

*Minutes approved as amended  
at December 20, 2011 meeting*

**Exeter Economic Development Commission**

**December 6, 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. Members present were: Lizabeth MacDonald, Christine Davis, Brandon Stauber, Madeleine Hamel, Brian Lortie, Caroline Amport, Planning Board rep. Kathy Corson, Building Inspector Doug Eastman, Town Manager Russ Dean and Selectman Don Clement.

Mr. Sandberg introduced and welcomed new member to the EEDC Len Benjamin.

**2. Approval of minutes**

In asking for approval of the November 22, 2011 draft meeting minutes, Mr. Sandberg noted an error in the start time stated in minutes. With correction noted Ms. Corson made a motion to approve, Mr. Lortie seconded. Vote: unanimous with Ms. Amport and Mr. Benjamin abstaining. (Ms. Davis not present at this time)

**3. Discussion/Action Items**

Mr. Sandberg read correspondence received from Don Briselden. Mr. Briselden spoke to his involvement in various community organizations for a number of years, but at this time personal circumstances deem it necessary to reduce time spent in volunteer work. That being said he wished to step down from the EEDC effective December 5, 2011. In the letter, he praised the Chairman and the talented Commission members for the excellent work accomplished in the past months and wished them continuing success in the upcoming year. Mr. Sandberg remarked Mr. Briselden was a great resource to the community and his presence will be missed but felt he could call on Mr. Briselden as needed.

This does create an opening in the Commission membership. The Board of Selectmen and Town Office will be asked to review and select a candidate as a replacement for Mr. Briselden.

The Executive Committee will follow up on any work Mr. Briselden was doing on the Train Station/West Ex project and be certain there is no slack in the ongoing work. At the Visioning Session, Mr. Briselden had requested some of the work come under the purview of the Commission. It is necessary to have some representation so work doesn't get lost.

Following the last meeting the Executive Committee, Ms. Amport, Ms. MacDonald, and Mr. Sandberg, met to review where the group was in terms of progress as the end of year approaches and what needs to be looked at in the coming year. Also discussed were operating procedures for the Commission following the last meeting when it seemed some comments cited in a sub committee report did not have the support of all the members of that group. Mr. Sandberg re-iterated each working group has the responsibility to properly conduct the meeting, follow-up when necessary and take accurate minutes and reports of procedures taken. These minutes should be reviewed and approved by the members present and determined they are an accurate reflection of what was discussed and any future actions to be taken. At that point the report should be submitted to Town Manager's office for filing. In the future the Commission will not hear any reports not prepared in this manner. The intent is to ensure all sub committee members have a clear understanding of what was discussed at the meeting, documented and approved so when a sub committee chair presents a report it is based on what was agreed upon. The EEDC meetings are posted public meetings and any reports presented in this forum should be representative of the sub committee's activities.

Discussing the proposed procedure, several members cited possible scenarios with respect to the intervening time between a sub committee meeting, a Commission meeting and then back to a sub

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committee meeting for a formal approval of the minutes and the possible implications for the working group's activities and future planned actions becoming stalled while waiting for approval.

Another alternative presented is to report a summary of important points discussed as long as those thoughts and points have been agreed to by sub committee members at the meeting before adjourning. Mr. Clement commented at Board of Selectmen meetings' they are asked to give reports of the committees they sit on and often it is before minutes are drafted and posted; can't say committee approved, but can say this is what was talked about. Again, the possible time lag could be anywhere from two to four weeks. He felt there was good momentum going on within the group and would like to keep the flow going.

Mr. Sandberg summarized what he heard and felt it was a reasonable compromise. The Executive Committee wants to find a balance to keep work flowing but making certain there is an accurate reflection of the sub committees positions. No formal motion was offered but there was agreement to the following procedure: *with the approval of the members present at the sub committee, the chairman may present to the Commission a summary of their meeting with discussion points and planned future actions; issues they wish the full Commission to be apprised. Draft minutes of the meeting would be prepared and voted for approval at the next working group meeting. The approved minutes would then be submitted to Town Office for formal filing and posting.*

**Reports: EEDC work groups**

- **Organization and Leadership for Growth**

Sub committee Chairman Brian Lortie stated he was trying to find Town reports regarding tax collections and property valuation but hasn't to date found anything that puts it all together. With upcoming meetings scheduled with the Town Manager and Ms. Hamel he is hopeful more information will be obtained to see this accomplished but also doesn't want to duplicate any work the intern, Mr. Brown may be doing. When queried, he was confident he'll have something to present by the end of the year/early January.

- **Business Retention and Expansion**

Sub committee Chairman Madeleine Hamel reported the group is continuing to work with Mr. Brown on the Exeter business and property inventory data base. As previously reported there are over 500 entries to date. There are some fields in the data base that are problematic in providing an entry i.e. email addresses, mailing addresses that differ from physical location, business contact and title, date of establishment, number of employees: fields that may not be initially filled in. These will be addressed at next meeting in hopes of finding resources for this information. Still questioning how to address assessed valuation of business locations and will be meeting with Mr. Lortie to how best determine that figure.

Responding to the question of what might the Commission want to do with that information, Mr. Lortie replied there would be the ability to analyze where the tax money is coming from, can we expand in those areas, existing vacant properties. Ms. Hamel stated it was a valuable economic indicator; important for economic development to be able to know where is the starting point. As a business expands and increases its tax base it enhances the value of the economic community. When the completed data base is presented to the Commission it is anticipated you will be able to review and discuss in more detail what the data base encompasses and how it might be a tool in the group's work as well as any deficiencies. Primarily, you want to use it to reach out to the community. Hopefully the presentation will be the end of December/early January. The group also wishes to

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move forward with their plan to meet with specific businesses in the community and will be working on that project at their next meeting.

Mr. Sandberg thanked Ms. Hamel and her group for all their efforts noting they (EEDC) were miles ahead of where they were just three months ago.

Before moving on to the next sub committee report, Mr. Sandberg wished to present another topic discussed by the Executive Committee. On the to-do-list resulting from the Visioning Session was hosting a business forum. Originally it was to be an action coordinated by the Business Retention and Expansion group but in re-thinking, the Executive Committee felt it might make sense to make it a group project instead of one group. It would allow more to become involved and pull in their skills and contacts; leaders could be designated, tasks assigned. There perhaps could be collaboration with the Chamber if they wished. It was just a suggestion as the group moves forward. He asked for feedback and was there interest in making this a project of the whole EEDC.

Mr. Stauber promptly responded “Brilliant”.

Discussion followed on the necessity for developing an agenda but also to think about what the Commission can provide to the businesses for information; have something to offer them, something to start the dialogue. It was also suggested members extend personal invitations to area businesses.

Ms. Amport made a motion to move forward with a business forum in 2012. Seconded by Mr. Stauber. In discussing the motion it was suggested to be more specific in the timeline. Ms. Amport amended her motion to read a *business forum will be held before summer of 2012*. Seconded by Mr. Stauber. Vote: unanimous. Mr. Sandberg stated the Executive Committee will put together an initial plan of action. Mr. Lortie asked it be an agenda item as ongoing business.

- **Market and Branding**

Having presented the working groups suggestions for marketing messages and a proposed web site map at the November 22 meeting, they are awaiting feedback so they may proceed with filling in the details. To date no comments have been received and have not met for that reason. The Chair encouraged all members to go back and review the handouts with the marketing messages and the web site map. Mr. Clement, providing an update on the status of the web development project, stated it is still in a development stage with ongoing discussions with potential developers/designers and the Town IT coordinator. It was clarified, any tag line developed will be only for the EEDC web page; not necessarily applicable for the Town.

Ms. Corson added Ms. Amport was unable to attend that meeting but hoped to have a brain storming session to hash out a tag line and come to some conclusion. Perhaps such a session could be an agenda item for the next meeting.

After polling the members present if they were ready to comment on the branding messages presented at the last meeting the feeling was to schedule the brain storming session as it was determined those four messages were just starting points. Ms. Corson felt the need to devote a specific amount of time and focus on just that topic.

Mr. Stauber reviewed the four messages and commented he felt personally to keep it more business oriented; not necessarily a tag line but more of a message as you write and develop content you can refer/go back to this message. Ms. Hamel said as well as viewing other area business web sites to

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at December 20, 2011 meeting*

see how they attract potential employees, it might be considered to speak directly with a marketing professional for guidance/consultation for direction in how a label is developed. It should be considered this tag line/message might be incorporated into a logo that would appear on distributed materials.

Mr. Stauber made a motion to allocate 20 minutes at the next meeting to brainstorm specifically on the messaging: seconded by Ms. Corson. Vote: unanimous.

As for the web site map put together by Ms. Amport, he felt it to be comprehensive based on input from the various work groups. Given the flexibility of the web site, the group will have to wait and see what portions can be actually incorporated. A motion to have the full Commission accept the draft site map in its present stage was made by Mr. Stauber; seconded by Ms. Corson. With a quorum present, motion carried. The outline will be forwarded on to Selectman Clement and Selectman Ferraro for their use in the Town web site development.

**4. Town updates**

Mr. Dean reported Ms. Davis had contacted him from her office at DRED regarding an ER Zone for Epping Road and possible available tax credits. He needs to follow up with her and secure additional information on the proposal. Also, the Budget Committee proposed a five thousand dollar amount (\$5000.00) for the EEDC. In review of the tasks anticipated to be undertaken in the coming year he is almost certain the funds will be used.

Ms. Corson questioned why the funds did not come from the EEDC reserve amount instead of the general fund. Several opinions were offered as to the value of having a small amount in the Town budget to show support for the Commission and its work. As to the reserve amount, once it is depleted it is not replenished. Mr. Stauber questioned Mr. Clement if the EEDC does not have a line item does that preclude a request in 2013; does it prejudice the group? Mr. Clement explained every budget year is different and this was discussed at great length at the Budget Advisory meetings as the original amount requested was ten thousand and the Budget Committee reduced it to the five thousand amount knowing of the balance in the reserve bank account.

Mr. Stauber made a motion to zero out the line item in the Town budget and use the existing funds in the EEDC account. Motion seconded by Ms. Corson. In further discussion Mr. Clement felt we were not helping ourselves and feels the Commission would want a budget line for operating expenses. And added the Board of Selectmen has not finalized the budget yet.

Mr. Stauber agreed to modify his motion to read to reduce the Exeter line item to five hundred dollars (\$500.00) for incidental expenses and use the reserve account for any remaining expenses. Ms. Corson seconded stating the reserve amount has been in the bank for years untouched; would like to save the Town some funds in whatever way she can.

Mr. Benjamin asked if the funds are earmarked for anything particular and was told the funds have a long history for other Commissions in the past but there is no stipulation on how it is to be used.

In discussing the motion further, Mr. Dean felt the Commission needed a budget and that other Town Boards and Committees had budgets. For a Commission to vote against its own budget was a little unusual. Questions were asked as to amounts other Town Boards had for budgets. Mr. Clement said it varied with the groups but did name several dollar amounts for other Commissions. Ms. Hamel felt in reviewing just the projects talked of today there will be a need for funds for printing marketing material,

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postage, hosting events. Her feeling the reserve account should be available for later projects; money for one- time projects. *Ms. MacDonald* felt by refusing the monies offered in the budget it sends the message this is a do-nothing Commission. She felt it incumbent upon the group to take the money and to do as much work as possible with those funds and not limit our ability to do something in the future by depleting the reserve funds.

Hearing no further comments, The Chairman called the question: to reduce the present line item amount of \$5000.00 to \$500.00. Mr. Clement said he would abstain from voting; as a Selectman he would be voting on the final Town budget. With that, two members voted in favor of the motion; five opposed. Motion defeated. The EEDC will keep the budgeted amount of \$5000 in place and the Executive Committee will propose line items for that amount.

Mr. Dean continued his report with an update on the train station project; he anticipates meeting with a DOT representative to sign agreements allowing plans to move forward i.e. appraisal and surveying. The project will go into 21012. The Exeter and Stratham water and sewer process is continuing with Selectman Clement representing the Selectmen. Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC) is the lead agency on the RFP and interviews have been conducted and a decision will be made soon. The extent of the exploration process was detailed and Mr. Clement noted the project is only along Portsmouth Ave. from the Exeter/ Stratham line north to the circle/round-about. Lastly, the Exeter Police Chief has requested from Mr. Dean that he have an opportunity to appear before the Commission and address the comments in the document presented at the last meeting.

Mr. Clement spoke of the sale of the Ioka Theater at the real estate auction. From what is proposed it could be an economic and social boom to the downtown economy. A re-vitalized theater is a real plus for the Town and EEDC should stay apprised of ongoing developments.

Mr. Eastman spoke of two businesses re-locating to the Town. Both will be moving into vacant buildings. Also, the newly renovated Green Bean restaurant has extended their hours of service to include breakfast.

**5. Next Meeting: December 20, 2011**

Discussion followed on the date of next meeting and Ms. Corson felt it should be held as the Business Retention and Expansion sub committee had an introductory letter prepared (which also needed approval) to go out in January to 30 designated businesses and wished that any tag line/marketing message determined at the brain storming session be incorporated in the content. In reviewing the proposed agenda of a brainstorming session, a possible presentation by Mr. Brown of the data base and an appearance of the Police Chief the consensus was to keep the scheduled meeting. Members were then asked to review the marketing messages and come prepared for the work session. Chamber materials will be reviewed as possible resources, as well as DRED materials and area company web sites viewed too.

The Chair will send out a reminder of the meeting date with bullet points of the agenda: will not be the formal agenda.

**6. Adjournment**

Mr. Clement made the motion to adjourn: seconded by Ms. Corson. Vote: unanimous  
Meeting adjourned at 9:40 am.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ginny Raub, Recording secretary