

Exeter Economic Development Commission

February 12, 2013

1. Call Meeting to Order

Chairman Barry Sandberg convened the meeting at 8:05 am in the Nowak Room of the Exeter Town Office building. Members present were: Selectman Dan Chartrand, Brian Lortie, Len Benjamin, Cynthia Tokos, Kathy Corson, Dave Hampson, Brandon Stauber, Lizabeth MacDonald, Madeleine Hamel and Town Manager, Russ Dean. Also in attendance: Building Inspector Doug Eastman and Town Planner Sylvia von Aulock and Chamber President Mike Schidlovsky.

2. Approval of Minutes of January 15, 2013 meeting

Ms. MacDonald moved to approve the draft minutes as presented; seconded by Mr. Hampson. Motion to approve passed with Ms. Corson and Mr. Lortie abstaining. (Ms. Hamel was not present at this time to vote.)

3. Town updates/announcements

Mr. Dean and Mr. Chartrand were prepared to discuss the exploration of establishing a TIF district in Exeter and the role the EEDC might play in researching the concept.

Working from a prepared handout, Mr. Dean noted the concept of a TIF district was discussed in prior years, but the impetus for revisiting the plan at this time is the recently vacated property of Al's Automotive on Franklin St. and the transfer to a reality trust of The Mill complex on Chestnut St.; including the large undeveloped parcel across from the building complex. The basics of the TIF district were outlined emphasizing the revenues derived were placed in a dedicated TIF fund to pay for improvements within that district but the district must be determined before any development occurs.

The Board of Selectmen (BOS) after hearing a presentation on establishing a TIF district requested the EEDC take the lead on exploring the proposal with designated Commission members participating in a work group with the Town Manager and Mr. Chartrand. The target date for reporting back to the BOS is June to allow for the necessary Boards and Commissions to review/evaluate the proposal before being presented to voters for adoption in March 2014. Mr. Dean acknowledged there will be questions and it is a process that can be lengthy. Other factors i.e. zoning will need to be looked at to ascertain these parcels/areas can be developed to their full potential.

A second handout outlining the downtown TIF plan from the Town of Durham (which may be viewed electronically on their site) was distributed. It lists the various elements that must be addressed to meet the RSA standards; most importantly it must identify what the TIF derived funds will be spent on. Exeter has at various times put forth plans for downtown improvements but they have not materialized for various reasons. This work group could identify specific projects before going to the Planning Board (PB) and BOS, although those groups certainly could provide input and refinement to the proposals.

Mr. Chartrand again restated his reasons for running for the position of Selectman; one being to develop the commercial real estate tax base as a form of tax relief for the residential property owner. This will be his focus in the coming year and is prepared to give his full support to all involved.

Draft Minutes

Mr. Dean agreed noting our downtown is what separates us from other communities and what can be done to enhance the downtown perhaps with the benefit of a more focused approach to funding might be viewed differently than other design proposals presented in the past.

Responding to a question as to selling a TIF district with its diverted revenues versus direct revenues to the Town (from the new development), Mr. Chartrand offered you can have a small amount of property tax relief (to the residents) now or set up a TIF and let the funds flow into the downtown district for public improvements. That increases the value of those buildings and will get a multiplier effect with the increase in the value of the (commercial) buildings because the public part is now improved.

The Chair allowed time for questions and comments; topics raised ranged from determining if there are any discreet, specific benefit to the developer, queries on the figures used on the first handout and the TIF methodology allowing for the opportunity to be a part of a planned development as opposed to hopscotch development. Ms. Corson suggested including representatives from the downtown merchant's group and Zoning Review Ordinance Committee (ZORC) to explore mixed uses, parking etc. before they become issues/obstacles; broaden the participation on the working committee. Ms. Tokos suggested possibly including commercial developer(s).

A scenario with revenues derived from the TIF district not being sufficient to cover any debt service associated with the improvement was dispelled by Selectman Chartrand and the Town Manager by noting Exeter form of Town government would not allow that to take place. Mr. Dean noted there are other models on how to apply the dedicated funds; these options would be outlined in the TIF plan.

At the conclusion of continued discussion the Chair summarized the charge from the BOS and Town Manager to help provide the leadership in an exploratory committee to look at the potential of a TIF in the community and the accompanying specifics.

Ms. Corson motioned for the EEDC to establish a committee to explore a TIF with Commission members, representatives from the community, Planning Board, Zoning Board and commercial developer(s); seconded by Ms. Tokos.

In discussion of the motion, Ms. MacDonald asked that perhaps a commercial realtor replace the inclusion of a commercial developer so as not to have the appearance of conflict.

Summarizing the motion, the Chair called the question; motion passed unanimously. The composition of the committee will be determined by the Town Manger as deemed appropriate. The meetings will be posted as a TIF subcommittee. Mr. Sandberg stated the EEDC membership to be up to 3 Commission members; those members interested in serving on this committee should contact Mr. Sandberg.

4. Determination of 2013 priorities

Mr. Sandberg distributed a prepared handout as background of the presentation prepared after the Visioning Session and presented to the BOS in the fall of 2011 when he was invited to discuss the intent and work of the EEDC and what (the EEDC) would be addressing as the priorities in 2011 and beyond.

Draft Minutes

It outlined five priorities and ranking as determined at the Visioning Session: **branding and marketing, growth and capacity building** of EEDC, **retention and expansion** of existing employers and **real estate development** and associated **infrastructure**. Priority #5, real estate development was not adopted as an ongoing priority at that time but because of some interest was retained as a possible priority.

A second handout was distributed of the EEDC Action Plan adopted by the Commission in September 2011 following a facilitated off-site visioning session. The list of prioritized tasks was broken down further to a time period for the tasks to be completed; within 120 days to 3 years. Mr. Sandberg noted although there were 10 tasks identified the Commission chose to focus on the first three. Asked if the list remains as a reasonable Action Plan for 2013 or needs to be revisited noting the membership has changed over the year and needs to be reflected in the Lead Person column. Also, at this meeting a TIF subcommittee was approved as a work group and that needs to be listed on the Action Plan.

Mr. Stauber, reading from the January 15, 2013 minutes, spoke on the vote to approve a Development Committee to tackle new emerging issues within the Town. The leadership and membership were to be determined. Mr. Stauber felt the formation of the TIF work group tied directly into task #5 dealing with Town infrastructure and this Development Committee.

Mr. Benjamin posed the question from his observation they were all laudable tasks but what resources/power does the Commission have to see them accomplished other than possibly assisting the present Town government. Mr. Chartrand later emphasized each individual has the power for development (to occur); don't need to meet as a group to pursue development. Mr. Dean added the Town also has the staff resources to aid in development.

It was suggested because of the number of new members, the list be reviewed and schedule a discussion for next meeting or possibly have members' priorities be emailed so as to jump start a discussion at the March meeting. The question of discussion via email raised the privacy issue and the public right to know. (Mr. Dean later confirmed emailing information is fine, it is when you get into policy and decision making that the public right to know comes into play)

Further discussion focused on the need to have a separate work meeting before the scheduled March meeting or to do so at the March meeting. Consensus **determined a separate work/planning meeting will be scheduled for March 5 from 9-11 am**. Meanwhile members should review the Action Plan, determine if new tasks should be added and/or if there needs to be a shift in priorities; this will be the Action Plan for how the EEDC moves ahead in 2013.

5. General Announcements

Mr. Stauber stated the Branding and Marketing subcommittee met and discussed goals for the coming year including a proposed activity for the 375th anniversary celebration. The intent is to host/sponsor a business forum with a speaker or a series of speakers on the economic history of Exeter presented perhaps in a TED video style presentation. He and Ms. Corson are attending the anniversary planning meetings, but would like some direction from the full Commission on this proposal before presenting to the anniversary committee for consideration and scheduling.

Draft Minutes

Following discussion, Mr. Sandberg summarized what was being proposed and the consensus from the members is the EEDC endorses this idea and wants to be involved in a business forum from a historical perspective; details and staffing to be determined. The subcommittee will move forward to further develop the proposal.

6. Next Scheduled Meeting: March 12, 2013

7. Adjournment

With no further business, the Chair called for a motion for adjournment. Meeting adjourned at 9:31 am

Respectfully submitted,

Ginny Raub
Recording Secretary