

Exeter Economic Development Commission

July 10, 2012

1. Call meeting to order

Chairman Barry Sandberg convened the meeting at 8:15 am in the Nowak Room of the Exeter Town office building. Members present were: Kathy Corson, Brandon Stauber, Madeleine Hamel, Lizabeth MacDonald, and Town Manager Russ Dean. Also in attendance: Building Inspector Doug Eastman, Town Planner Sylvia von Aulock and interns Tom Lamb and Betsy Bilharz.

Ms. Bilharz was introduced as the new intern for the EEDC. A recent Hamilton College graduate, Ms. Bilharz will be working with Mr. Lamb on website development and other responsibilities as the EEDC's program moves forward.

Mr. Sandberg welcomed Betsy and the members present introduced themselves.

2. Approval of minutes

Ms. Corson moved to accept the draft minutes of the June 12, 2012 meeting: seconded by Ms. Hamel. Mr. Dean noted the correct spelling of Mr. Berry's name (Barry) on page 3. With no other edits, Mr. Sandberg asked for approval of minutes. Vote: unanimous.

3. Discussion/Vote: support for Exeter Hospital

Ms. Corson expressed her opinion the EEDC should demonstrate a show of support for the Exeter Hospital as it is in the midst of clinical scrutiny. The letter penned and signed by the Board of Directors of the Exeter Area Chamber of Commerce was an example of what she felt the EEDC might do to validate the mission of the EEDC; to economically support the hospital as the largest employer in Exeter and in the seacoast.

Mr. Stauber felt the Commission should wait until more information is provided; personally doesn't want to take a stand at this point. Discussion followed prompting Ms. Corson to read the Chamber letter sent to all the major newspapers in NH. (Copy of letter on file with recording secretary)

Mr. Eastman agreed with the content and tone of the Chamber letter; didn't feel we could turn our back on an entity that has been part of our community for so many years. He concurred all the facts are not in but doesn't believe it is the fault of the hospital; wasn't sure how to respond (written letter) but to keep it simple.

Ms. Hamel agreed. As a Commission we should promote and support the economic wellbeing of the entity within the community. Do not need to get involved in the specific issue but do need to support our (the Town) largest employer; keep comments relative to business activity

Mr. Dean felt it was within the purview of the Commission's role to foster good will of businesses and can do that without passing judgment on a specific issue. Knowing the history of the hospital and its place in the community it is important we let people know and the hospital know we are here as an Economic Development Commission to be of support.

Ms. von Aulock admitted she too had mixed feelings as well and yes it is serious but there is the need to highlight the good that has taken place at the Exeter Hospital. She was willing to draft a letter of support to

share with Commission members to show the support of the EDC for the institution and trust there will be revised procedures/reforms taken to address this incident; just a simple letter of support.

Having heard from the members present, Mr. Sandberg asked for a consensus from the group to move ahead and draft a letter to the community; contents to be developed by individual members. Ms. Corson made that as the motion; seconded by Ms. MacDonald. The Chair asked for a vote to move ahead with a statement to be drafted and brought back for review. Four votes in favor; no opposed with Mr. Stauber abstaining. (Mr. Stauber stated he does not disagree with a show of economic support but what impact does this have in a broader perspective.)

Discussion followed on the logistics of developing and reviewing a statement and it was agreed, Ms. Corson, Ms. von Aulock and Ms. MacDonald will prepare the draft to be reviewed by the Executive Committee before it is sent out.

4. Town Update

Responding to the inquiry on the status of the Town website redesign, Mr. Dean stated he felt it was going quite well. The Town is working with the group aHa! Consulting from Hudson, NH. It is still very much a work in progress, but if people wished they may visit the website <http://exeter.teamaha.com> (no www needed) to get an idea of the look of the new website; helpful critique welcomed. September is the calendar date for release but won't do so until able to be complete and proud of the accomplishment.

Mr. Stauber as Chairman of the Branding and Marketing work group will be meeting with Ms. Bilharz to further develop content for the EEDC website section.

The web design team is looking for 10-15 photos that represent Exeter; good representation of what you think represents Exeter. Mr. Stauber offered to shoot any locale, events; email the suggestions to him and he is willing to go out for the shot. Mr. Dean added to forward any photos to his office.

Ms. von Aulock suggested the ER Zone and a map of; has material from her PowerPoint presentations. Also, she understood there was some discussion on using the Bandstand or the Alewife symbol on the Town seal for the front page of the website. She did an informal poll and determined 100% of responders favored the Bandstand. Not only is it iconic but practical; seemed to be most often referenced when giving directions....."Come into Town and turn at the Bandstand", "Do you know where the Bandstand is?" It is all about the Bandstand.

When asked by Ms. Hamel what type of photos did the Commission want for the EEDC page. Mr. Dean explained the Boards and Committees section of the website is along with the Departments. The approach (of the design) is from a functional perspective and getting away from compartmentalizing. The concept of the site is geared toward residents, visitors, business, resources and government with a photo gallery section also; very flexible and functional.

Mr. Dean continued with his report on the Goals of the Selectmen as developed in two visioning sessions. Primex, (the NH Public Risk Management Exchange), a group already working with the Town, facilitated the session and developed a report given the BOS at their July 09, 2012 meeting. (Mr. Dean noted a copy of

the report will be sent electronically to members.) From the session, six goals were developed; top one being economic development. Under that goal is a series of subject issues related to economic development in Town. One task being for the Planning Board, the Economic Development Commission and the Board of Selectmen to hold a joint work meeting at some future date to discuss any pertinent initiatives i.e. Holland Way, Epping Road. Such a meeting could be used as a brainstorming session to get the three groups on the same page; to coordinate efforts.

Ms. MacDonald asked if there might be specific information gathered when the business/property owners were visited as part of the Business Retention and Expansion project to bring to this meeting.

Mr. Dean did not think so as there needs to be an assemblage of technical information to gain the full picture of what we have, what is current: zoning ordinances, discussion of Form Based Codes. As for Holland Way being included it is seen as a corridor and not well built out. Part is to deconstruct myths and develop a plan for what can be done; again, the need to be realistic.

The Exeter Stratham talks (on extending services into their Town) are continuing; still in the process of developing a model. When that is complete and a report is produced will be looking at the next steps and what will be Stratham's commitments.

Mr. Dean spoke of The Mill complex being purchased by a local developer, Eric Chinburg and his group. It is understood the purchase includes the vacant lot across the street from the apartments. Mr. Eastman was excited to see perhaps this site developed to its full potential whereas the previous owners were not so inclined. It was hoped a future discussion with Mr. Chinburg would be held to determine what future plans may be for the site. It was acknowledged this could be a possible TIF site; but Mr. Dean cautioned it is a timing issue and a discussion with Mr. Chinburg and his plans, if any, to develop that parcel might determine if pursuing a Tax Increment Finance (TIF) zone would be advantageous

The re-location of Al's Automotive Services to the Epping Road will free up his former downtown location. Mr. Eastman felt we will see an increase in in-town development in the next few years.

Ms. von Aulock returned to the TIF discussion saying if the group wants to support a TIF in the downtown- and an expanded downtown area to include Al's and the Mill, this would be a good time to support the beginning of the development. It might need to be a Capital Improvement Project; to hire a consultant to help develop the concept/language. She did (the language) for the ER Zone but a TIF was more involved and was uncertain if she had expertise to do so.

Mr. Dean provided more background on two previous efforts to establish a TIF zone in Town; never made it pass the Budget Review Committee nor Board of Selectmen to become a warrant article for a Town vote. But did note the subject of a TIF was not developed to the extent needed for further consideration. He did add he agreed with Ms. von Aulock we should be thinking about maybe committing some EEDC funds to have a TIF drafted. As for a timeline, because it would be a warrant article it would need to be complete by January 2013 to appear on March 2013 ballot and it is a fairly involved process.

Discussion turned to meeting with Mr. Chinburg and it was acknowledged he may have his own incentive plans/ideas and what is his time frame. Ms. von Aulock said she was looking at a broader area; want to know what do you have available for developable properties i.e. Al's Automotive, Mr. Chinburg, the lot next to the Chocolatier. They as owners are dealing with their own schedules/issues. It could take some time to get people educated enough to even want a TIF but she feels the education needs to start sooner than later; regardless of any meeting with Mr. Chinburg as his plans could change.

The structure of a TIF and how it may function was outlined but was also noted there is more than one model. Mr. Sandberg agreed the subject warranted more discussion but wished to return to the pending visit with Mr. Chinburg. At any meeting Mr. Dean and Mr. Eastman would be representing the Town but it was felt even a letter from the EEDC expressing our enthusiasm for the acquisition and to consider the EEDC as a resource would be appropriate. Mr. Dean felt more facts about the real estate transaction need to be verified before any letter goes out. Mr. Sandberg agreed and asked to keep the Executive Committee advised of any future meeting. He acknowledged Ms. von Aulock and Ms. Corson's comments are quite relative in talking more of the TIF concept sooner than later.

Responding to an inquiry on the status of the YMCA project, Ms. von Aulock stated it is in the planning process within her Department. Ms. Hamel felt when the time was right we should send a letter of support.

Additional work group reports

The *Business Retention and Expansion* work group will be meeting to put together a list of businesses for visitation this fall; still need to pursue the documentation and data management of the information gathered at the business visitations.

Mr. Sandberg did have a telephone conversation with Diane Hardy, planner for the Town of Newmarket and their approach to developing an Economic Development chapter for their Town Master Plan. She is willing to meet with members of the *Organization and Capacity Building* work group as they explore developing a chapter for Exeter's Master Plan.

Items for August agenda: letter to Exeter Hospital and meeting with Eric Chinburg. Mr. Dean stated he will be contacting Mr. Jack Dugan, director of the Monadnock Economic Development Corporation in Keene, NH; a speaker he met at a recent conference and feels he would be an excellent presenter to the EEDC. He found him to be very interesting and knowledgeable and would like the group to hear of how the Corporation has operated for some twenty years and their accomplishments; most likely will be a fall agenda item.

General Announcements:

Mr. Eastman stated the second building of the multi-family project on Epping Rd., The Meeting Place, is very close to being ready for occupancy.

With no other business, the Chair asked for a motion to adjourn. So moved by Mr. Dean; seconded by Ms. MacDonald. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 9:30 am

Respectfully submitted,

Ginny Raub, Recording Secretary