

**Exeter Economic Development Commission**

**March 12, 2013**

**1. Call Meeting to Order**

In the absence of the Chairman, Barry Sandberg, Vice-Chairman Lizabeth MacDonald convened the meeting at 8:07 am in the Nowak Room of the Exeter Town Office building. Members present were: Kathy Corson, Madeleine Hamel, Len Benjamin, Jason Proulx, Brandon Stauber, Dave Hampson and Town Manager, Russ Dean. Also in attendance: Building Inspector Doug Eastman and Town Planner Sylvia von Aulock.

Guests: Rob Roy McGregor, Rhonda Bernstein and Karen Prior of the Southern District YMCA.

**2. Guest Presentation**

Mr. Rob Roy McGregor, Executive Director of the Southern District YMCA, thanked the EEDC for inviting the Y to address the Commission. Acknowledging his audience, Mr. McGregor focused his presentation on the economics of the Y, their history and experience working with and training young people in leadership development. To have trained individuals able to perform a function is a life skill vital to key economic development. The Y is not only a business with a 2.9 million dollar budget but a social agency meeting the needs of youth and families every day. Now, the Y is expanding their business by coming to Exeter. In September 2012, the Southern District YMCA purchased the old Exeter Area Junior High building on Linden Street from the former owners, Squamscott Community Commons. The condition of the building was determined unsafe and unhealthy and its demolition was completed last month. Currently, the focus is establishing the presence of the YMCA in Exeter again, after an absence of a number of years, with the construction of a community facility. Stressing the Y is a known entity with a history on how to run a business he emphasized they are not a franchise but an independent YMCA; an affiliation with a larger group but connected by its mission and values. As a business entity they are confident they will be able to deliver their product; designed for what the community needs as opposed to the standard product of a franchise.

It is to be a two phased project: Phase 1 is the construction of a 30,000 sq. ft. facility to include a full size gymnasium and wellness areas with a projected cost of 3.5 million dollars; phase 2 will see the indoor pool at a projected cost of 2 million dollars. Mr. McGregor spoke of the number of anticipated users and the jobs created with the completion of just this first phase. They are currently working with Y on a quantification model demonstrating the potential economic impact of the facility to the Town. It was stressed the demographics completed demonstrate there are the numbers to support the new facility. However, unable and/or cautious on providing "dates" for initiating Phase 1, Mr. McGregor did state they would not break ground until 70-75% of the funds are committed and then determine if the Y will take on any debt.

Mr. Stauber, expressing support for the project asked what the EEDC could do to support their project. Mr. McGregor turned the discussion to Ms. Karen Prior, chairperson for the Community Campaign. Currently a strategic plan for donations and fund raising is underway with a focus on the larger donors; those with the resources and ability to give and those wanting to make a legacy gift. But there is the need to expand the search. They wish to take advantage of CDFA (Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance) funds in applying for tax credits. The application for the program is due April 19, 2013 and will include letters of support from various entities in support of the project. She hoped the Commission would offer a letter of support: anticipating a positive response she provided a draft letter for the Commission to review and edit if desired to accompany the application.

## Draft Minutes

Mr. Stauber moved the Commission have a letter be formally drafted by the Executive Committee stating the EEDC support for the YMCA project; seconded by Ms. Corson. Motion passed unanimously.

The presenters were thanked for their timely presentation but before departing a group photo was taken by Ms. von Aulock documenting their visit for submission later to the Exeter Newsletter.

Returning to the agenda, Ms. MacDonald asked for **approval of the minutes for the February 12, 2103 EEDC** meeting. Mr. Stauber asked if an approval could be deferred as there were some of his comments on the TIF discussion he wished to have included but did not have the specifics at this time. The Vice Chair agreed to the request. Mr. Stauber will confer with the Recording Secretary and any additions will be noted and re-posted.

### **3. Town Updates**

No reports from Town department heads or staff at this time

### **4. TIF work group report**

Mr. Dean stated an initial work group meeting was held and items to be considered in establishing a TIF document were discussed including but not limited to: the prior discussion with owner of 27 Chestnut St. property on possible ideas/plans for the vacant lot, determining boundaries for the district and sections of Master Plan that relate to economic development for use as discussion points at future work meetings. Selectman Chartrand will serve as Chairman of the working group along with Ms. Corson representing Planning Board/Zoning Ordinance Review Committee, Mr. Dean, Ms. von Aulock, with Ms. Tokos, Mr. Hampson and Ms. MacDonald representing the EEDC. Mr. Schidlovsky of the Chamber did attend the meeting and spoke to the near 60 thousand dollars of dedicated funds designated for the Stewart Park/river walk improvements that the Chamber is holding. There are some specific restrictions on the funds but the Chamber is looking to have them utilized. Ms. MacDonald added there is some question on the source(s) of the funds and until that is unraveled there is a hesitancy for disbursal; is a Chamber issue and only a background item for Town.

Mr. Dean emphasized the subcommittee is still evolving and views the task as a major research project. The next scheduled meetings are March 20, 2013 and April 3, 2013; both meeting times are 8:30 am in the Nowak Room.

### **5. Update on involvement in 375<sup>th</sup> anniversary event**

Mr. Stauber reported the Marketing and Branding subcommittee has taken on this project and are working with Julie Gilman, Chairperson of the anniversary celebration activities. The committee is planning to host an evening presentation open to the public on the economic and industrial history of Exeter and surrounding regions. Tentatively scheduled for October 17 or the 24<sup>th</sup>, the presentation will have 3-4 speakers representing the major industrial periods in the Town; the intent is to make it “snappy, fun and enlightening” as expressed by Mr. Stauber. Sponsorship will be sought from area businesses that in turn may have an informational table at the presentation. When queried, feels there will be a monthly update until October as part of this subcommittee’s report.

### **6. Business Retention and Expansion work group report**

Ms. Hamel, chairman for the subcommittee, reported the meeting with about a dozen companies, properties owners are ongoing as a result of the EEDC introductory letter sent out in January. To date, Ms. Hamel noted

## Draft Minutes

how positive the visits were; companies commented on their reasons for locating in Town noting its location as a “hub” for transportation, the availability of talent. Also, meetings were scheduled with new businesses to Town as a means of welcoming. Committee members, Mr. Hampson, Mr. Proulx and Mr. Dean called on several properties owners along the Epping Road and noted they were pleased to have an active EEDC in the town again.

Ms. Hamel raised the question of having business “mentors” to meet with newly locate businesses to aid in the transition. Ms. Corson expressed her concern about a possible conflict of interest and suggested a referral be passed on to the Chamber to utilize their Ambassador program.

At the meetings the Town/EEDC web site is promoted as well as the leave-behind postcards with relevant contact names and internet links. As the visits are still ongoing, any relevant issues, recurring themes will be addressed in a later report.

### **7. Review/Decision**

Ms. MacDonald working from the notes of the March 5, 2013 work session, noted the next steps needed was the decision on how to proceed; be it the April scheduled EEDC meeting, an offsite location, and/or contracting with a facilitator as the group sets to prioritize the 2013 activities.

Mr. Dean stated he had contacted Mr. Cliff Sinnott of the Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC) as a possible facilitator who agreed to do so. The Community Room at the Town Library was suggested as an offsite location; both are at no cost to the Commission.

Discussion determined a facilitated discussion at an offsite location seemed the most advantageous. A motion was made by Mr. Stauber authorizing the Executive Committee to finalize the necessary details for the work session; seconded by Mr. Eastman. Ms. Corson suggested meeting with Mr. Sinnott (or the designated facilitator) prior to the meeting to review and set agendas. Further discussion focused on date and length of meeting; a date of April 2 from 8-10:30 am at the Library Community Room appeared to be satisfactory to those members present. This work session will replace the regularly scheduled April EEDC meeting. Mr. Dean agreed his office would verify the availability of location, facilitator and other pertinent details. Ms. MacDonald called for a vote on the motion; motion carried.

### **8. General Announcements**

- A slate of officers for the 2013-2014 will be voted at the May meeting. If members have nominations please forward to Executive Committee prior to the April meeting.
- Mr. Dean earlier in the meeting spoke of turning to the UNH Career Services for intern candidates. It has resulted in interest from a number of individuals and he is holding interviews.
- Mr. Stauber and Ms. Corson attended a presentation by the Exeter Theater Co. (IOKA) documenting arts and cultural spending and its impact on economic development. Mr. Stauber has a copy of presentation if anyone is interested in reviewing.

## Draft Minutes

- The annual Small Business Showcase, hosted by the Seacoast School of Technology students and facilitated by the Chamber, is scheduled for April 10 from 3-7 pm at the School at 30 Linden St. Members of the Commission were at the event last year but did not have an exhibit. Exhibit materials have since been developed and members discussed participating; Mr. Eastman volunteered to staff the table. Mr. Stauber volunteered the Marketing and Branding subcommittee to help coordinate. A motion was made to participate in the showcase and expend \$50.00 of Commission funds for a display table; Ms. Hamel seconded. Motion carried.
- Mr. Dean reported on the success of the Job and Resource Fair held on Friday, February 15, 2013. The second annual job fair was sponsored by a number of State agencies and non-profit organizations and hosted by Exeter in the Town Hall. With 40 employers present and the number of attendees the Town Hall was at capacity. Mr. Dean reported the confusion on parking limits was remedied with warnings rather than tickets and will be addressed in the future prior to the event.
- Mr. Dean suggested at the upcoming work session perhaps establish a Calendar of Events noting established and known events with participation by the EEDC occurring throughout the year. By knowing the upcoming events discussion/planning could become minimal. It was agreed to address.

### **9. Adjournment**

With no further business, the Vice Chair asked for a motion to adjourn. So moved by Mr. Benjamin; seconded by Ms. Corson.

Meeting adjourned at 9:31 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Ginny Raub  
Recording Secretary