

Draft Minutes

Exeter Economic Development Commission

January 10, 2012

1. Call Meeting to Order

Chairman Barry Sandberg convened the meeting at 8:20 am in the Nowak Room at the Town Office Building. Members present were: Madeleine Hamel, Lizabeth MacDonald, Len Benjamin, Brandon Stauber, Caroline Amport, Chamber of Commerce rep. Allison Field, Town Planner Sylvia von Aulock, Building Inspector Doug Eastman, Selectman rep. Julie Gilman, Selectman Don Clement and Town Manager Russ Dean.

2. Approval of Minutes

In asking for approval of the December 20, 2011 draft minutes, Ms. Hamel offered additions to be included in the minutes. They were noted and given to recording secretary for inclusion in the approved minutes. The Chair then entertained a motion to accept the minutes as amended. Mr. Benjamin moved the minutes be accepted with corrections; seconded by Ms. Gilman. Vote unanimous with Mr. Stauber and Ms. Amport abstaining.

3. Discussion/Action Items

Mr. Sandberg asked the report from the Planning Department be presented before moving to the Working Groups' reports.

- **NH Division of Economic Revitalization Zone Tax Credit application**

At the December 20, 2011 meeting Ms. von Aulock presented a draft of a Proposed ER Zone application for the Epping Road Corridor. Support was received to proceed with the formal application to request an Economic Revitalization Zone Tax Credit Designation for the Epping Road Corridor. With the assistance of Ms. Davis and Mr. Robert Barry at DRED, Ms. von Aulock finalized the application and distributed copies of the application for review.

Referencing the handout, Ms. von Aulock walked the members through the seven page application containing description and maps of the proposed area. The Documentation page displayed a generalized map outlining the 1.5 mile area consisting of approximately 720 acres. Also included were streets and addresses within the ER Zone. The application further defined the corridor as being divided into two sections; 88 acres located north of State Route 101 and the 640 +/- acres between Rt. 101 and Brentwood Road. A portion of the application addressed the requested Eligibility Requirements and ER Zone Justification.

Mr. Dean added the Board of Selectmen saw the application at their January 9, 2012 meeting and Ms. Gilman felt the initial response was favorable but wanted further input from the Planning Board. Mr. Clement added they also wished to know more from other communities with ER Zones and how they have worked –or not worked for them.

On a question of Conservation lands within the corridor, Ms. von Aulock said she focused on what is buildable and vacant or demolished buildings (maps included in application). Locating or building in an ER Zone is not carte blanche; all the other processes i.e. Planning Board, Zoning Board must be followed.

Mr. Eastman asked if this application would prevent the Town from applying for an additional ER Zone and cited the Holland Way area. It was re-iterated it was the inquiry to the Town from the Cobham facility on Continental Drive about possible tax incentives for its business that brought the State tax credit program to the forefront and prompted moving forward with this present application. To include the Holland Way in this application at this time might not be the best route but this application does not prevent submitting another application. Ms. Gilman stated it is a rolling application process and there is no time requirement for submission.

Questions and discussion followed on various topics.

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- *Costs associated with the application*
Ms. von Aulock replied there were no fees associated with filing and noted she did not use any of the monies approved at the December 20 meeting to complete the application.
- *Who applies for the ER Zone designation*
Ultimately it is the Town that applies and not necessarily at the request of an industry.
- *Eligibility to establish an ER Zone*
Usually the area has deficiencies where property owners have been unable to sell or develop proposed plans for their property. Most often it does have a “blighted” feeling/reputation. Often there are natural and physical restrictions present on the properties.
An application may be submitted for an area of the Town’s choice but ultimately the State will decide if the area is eligible for the program.
- *Land areas be contiguous*
Land chosen for the zone must be contiguous and Ms. von Aulock used the prepared maps to illustrate the land configuration included in application. BOS may modify zone boundaries if they choose to do so.

Responding to the Chair’s inquiry as to how the Commission wished to proceed, **Ms Amport motioned the EEDC support the application establishing an ER Zone on the Epping Road and for the application to be reviewed by the appropriate Departments, Commissions and Town Office for inclusions or modifications as deemed appropriate before submittal to the BOS for formal approval.**

Seconded by Mr. Benjamin and motion carried. Mr. Stauber abstained as he was not present at the December meeting when first presented.

Mr. Dean stated he would also request a letter be prepared on Town letterhead and signed by the Chairman noting the vote taken at this meeting supporting the establishment of the ER Zone; the letter would accompany the application to DRED.

Mr. Sandberg expressed his appreciation to Ms. von Aulock and her staff for putting together the application in such a timely manner.

Before moving on to the Work Group’s presentation, there was discussion on Jason Brown’s report presented at the last meeting and had members received their copies electronically. Ms. Hamel stated Mr. Eastman and Ms. von Aulock have the capability to *edit* (the Excel spreadsheet) and the other members only permitted to *read*. Any additional comments to the report are to be forwarded to Ms. Hamel.

- **Branding and Marketing Work Group**

Mr. Stauber prefaced his brainstorming session noting they were not looking for a single slogan; want a unified message for the redesigned website and future marketing material that is succinct and unified in what the Commission and as a Town wants to say to attract, retain and interact with the businesses.

Mr. Stauber started by reviewing the Branding Messages previously presented at the November meeting.

The Hub of New Hampshire’s Dynamic Seacoast Economy
Poised for the Future, Informed By the Past (...Shaped by the Past)
Bridging New England’s Historic and Revolutionary Past to the Future
Everything you never knew you were looking for and
Open for Business since 1638

As part of the brainstorming session, members were asked to give their initial response in a single word (or phrase) when thinking of Exeter to be incorporated into a message to appear on the primary page of the EEDC website and in any future marketing material. The words/phrases *historic, the hub, location, seacoast, crossroads, tradition, family, history, inviting, community* were expressed.

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Mr. Stauber added he wants to be certain the Commission agrees to a core message and exclude what the group doesn't like. Each of the words mentioned is inclusive to what the subcommittee has been talking about. As the content for the website is developed, these words/concepts will be incorporated into the messaging. When questioned if a tag line and narrative was desired or just a narrative Mr. Stauber replied a tag line would be desired but the reality is there is a lot of content to be developed.

Mr. Clement suggested more time be spent developing content as he and Selectman Ferraro are preparing an RFP for the web design and will be asking the Departments, Commissions to get all their content together so the selected-designer will have all the material to include in the final design. Tag lines can be added latter.

Ms. Amport commented this discussion was to ascertain the material is developed and organized into some conceptual framework that covers the areas the Commission wants to touch on. Tag lines are useful but require the message be reduced to the essence of what you want to say. Writing a lot of words is the easy part, developing a tag line is more difficult.

Ms. Hamel spoke on the importance of identifying what is unique about Exeter from a business perspective and perhaps highlight the infrastructure that exists in the Town suggesting it is the crossroads of New England, the crossroads of the Seacoast.

As the Chamber of Commerce representative, Ms. Field was asked if anything said today may be offensive or challenged by neighboring communities. Her response noted geographically Exeter may be the hub but candidly Portsmouth is most often thought of as the hub of the Seacoast. It is important you not risk making claims that people could question as that would raise the question of the validity of all the content. Exeter is an integral player in the economy of the seacoast but no one single community can be independent of its neighbors and be economically viable.

Mr. Stauber added that Mr. Dean once stated Exeter had the most on/off ramps from Rt. 101 between Portsmouth and to the south. It was noted this is an excellent example of why a company should consider locating in Exeter. The ease of accessing and exiting is perhaps one point you would want to highlight. Ms. Gilman commented the *crossroads* idea fits this; crossroads to the future, crossroads for access, crossroads for old businesses to new businesses.

As for the next steps for this Working Group, Mr. Stauber felt the group will be getting into more outlining and specific content to become the components of a marketing plan at a broad level as it overlaps with other Working Groups. He needed assurance the Group was not going in a direction that was contrary to the Commission. As for a time table for future reporting, Ms. Amport felt there was enough information presented at the meeting to proceed and asked to work just on a draft of some basic structure and content for a future presentation.

4. Town Updates

- **Exeter Theater Company Visioning Session**

Ms. Gilman noted the session the EEDC choose to host was on Saturday January 21 from 9 – 11 am at the Town Hall. Volunteers would be welcomed.

- **Job Fair**

NH Employment Services will be holding a Job Fair on Thursday February 9, 2012 from 9:30 am – 3:00 pm at the Town Hall. The Rotary Club and the Exeter Area Chamber of Commerce are hosting the event and Ms. Gilman has requested the EEDC have a table where they might interact with businesses and see what they are looking for and perhaps this group could assist them. Space is being designated for approximately thirty-five (35) tables. Work is ongoing by both the Chamber and Rotary to have a diversity of businesses represented.

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An electronically prepared bulletin will be airing on the Town's Public Access channel (Channel 98) and possibly the Government channel (Channel 22).

- **The Getty Station at 1 Bow St.**

The property at 1 Bow St. (the former Getty Station) is being offered to the Town for purchase and it is hoped the option can be finalized after a vote on the warrant article at the March 2012 Town election. Because the building is over fifty years old it does come under the review of the Heritage Commission before it can be demolished. At a recent Heritage meeting discussion focused on the building and how it was a good example of the auto age. After a discussion of perhaps there was some shared feeling out there, Ms. Gilman did contact the National Association of Auto Museums and they are showing some interest. If some action such as the re-location of the building is a result of the contacts, there could be possible media attention.

- **The Baggage Building at the Train Station**

Mr. Dean reported the Baggage building project continues to move ahead. The Grant agreement has been finalized as well as attending the mandatory scooping meeting with NH DOT. Ms. Jennifer Perry and Mr. Kevin Smart of DPW are the lead administrators in helping oversee the construction aspect of the project. With the contract in place, the process of determining how to divide the property, ordering an appraisal and hopefully closing on the Goupil property sometime in the next 60-90 days are the next steps.

Ms. Field noted the Chamber EDC has an active interest in the project and hopes to schedule a Chamber forum discussing the purchase of the Baggage building and what it would mean to the Lincoln St. economy and to tie in with the charrette done earlier in the year on the West Ex project. She asked to be informed of the timeline so a meeting can be scheduled in a timely manner to ensure public awareness for the project.

Mr. Dean replied he was grateful for the Chamber's interest and support in the project and their input as to what the Welcoming Center should be. He felt they were at a point to start brainstorming some of the pieces more aggressively. And he would most certainly keep them informed.

5. General Announcements

Ms. Field noted the next scheduled EEDC meeting on Jan. 24 does conflict with the date of the Chamber's Breakfast Forum: Economic Forecast 2012 with Mr. Ross Gittell as the featured speaker. Several members expressed an interest in attending. It was agreed the next meeting could be rescheduled until the following week if desired. Registration fees and re-imburements from the EEDC bank fund were discussed resulting in Mr. Stauber making the motion if members wishing to attend the Economic Forum would be reimbursed for the registration fee by following the Town protocol for attendance at such a program. He further requested the members be permitted to receive the Chamber member price of \$20.00 when registering. Motion seconded by Mr. Benjamin. Vote carried. Mr. Dean agreed to speak to Mr. Schidlovsky at the Chamber to confirm the fee.

After a review by the Executive Committee, the Chair advised Ms. Hamel and the Business Retention and Expansion subcommittee to proceed with their prepared letter of introduction to the businesses. At their next meeting a short list will be generated of the businesses to receive the letter. Also the working group will start scheduling appointments with businesses to introduce themselves and the mission of the EEDC.

6. Meeting Schedule

The next meeting has been re-scheduled to **January 31, 2012** at 8:15 am

7. Adjournment

Mr. Stauber moved to adjourn meeting at 9:40 am. Mr. Benjamin seconded. Vote: Unanimous

Respectfully submitted

Ginny Raub, Recording Secretary