

Exeter Economic Development Commission

April 2, 2013

1. Welcome/Introductions/Meeting purpose and expected outcomes –Barry Sandberg (5 min)

Barry Sandberg, Chairman, convened the meeting at 8:30 am in the meeting room at the Exeter Public Library. Those in attendance were Kathy Corson, Dan Chartrand, Madeleine Hamel, Cynthia Tokos, Lizabeth MacDonald, Vice Chairman, 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. Brian Lortie was unable to attend.

The session began with each member stating their name and affiliation with the Town of Exeter. Chairman Sandberg introduced Cliff Sinnott, the Executive Director of the New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission (RPC), who has been driven to assist the Commission in structuring today's Agenda.

2. Brief Recap: the EEDC from September 2011 - March 2013

Chairman Sandberg provided a brief summary of the successes in the last 18 months:

- The Commission was dormant for a time and now has been growing since is reconvened in 2010.
- A Commission structure was formed in the Fall of 2011

Mr. Sinnott addressed the members and explained the RPC is a public, non-profit organization not part of the County, but established by the towns. The mission of the RPC is set up in three parts:

- a. Work with each individual town on their own planning efforts and provide services such as facilitation meetings, plans or documentation.
- b. Provide regional planning based on the location. There are 9 locations throughout the state which can focus on but not limited to Natural Resources, Transportation, Housing, Hazard Mitigations and some Community Development.
- c. Assist towns to facilitate their cooperation among themselves that work on constant problems.

Mr. Sinnott explained his purpose is to facilitate the meeting and help the EEDC figure out how to match the objectives to the goals.

3. Individual members report out: What are your top priorities for EEDC over the next 2-3 years? (20 min)

Mr. Sinnott referred to the EEDC Action Plan table from September 14, 2011 and requested that each member report what their top priorities are, what is still important, what has been accomplished and what needs to be done based on their perspective.

Mr. Dean shared he would like to create an economic development chapter with clear goals and strategies for economic development. He would also like to ensure the land use policies and regulations are consistent with global economic development goals. Lastly, identify the economic activity in town.

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Mr. Chartrand shared he would like to grow the commercial real estate tax base. He also would like to first focus on growing the commercial base downtown since he believes that is the focal point of the town. Lastly, he agrees with Mr. Dean regarding the land use policies and regulations.

Ms. Hamel shared she would like to see a Director of Economic Development and a budget for staffing to cover short and long term goals. Also mentioned were business outreach projects, business forums, training programs, continue to build with the Exeter Chamber of Commerce and build on business retention.

Mr. Proulx shared he would like to see a digital storage network of the meetings, plans and everything they do to reach business owners and improve how information is distributed among members.

Ms. Tokos shared she agreed with Mr. Chartrand to start with the downtown and she added it needed to be vital, full and cleaned to look great. She would also like to bring creative economy to the downtown which would include artist and creative working professionals to make the downtown stronger.

Ms. MacDonald shared she would like to differentiate on what attracts business to the town and what makes Exeter different. She also would like to see the town capitalize on the river front and add walkability and biking options in and around the town.

Ms. von Aulock shared she would like to promote Exeter via the town website (the business portion section) and keeping up to date information, add professional photos and accessible links. She agreed with the staffing suggestions and would also like to see funding sources for downtown improvements. Lastly, she would like to see the town capitalize on waterfront for pedestrian and bikes and look at downtown safety improvements plus moving out to other business districts such as Portsmouth Ave.

Ms. Corson shared when speaking of economic development she would like to engage other departments in the town such as the police, fire and DPW.

Chairman Sandberg shared his priority for this year would be working with the Commission in terms of sustainability and infrastructure of the commission itself. This could include budget resources from the town, staffing, new memberships and promoting vitality.

Mr. Hampson shared he would like to see more exposure of the EEDC to businesses in Exeter and surrounding communities and possibly develop a business forum or focus group of businesses in the area.

Mr. Eastman (Building Inspector) shared he would like to see Commercial growth in real estate and development in the Industrial parks that go beyond the downtown and Holland Way.

Mr. Stauber explained he would like to focus on how we can lower our tax base but most importantly the Commission needs strong internal leadership that is well networked to focus on things the Commission can actually affect change in, in the community.

Mr. Benjamin shared he would like to see commercial tax base with emphasis on enhancing and maintaining the downtown including a funding sources for its growth and improvements.

4. Status of Priorities and actions from 2011: (20 min)

Mr. Sinnott revisited the EEDC Action Plan from 2011 and went through each one by one to remove what is not important and focus on what the group would like to put more effort into for the coming year.

Due to time restraints the members agreed to scale the importance of each and move forward accordingly with a show of hands.

Branding your community, differentiating and marketing that brand

The members agreed this is still an important part of the Action Plan.

Resources required: The members agreed this is still an important part of the Action Plan.

Marketing plan: Though a marketing plan is not currently in place, the members agreed this is still an important part of the Action Plan and will be addressed once a Master Plan is developed.

Organization and leadership for growth of the economic development entity

Mr. Sandberg addressed this and it was deemed inward focused.

Complete a business and commercial inventory including Epping Road: The database needs updating but it has been completed.

Master Plan: The members agreed this is an important part of the Action Plan though no action has been taken at this time due to resource issues.

Goals and missions presented to the Board of Selectman: This has been completed.

Researching the tax base history: A single page of data is available, which can be used as a starting point, however, little action has been taken at this time.

Establish a Tax expansion goal: Mr. Dean suggested a change from Tax base to Value base since Value base is the growth aspect. He further explained they do not have enough data at this time to determine what impacts increasing the value.

Retention and Expansion of existing employers (advocacy and problem solving)

Business visitations and outreach begun: Actions have been taken. Thirty businesses were contacted for Phase 1 and there is a list of over a dozen companies and developers to be contacted for Phase 2. Phase 3 involves resources which have not been addressed.

Business issues/needs forum in town – engage the business community: This is ongoing and a coop with the Chamber of Commerce. This may be broken into focus groups.

PEA, hospital and Riverwoods meeting with the EEDC: The members have met with only the hospital at this time. These tie in with meeting with the top 25 employers. The goal is to remain engaged with the businesses and community stake holders.

Exeter real estate tax grows significantly and is competitive with area towns: This was more of an aspirational statement and not of high importance for the EEDC to focus on at this time.

Recruitment: None at this time.

Real Estate Development: None at this time.

Train Station and Lincoln Street Completed: The project is underway and being managed by Silvia von Aulock. This is important but not necessarily to the EEDC.

Epping Road fully developed good architectural design, streetscape improvements: Action has been taken and is deemed still important.

Infrastructure

Research and recommend TIF District for Epping Road: The members agreed this is still important.

Water and sewer coordinated with Stratham: Action is currently underway though not a short term or EEDC priority.

Mr. Sinnott addressed the commission and asked what has changed over the past two years that would suggest a different perspective of priorities for the EEDC. The group briefly discussed the following:

- Change in stock market
- Real Estate is rebounding and the economy is improving
- New EEDC membership
- Readiness by EEDC to focus on more tangible things
- Competition in the surrounding communities has increased
- Towns are increasingly “on our own” due to the state not providing help in generating solutions
- Change in population which could lead to more competition making regionalization more important

Ms. Tokos shared her priorities and thinks that regionalization is very important and Exeter needs to differentiate from other communities, be proud of what we have and how we look and build on the core. Her priorities in terms of actions of the EEDC would be the Arts community, tax base, and downtown.

5. What are the priorities and actions that should guide the EEDC over the next 6 months, 18 months and 2 years (40 min)

Mr. Sinnott requested the members review the priorities and choose first, the most important based on the benchmarks that have been set. Mr. Sinnott reviewed the previous priorities which were:

- Complete the inventory
- Marketing plan
- Board of Selectman
- tax base history
- Engaging the business community,
- Talking to Phillips Exeter Academy (PEA), Exeter Hospital and Riverwoods
- Business visitations outreach

Ms. von Aulock explained she grouped the work that has previously been done and broke it down into 5 areas then provided her ideas as to how she views the goals, what each entails and what needs to be done:

Fundamentals: Creating the Master Plan chapter and ensuring land use policies are consistent with the goals of the EEDC.

Growth: Growing a tax base, making it walkable and recognizing the waterfront, encouraging the creative economy and identifying economic development activities

Sustainable Committee: Staffing for the EEDC, budget appropriations, strong leadership, focus on what can be accomplished

Relationships: Business retention, reaching out to other departments, focus on increasing the exposure to other businesses, coordination with the chamber, business forums, networking with other organizations and reaching out to banking and UNH communities and workforces and lastly, development and recruitment.

Tools: Storing and retaining the data of local business, creating funding sources, TIF and website development.

Mr. Stauber shared his view on the formation of the Master Plan. He would like to start with creating the Executive Leadership of the commission, maintaining the Master Plan and ensuring the activities are congruent with the Master Plan. He also mentioned using Ms. von Aulocks' categories as sub sections to the Master Plan.

Mr. Dean stated he would like to see a Chapter in draft form presented to the Planning Board to review in 6 months.

6. Ranking EEDC's priorities and actions for Phase II (20 mins)

The members discussed each priority and the ranking of each priority in terms of months.

Master Plan	6 months
Mr. Dean explained there is a small amount of funds available to the EEDC and if speeding up the process of the Master Plan is desired, these funds could go towards hiring an organization or consultant that specializes in working with communities on matters such as this.	
Land Use Policies and Regulations	18 months
Website Plan	This is an ongoing priority.
Database/Business Directory	18 months
Staffing	6 months
Budget and Appropriations	6 months and 18 months for implementation
Working with the Chamber	This is an ongoing priority.
Business Retention	This is an ongoing priority.
Outreach to Banking and University Communities	18 months
Workforce development	Aspirational, part of the Master Plan
Recruitment	This is an ongoing priority
Creative Economy	This is ongoing and part of the Master Plan

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What makes Exeter different	18 months and part of the Master Plan
Defining digital databases to work with 501c3's	6 months, implemented but not completed
Funding sources for downtown improvements	12-18 months
Central Business District (CBD)	6 months
Signage, walkability outside the area of downtown	12-18 months
Engaging other departments (e.g. Public Works)	12-18 months and part of the Master Plan
Business forums and increasing exposure of EEDC	6 months and ongoing
Committee involvement & infiltration	6 months, local and state connections will be determined
Development focus	Epping Road 6-12 months, Holland Way (18 months)
Sustainability of EEDC and the Preliminary budget	August 1, 2013 is a possibility

Mr. Dean stated the commission should request feedback from Fire, Police and the DPW and engage each department to obtain feedback based on what they do on a day to day basis.

7. Wrap up and next steps (5 Min)

Mr. Sinnott suggested the members use the breakdown of priorities that Ms. Aulock provided and work with the planning committee to restructure these priorities in terms of the goals and actionable things so each member can prioritize them at the next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Nadine Young, Recording Secretary