

# FINAL MINUTES

## EDC MEETING MINUTES

June 14, 2011

### 1. Call Meeting to Order

Chairman Barry Sandberg convened the meeting at 8:58 am in the Nowak Room of the Town Office Building. Other members present were: Vice Chair Caroline Amport, Town Manager Russ Dean, Building Inspector Doug Eastman, Town Planner Sylvia von Aulock, Selectmen's Rep. Julie Gilman, Christine Davis, Brandon Stauber, Madeleine Hamel, Chamber of Commerce Rep. Mike Schidlovsky, and Chamber of Commerce Rep. Allison Field.

Mr. Sandberg introduced John Atsalis, an intern in the Town Manager's office, who recorded minutes, and Aaron Sanborn, a reporter for the *Exeter News-Letter*.

Mr. Sandberg noted that the TIF subcommittee will meet next week on Tuesday the 21<sup>st</sup>. at 3:30pm

Mr. Sandberg turned the floor over to Mr. Schidlovsky to discuss a business inquiry he had received regarding a retail development project in Brentwood. Mr. Schidlovsky noted that the Exeter Area Chamber of Commerce works on the behalf of the Brentwood business community as well, so he wanted to bring the project to the attention of the Commission in case there was opportunity for dialogue between the developer and the Exeter EDC, but he also had an obligation to Brentwood. Moreover, this business would compete with members of the Chamber of Commerce, so he also had a concern about advancing the development given that fact. He has not been involved in the process thus far, so he does not have details on whether Brentwood is the final site choice, or simply under consideration, though there are online records of hearings by the Brentwood BOS.

Mr. Sandberg asked Mr. Dean what the protocol would typically be for the Town administration to interact with a developer. Mr. Dean said that if a developer came in, they would likely sit down with Planning and Building and work through options in town.

The Commission then engaged in a discussion over the most appropriate way to handle this issue. Mr. Stauber suggested that the Commission be proactive, not reactive and seek out the developer and tell them what Exeter has to offer. He also noted that we did not want to step on Brentwood's toes if the site decision was already completed. Ms. von Aulock suggested that the Commission should have an informal conversation, rather than a formal introduction and that more information was necessary before such a conversation should take place. Ms. Hamel noted that the Commission needed to know whether the developer is set on Brentwood before determining whether a formal invitation was prudent. The Commission came to the consensus that more information was necessary before it should act and Mr. Schidlovsky agreed to provide more information as soon as it became available to him. Ms. Davis offered to seek information in her office, as the developer may be working with the state recruitment team.

Mr. Sandberg asked Ms. Hamel and the Business Retention and Recruitment committee to prepare for an interaction with the developer, but to hold off until more information was available. He noted that this is an opportunity for the Commission to think about what next steps and a welcome message would be for this project and future opportunities. Mr. Dean reminded members of the Commission to not reach out to the developer on their own and to wait for a Commission decision. Ms. Amport reminded members of the Commission that any information about the project shared with the Commission would

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be public knowledge and to keep this in mind.

### 2. Approval of minutes

Ms. Gilman noted that she did not motion to adjourn the previous meeting since she was not present for the adjournment. Mr. Sandberg noted that the minutes will be amended to reflect that.

**Ms. Davis moved to approve the minutes of the May 31, 2011 meeting as presented. Mr. Dean seconded. Vote: Unanimous.**

### 3. Discussion/Action Items

#### a. New Business

##### i. Preparations for EDC Visioning Meeting/Master Plan presentation

Ms. Amport developed an RFP for the visioning session and the hiring of a facilitator. Mr. Sandberg asked if there was any questions, comments, or edits that members would like to bring to the attention of the Commission.

Mr. Stauber asked whether item 3 under “Scope and Services” on page 2 should include local businesses, since Ms. von Aulock had suggested at the previous meeting that local business be included in the visioning process. Ms. Amport said that local businesses fell under “interested parties.”

Ms. Hamel had several comments to offer. She suggested that the group background section on page 1 reflect that the group has received input from the Exeter Area Chamber of Commerce. She also wondered whether the scope of the RFP made it necessary for the session to be a full day vs. the planned half-day.

Ms. von Aulock and Ms. Davis noted that four hours is an appropriate amount of time for the vision session and may even be too long. Ms. von Aulock suggested three hours is probably best – 1.5 hours, then 30 minutes for lunch, and 1.5 hours. Ms. Amport agreed with Ms. Hamel that it seems like a lot on paper, but she noted that the facilitator will help the Commission pick the most essential elements out of the RFP and that a half-day will be most conducive to a productive experience. Ms. Hamel also brought up the role of the business community in the visioning session.

Regarding the involvement of the business community, Mr. Dean noted that any forum with many businesses will likely have a flavor of existing businesses opposing the establishment of rival new businesses, such as the opposition that some local businesses had to the construction of the hotels on Portsmouth Avenue. Business members & the public are welcome to the visioning session, but the Commission needs to formulate its own goals and mission before meeting with businesses. Ms. Gilman noted that a goal coming out of the session would be to get the pulse of the business community and that it was not necessary to do so during the session itself.

The Commission came to a consensus that a more in-depth conversation with the business community should occur after the visioning session and that a half-day was the appropriate timeframe for the session.

Ms. Hamel inquired as to whether we should put the bid out for thirty days to get as many responses as possible. Mr. Sandberg asked Mr. Dean what the protocol for bids usually were and whether BOS authorization was necessary. Mr. Dean noted that **sealed written bids** should be delivered to the Town

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Manager's office and that no higher approval was necessary by the BOS or counsel. Ms. von Aulock suggested that the bid be put out for two weeks and the Commission expressed broad support. Ms. Amport noted that the Executive Board already has three potential facilitators identified, so it won't be necessary to have the bid process run longer than two weeks. She asked that Commission members forward her names of any other candidates, as Mr. Dean asked that the Commission keep a list of which people the RFP was sent to and that Commission members not send the RFP out themselves.

Mr. Sandberg noted that the Commission had taken major steps on the visioning process and they will continue to work towards making the session a reality.

#### **4. EDC Subcommittee Reports**

**a. Executive-** None

**b. Finance-** Mr. Sandberg noted the Commission had heard a report last week.

**c. Governance and Regulations-** None.

**d. Public Programs-** None.

**e. Marketing and Communications-** None

**f. Business Retention & Recruitment-** Ms. Hamel provided a report on the BRR's recent activities and its May 18<sup>th</sup> meeting. The subcommittee went over how to approach creating a business inventory and property inventory for the Town and expected to work with Mr. Dean and other town employees to compile the inventories. She said they are still working on next steps.

Bob Anderson, a commercial realtor from Prudential Verani met with the subcommittee and talked about what is going on in the market – the different prospects and availability for development and how businesses make a decision for location. He talked about how Exeter falls regionally in that it is competing with communities with low-cost land, such as Seabrook and areas “north of the bridge,” when it comes to light industry. There is also the issue of land availability in Exeter for industrial use. Moreover, many businesses that have been coming into New Hampshire prefer to rehab existing buildings over construction of new ones. This is difficult in Exeter, since there are not many 10-15K square foot properties that would support development. He noted that Exeter does have Municipal Water/Sewer, which is a huge plus and highlighted the importance of having a smooth Planning/Building approval process.

He also told the subcommittee that Portsmouth Avenue is commercially full, and prospective businesses are not accepting of Epping Road, despite promotion by local developers. There is a lot of risk with building on Epping Road, such as the cost of constructing on Continental Drive, where there is ledge and wetlands issues. He noted that retail might be a good approach for Epping Road and using the 100 Domain [Stratham] model for the commercial/industrial parks.

Ms. Hamel said that the subcommittee came away with the impression that it is necessary to forge relationships with developers and that the Commission must develop a promotion package for Exeter regarding its benefits and any TIF or ERZ zones that are created. Additionally, web visibility is key, as many companies look on the internet first and other Seacoast communities have established a strong

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economic development presence on the web to this end. The Commission should also be able to articulate state (DRED, others) and regional (REDC, others) programs that foster business development to potential businesses. She reviewed the tour of Exeter that Mr. Eastman conducted for the Commission and noted that it was very helpful. Mr. Sandberg noted that another tour will be scheduled this summer for members that did not make it.

### **5. Meeting Schedule Review**

The next meeting will be in two weeks, Tuesday, June 28, 2011 at 8:15am.

### **6. Announcements-**

Mr. Dean presented a mock brochure that Mr. Atsalis produced that modeled how the Commission may want to present information regarding a TIF or ERZ established in Exeter. The brochure presumed that a TIF and ERZ would be established along the Epping Road Corridor. The brochure was sent out to members of the Commission after the meeting.

Ms. Gilman announced that the Heritage Committee was examining form-based building codes, which would help the Town provide input and guidelines for the aesthetic design of new development, which would allow the Town to either encourage development that was stylistically similar or different than other parts of Town, depending on the preferences of the public. It was noted that the RPC has experience in this field.

She further announced that the BOS decided at the 6.13.11 meeting to request the Commission to provide a recommendation on language for an updated Hawkers & Peddlers ordinance. She specifically suggested that members look at ordinances in Portsmouth, Meredith, and Seabrook. Ms. Amport suggested that the governance subcommittee do some research and present their findings to the full Commission.

Mr. Schidlovsky noted that it was announced today that Timberland Company (of Stratham) was bought by a North Carolinian company and he said the Commission should consider the impact, given the number of local jobs that are there. Ms. von Aulock noted that it would be useful to contact Luke Pickett to get further information. Ms. Field said that the Chamber had an economic development meeting in the afternoon with its members and that she and Mr. Schidlovsky share the items that are considered by the Commission in hopes of facilitating communication between the stakeholders in the community.

Mr. Sandberg brought the meeting to a close and thanked everyone for a productive session.

### **7. Adjournment**

**Ms. Gilman moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:35. Mr. Dean seconded. Vote: Unanimous.**

Respectfully submitted,

John K. Atsalis  
Substitute Recording Secretary