

1. Call meeting to order

Chairman Barry Sandberg convened the meeting at 8:04 am in the Nowak Room of the Exeter Town office Building. Members present were: Kathy Corson, Christine Davis, Brian Lortie, Len Benjamin, Brandon Stauber, Madeleine Hamel, Lizabeth MacDonald, Selectman Dan Chartrand and Town Manager, Russ Dean. Also in attendance: Building Inspector, Doug Eastman.

Mr. Dean introduced Tom Lamb; a UNH graduate student in the MPA program doing a 10 week internship in the Town Manager's office. Tom will be working on special projects as well as involvement in the website design and some EEDC projects as well.

Mr. Sandberg welcomed Mr. Lamb and asked the members to introduce themselves.

2. Approval of minutes:

Ms. Corson moved to accept the draft minutes of the May 08, 2012 meeting: seconded by Mr. Lortie. Motion passed to accept the minutes as submitted. (Selectman Chartrand was not present for the vote.)

3. Discussion/Action Items

Work groups

Ms. Hamel, chairman of the *Business Retention and Expansion subcommittee*, distributed a handout detailing the continuous work of the subcommittee on the Business Outreach Project. Ms. Hamel reviewed the steps leading to the visitation of selected business.

Listed were recurring themes, feedback and input from the businesses visited. Also noted were the questions or needs of those groups visited. And lastly what the group learned in the outreach process.

Ms. Hamel in her review noted, each of the preliminary steps leading up to the business visitations were approved by the Commission members. This written summary will be a reference tool as they move forward.

The work group, comprised of Ms. Gilman, Ms. Corson, Ms. Davis, Mr. Eastman and herself, worked in teams, with one member assuming the role of contact person, in contacting the thirty chosen businesses; Epping Road businesses were excluded while awaiting approval of the ER Zone for the Epping Road corridor. Since mid-April, the teams have met with sixteen businesses and are continuing to schedule meetings; some businesses asked to delay a visit until a more opportune time. A second list of businesses will be developed in the fall.

The subcommittee continues to meet to discuss and review the project. Ms. Corson and Ms. Gilman suggested the use of Goggle.docs to allow the Excel mailing data base to be downloaded and add additional fields to the spread sheet for comments/notes on the visits as a tracking mechanism.

There is the administrative issue of where the project notes etc. should be kept and the need for an individual- perhaps Town staffing- to maintain the complete data base of some 500 businesses with any changes to management, location etc.to keeps the data base current.

Ms. Hamel emphasized how the businesses were appreciative and receptive to the EEDC visit and the Town in taking the initiative of meeting with them; all were very thankful (even when negative feedback was offered). In response to a question, most often the group met with the owner of the business or a member of the upper level management staff.

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As to a reason for Exeter being chosen as the site for their business, Ms. Davis replied the availability and location of property along with the small town community appeal of the Town seemed to be the response heard most often. Education-high quality public schools, availability of water and sewer, a positive business climate and proximity to Boston, Manchester and Portsmouth via the various transportation infrastructures were also cited as reasons for locating in the Town. Along with the comment of taxes being high also mentioned was the need for services being made available for the Holland Way/Hampton Road area, expansion of sidewalks, a need for the educational institutions to offer technical training programs and the availability of additional work force housing were also cited as needs.

Ms. Corson continued and spoke on a personal note on the benefits in making these visits; felt should be done on a regular basis, no letter need be sent prior, just a phone call, as they now know who the EEDC is. As the downtown and the small town community atmosphere was frequently cited, she talked of the proposed Form Based Codes being discussed in the ZORC subcommittee for along Portsmouth Avenue to make this another walkable link to the downtown.

Ms. Hamel noted the interest of the businesses to learn of the resources of the area and the opportunity to link to the State programs. Having Ms. Davis at the meetings and to share with them the resources of State became an excellent tool and enlightened many in opportunities and programs they were not aware of. Any requests for information/referrals were channeled to the appropriate Town departments/office.

In summary, Ms. Hamel and the work group felt it was a valuable and worthwhile effort and a lot was learned both by the group and the businesses.

Questions followed from the Commission members on the items listed in the prepared summary. They included clarification of “affordable property”, and how to replicate those conditions as the development of Epping Road is pursued. It was emphasized a number of the businesses visited have been at their location for a number of years and at that time it was considered “affordable”. There was no attempt to compare Exeter property values to those of surrounding communities. When asked for more explicit information on a company and would it appear on the Goggle.docs, Ms. Corson stressed the need to respect the privacy of the business and was paramount in deciding what was to be put out there; the notes are a synopsis of the visit. If members wish to discuss in depth the visits perhaps they should/could attend the subcommittee meetings.

In addressing the importance of services, Ms. Davis stressed the lack of water and sewer services is very limiting to a business looking to locate to a locale. It is a very expensive service to provide; do you have what we need.

On the comment of high taxes, Mr. Chartrand asked if it was in reference to property taxes or State taxes. It was in reference to property taxes. Mr. Dean reminded the members NH has neither a sales nor income tax.

Mr. Sandberg praised the group and their efforts and noted what the subcommittee has accomplished in the past months in reaching out to the businesses, getting good information, making connections, spreading some good will and letting the business community know the Town is here to hear their issues/ideas; will continue building bridges. Getting Epping Road business owners together and their feedback appears to be a future step; a conversation for another time.

Mr. Dean offered what advice he took away from a recent economic development meeting was very simple; be realistic. Suggested the group keep that in mind as the group goes forward and capitalize on our strengths and look to potentially expand on those (strengths) but to keep the existing businesses growing and happy. Mr. Chartrand added success and progress is incremental; is a long term process.

Ms. Hamel noted the group will continue to meet with those businesses that asked to be contacted at a later time. Mr. Sandberg commented on focusing on Epping Road but because water and sewer only goes to Continental Drive the focus will need to be broader.

As to the issue of affordable/work force housing the consensus was Exeter was doing quite well. With Ms. von Aulock on vacation and not in attendance it was agreed she could offer more detailed information. Ms. Corson remarked the work force housing was only mentioned by one larger corporation and she felt Exeter was a very diverse community. Mr. Dean did suggest a drive through the newest residential development, Linden Commons off of Linden St., as a good example of what was being built

Mr. Lortie, chairman of the ***Organization and Capacity Building subcommittee***, reported following the last meeting, he, Ms. MacDonald and Mr. Sandberg met in putting together an Economic Development chapter for the Town's Master Plan. It was suggested at the May meeting to reference the Newmarket chapter on Economic Development in their Master Plan. Ms. MacDonald and Mr. Sandberg have made contact with several Newmarket Town officials and will be scheduling a meeting to get more information; how they approached the process, a time frame, and resources needed. This will be brought back to the Commission and then decide how to proceed; most likely to be a 2013 project.

Mr. Lortie continued with the response received from Mr. Berry at DRED on a more detailed explanation of the ER Zone application. He noted it is a complicated application and suggested if a business visit is scheduled with an Epping road owner, they bring a copy with them. But he also suggested if there is an interest in such a tax credit to call DRED first for more specific direction on how to proceed. As to a typical profile on who would use/benefit from this credit it appears to be geared to industrial and manufacturing.

Ms. Hamel noted in their conversations with the businesses incentives such as this were nice but the other factors noted played a larger role in their decision to locate in Exeter: not a deal breaker.

Mr. Stauber chairman of the ***Branding and Marketing subcommittee*** reported there is no activity on the EEDC web site. To his knowledge a vendor has not been selected for the re-design of the Town website; will become more active when that happens.

On a personal note he told of his involvement with the ABI Innovation hub; a non-profit organization out of Manchester, NH that aims to attract, mentor, foster growth and success of technology startups and innovative companies. The structure of the group and its working with the infrastructures in placed is similar to what he was involved with a number of years ago in California. Isn't sure the concept is transferrable to NH; will the startups receive the support and mentors desired. All are questions he is pursuing and will keep the EEDC posted on any activities occurring in the area. Discussion followed on existing resources and organizations with similar goals.

4. Town updates

Mr. Chartrand spoke on the second of Selectmen's goal setting session. He replied he had not received the notes from the second session. But for him, the theme appears to be how we obtain the highest quality of life for Exeter at the best cost.

Mr. Dean added one item being considered is non-residential tax base growth. He felt this was an excellent opportunity to work side by side with the Commission. When asked for clarification on what this was, it was explained it was commercial real estate; growth and expansion-more properties paying rates. Mr. Brown was working on the business categories before he left and the prospective EEDC intern and Mr. Lamb will continue this analysis. Basically it is looking at what is available, how we are going to go, uses allowed by permit or special exception and what the Town wants.

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Mr. Chartrand said they will also be looking at broadening the regionalization of services i.e. the current talks with Stratham on the expansion of water and sewer into their town. It is not just water and sewer, but parks and rec and the other services as well; will not occur all at once but as the opportunity arises.

Mr. Sandberg reported he did write a letter of support as requested by Ms. Gilman on behalf of the Historic District Commission (HDC) for a Certified Local Government (CLG) grant for architectural inventorying of the High Street Historic District.

Ms. Corson spoke of the Planning Board applying for a State grant of \$19,000 for formulating the adoption of Form Based Codes (FBC); unsure if a letter of support is needed but will ask Ms. Gilman. She explained the FBC committee is looking at Portsmouth Ave in two stages: High St. to Walgreens and Walgreens to Foss Motors to make it multimodal and have the owners develop their properties to its fullest and incorporate greenery onto the properties/roadway to make more enticing for pedestrian use.

Mr. Chartrand wished to give kudos to Highway Supervisor, Jay Perkins, for working with all the parties involved to have the Farmers Market go forward on that Thursday while the culvert work was ongoing when it was thought the Market would have to be canceled; the day was an economic success.

Mr. Dean anticipates a second EEDC intern to start soon for at least the summer. It will be the same terms and conditions as with the previous intern, Jason Brown; will be working along with Tom Lamb on EEDC issues.

Would like to invite Cliff Sinnott from Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC) to acquaint members of the various infrastructure programs the RPC is involved with; have members understand some of TIP projects currently ongoing

5. General Announcements

Having participated in the business visits and attended the Stratham Business Forum, Ms. Corson felt strongly the EEDC and the Water and Sewer should meet and discuss frankly the Town's needs (services to the Holland way and Epping Rd) and the direction of the talks of extending of services into Stratham; is this where we want to go. Questioned if the EEDC intern could meet with Town Planner to determine what is buildable on the Holland Way and perhaps confer with the land owners for discussion. Her opinion is the Commission needs to show some type of action. Consensus seemed to be it should be agenda item for further in-depth discussion

Mr. Dean agreed it is one item out there and is timely as the consultants for the Stratham initiative are in the information gathering phase and would be important to them.

Mr. Sandberg agreed to possibly schedule something for August meeting; perhaps have a member of the Water and Sewer Advisory Committee present also.

6. Next meeting dates

July 10 and August 14 were set as meeting dates; felt important to continue to meet in the summer to continue the momentum of the Commission.

7. Adjournment

With no further business, Ms. MacDonald motioned to adjourn; seconded by Mr. Chartrand.

Meeting adjourned at 9:35 am

Respectfully submitted

Ginny Raub
Recording Secretary

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