Included was a Summary of Potential Revenue for five potential parking areas in Town as to number of spaces, hourly fees/day/number of days and annual permit fees for the lots and train station.

Four possible TIF Districts in the Town were highlighted: downtown, Lincoln St. area, Portsmouth Ave. and the Epping Road corridor. Those communities with TIF experience were noted.

The Chair thanked the Town Planner for an excellent presentation.

Varied questions and comments followed the presentation. Responding to a question on a history of Town parking, Ms. von Aulock said an extensive parking utilization survey

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was done back in 2005 by a Parking Committee when the downtown businesses wanted a parking garage. The full report is available if anyone wished to view it. Policy questions on the proposal were raised but Ms. von Aulock felt you had to decide first on the fundamental issue: do you want to create a revenue source. The BOS and possible other groups would make the final policy decisions.

Discussion focused on the need to include the downtown merchants in any future discussions as well as the need for a comprehensive marketing plan: photos of existing conditions, photos of communities adopting parking meters, more newspaper articles and use of the local TV channel.

After a good discussion of the proposal Mr. Briselden added he felt much good work has been done but perhaps all the work has not been done. What is the process to go from here to the next level. Several members felt it was a valid proposal worthy of the EEDC's involvement but to be mindful of the goals set forth in the Visioning Session and make those the primary focus for at least the next 120 days.

Before the next meeting Mr. Sandberg asked the group to think about parking issues and revenue enhancements keeping in mind the goals set forth at the Visioning Session. Time will be allotted at the meeting for a discussion of possible Commission involvement: do the members want to take this on in some form in the coming year perhaps as a special work group/task force or a think tank group meeting or put off any action,

- **Reports:** *EEDC work groups*

- Ms. Hamel reported the first meeting of the **Business Retention and Support** group focused on how they wished to develop a favorable business relationship with the business community. During the session it was reminded the role the non-for-profit groups play in this community as major employers and as some of the largest businesses: an important factor when developing an outreach plan. She has been in touch with Jason Brown, the intern, and is pleased with the progress he is making in developing a business data base with the assistance of Mr. Dean and Mr. Lortie. His Excel program is expanded to include undeveloped property information and developers' information. A letter of introduction from the EEDC is being formulated to be initially sent to the larger businesses as determined from the data base. It would serve as an introduction to the EEDC and this subcommittee; its plan and mission and invite them to participate to join in the work for economic development. It is hoped to obtain feed back from the business on their needs and issues and experiences doing business within the Town. Also, to create a business survey for conversations with the businesses one on one and/or hopefully to receive back a response. Ms. Davis is providing input from sample surveys prepared by DRED. Various methods for accomplishing a successful outcome for responses need to be explored. Longer term, a business forum may be held as another outreach action. Other communities will be contacted for comments on their economic development endeavors.

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The Chair reminded all the groups to post their meetings and to keep records of their discussion/actions as they are public posted meetings. It was stressed the Commission have the opportunity to review any proposed documents for feed back and approval.

- Mr. Stauber reported the **Marketing and Branding** subcommittee had a good first meeting with Mr. Frank Ferraro and Mr. Don Clement who are working at the Select level on developing a new Town website. They offered a vision to what the Town would like to have and how/where the EEDC would fit into that vision. Discussion focused on identifying key audiences and key talking points for each. For the next meeting, members of this group were asked to generate a preliminary list of resources and content that would be helpful for each audience. Hopefully the site will help potential businesses move through the process of working with Town and the appropriate channels in their location efforts. It is anticipated by the time a final position statement is approved the Town website will be in place so the subcommittee's work will be readily accessible and ready to go.

Discussion followed on the development of the web site and additional comments indicted that with all the input from the various departments and commissions as to want they wished to be included there will be the need for a significant reformatting of the present government-centered website.

- There was no report of the **Organization/Capacity-Building** working group as Mr. Lortie was not able to attend the meeting. A meeting date has been scheduled.

4. General Announcements

Ms. Gilman stated the BOS accepted a contract proposal for the power purchase agreement of solar power for the wastewater treatment facility. It is hoped to be in place by February.

Also she reported the Heritage Commission recently completed, with grant funding, a survey on the Winter St. Cemetery and the State has given the opinion it is eligible for the National Registry of Historic Places. The next step is to pursue the Registry applications.

Mr. Dean stated he, Mr. Eastman and Ms. von Aulock have been meeting with Sigarms and looking extensively at site plans and talking about different concepts. The Town wants them to stay but acknowledged the Town is competing with a Pease Tradeport facility.

5. Next Meeting scheduled for November 22

6. Motion to Adjourn

Motion to adjourn at 9:28 am by Mr. Stauber; seconded by Ms. Corson. Vote unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Ginny Raub
Recording Secretary

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