

**Exeter Economic Development Commission**

**August 13, 2013**

**1. Call meeting to order**

Chairman Barry Sandberg called the meeting to order at 8:10 am in the Nowak Room of the Town Office building. Members present were: Kathy Corson, Madeleine Hamel, Beth MacDonald, Selectman Dan Chartrand, Len Benjamin, Brandon Stauber, David Hampson and Town Manager Russ Dean Also in attendance: Town Planner Sylvia von Aulock, Building Inspector Doug Eastman and Selectman Don Clement and intern Mark Manganiello

Mr. Sandberg introduced Mark Manganiello, a MPA candidate from UNH, who is interning in the Town Manager's office. Members introduced themselves and welcomed Mark to the working group.

**2. Approval of minutes**

Mr. Chartrand moved to approve the July 9, 2013 meeting minutes as presented; seconded by Mr. Benjamin. Motion carried with Mr. Dean abstaining as he was not present for the meeting. (Ms. Hamel was not present for the vote.)

**3. Town updates**

Mr. Dean stated Ms. von Aulock is working with Zoning Review committee preparing an RFP for a consultant to assist with the draft of a Form-Based Code ordinance. It is relative to economic development as it pertains to re-zoning a portion of Portsmouth Ave. As for a presentation on this topic, Ms. von Aulock felt it might be best to wait until a consultant is on board.

The presentation by the RPC (Rockingham Planning Commission) on the Complete Street policy and its adoption by several NH communities was presented to the BOS at the July 29, 2013 meeting; a transportation policy and design approach requiring streets be planned, designed, operated and maintained to enable safe travel for pedestrians, bicyclists, transient users, motorists and commercial vehicles. Another presentation is to be scheduled and discussion followed on who should be in the audience. No definite decision was made, but consensus was the PB would be favorable venue as the meetings are televised; could invite personnel from other Town Committees. Mr. Dean suggested viewing the Town Hall Streams on Town website of that BOS meeting for more background.

As required by *federal law*, the Town was informed of the closing of the Stop & Shop store prior to the public announcement. The *WARN Act* requires the employer to report a closing and the number of personnel affected (if over a certain number); a reported 128 personnel will be affected. The State agency, DRED and its representatives will be doing displacement activities within the store. The Town has reached out to the property owner, Mr. Kevin King, and offered whatever assistance needed to facilitate and help in the process of re-populating the retail space. Discussion on Market Basket re-locating to the space concluded it will ultimately be up to the owner for that outcome.

As for a role the EEDDC can play in this matter, Mr. Eastman felt by supporting future development and keeping lines of communication open. Mr. Hampson reported he spoke to Mr. King recently and he expressed an interest in attending an EEDDC meeting; he could contact him and extend an invitation to attend the September meeting and perhaps share his goals. Affirmation determined a space would be reserved for him on the September agenda if he chose to attend.

Ms. Hamel felt this was an example of a need to be included in the Plan of Action as an area of focus; do have a Retention subcommittee and should have a relationship with the business community. There is an opportunity for outreach and Mr. Dean did say if members do come upon a contact/possible tenant to contact the Town Manager's office. His advice to members; be public, be visible. Ms. Hamel asked if would be possible to meet with a prospective tenant to let them know the EEDC is there to support them.

**TIF update:** Members of the subcommittee did a walkthrough with the downtown retailers group, HERON. Mr. Dean reported intern Derek Scanlon is working on additional details of a TIF and setting up a calendar of events (for the TIF project) up to February/March; still on track for a fall presentation to BOS.

#### 4. Discussion/Presentation

- **RSA 79-E Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive Program**

Along with a PowerPoint presentation and a prepared handout, Mr. Manganiello walked the members through the program, the purpose, qualifying properties and additional details of the RSA 79-E. Two other NH communities adopting this legislation were cited; the impact and amount of impact of the program on those two communities demonstrated the flexibility of the program; be it large or small. A majority vote by the Town on a warrant article is required to adopt the program before any benefits are offered to a property owner. Its adoption seeks to incentivize investment in downtown and village centers and to rehabilitate under-utilized buildings within these areas.

With adoption a town does have an application process for property owners to make the improvements that meet the guidelines as well as a public benefit test to present to the governing body. In return, the governing body may provide tax relief at a pre-rehabilitation value for a finite period. (A flow chart detailing the application process and three questions asked when qualifying the property and how the application proceeds if it meets the qualifications was detailed in the handout) It determined there is flexibility by the BOS on the financial qualifications needed and the area/locale in Town deemed eligible. Public hearings are required to provide transparency in any proceedings. Following Mr. Manganiello's presentation Mr. Sandberg commented it may be better as part of a package rather than a standalone. Mr. Chartrand reflected Mr. Dean's comment it is just another tool in the economic development tool box; not the answer, part of the answer.

Maps were shown of possible areas to be considered; Lincoln St. and Epping Road. Ms. von Aulock reviewed building permits issued in the past few years in these locales and noted a lack of activity in these areas and this might be the incentive needed.

In discussing designating the downtown with the historic buildings in need of rehab as eligible under 79-E, Ms. von Aulock felt might be a conflict when considering that area for a TIF district. Mr. Chartrand responded they are two separate entities and don't work against each other; TIF for new development and 79-E for revitalizing individual properties. Further discussion will be held on the two proposals as to the potential for confusion to voters in distinguishing the two.

Mr. Stauber felt from reading the RSA, there is the flexibility to aid the Town in economic development. His impression from attending BOS meetings, the selectmen are looking to EEDC for a

recommendation/feedback if this is something the Town should move forward on or not. Mr. Stauber felt the Commission should be looking at action to that end. With that said, he motioned the EEDC endorse the RSA to give the BOS the broadest geographic area option and include the Urban Compact Area of the Town. Clarification of the Urban Compact Area appeared to be quite broad extending from lower portion of Rt. 111A, through the east and west side, portions of High St., north along Portsmouth Ave. out to 101, Epping Road, and up to the river on Court and Linden St.. Mr. Chartrand seconded the motion for discussion.

Mr. Dean agreed with the proposal but would like to see a map of the Urban Compact Area and explore more details; delaying a decision at this meeting still allowed time for the BOS to review and take further action .

After further discussion on discovering more details of the UC Area and other NH communities utilizing the RSA, Mr. Stauber agreed to withdraw his motion and Mr. Chartrand agreed to withdraw his second; motion rescinded. It was determined the vote on a modified motion as stated by the Chair was in error as there was not a second to the modification. With the additional time (between meetings) for research, it was anticipated a vote would be taken at September meeting.

- **Economic Development Resources**

Mr. Dean distributed a prepared handout addressing a goal identified at the BOS goal setting session in June; to draft an economic development position. There was agreement such a position needs to be added to the town staffing. The handout outlined the eight objectives/criteria from the Selectmen and the potential for positive results. The draft was presented at the August 9, 2013 BOS evening meeting. A listed item for exploration states the BOS representative (to EEDC) and Town Manager present the proposal to the EEDC for feedback.

He noted the Commission has had ongoing discussions about more permanent resources to support the Commission's mission of expanding the commercial tax base of the Town and related activities. Mr. Dean walked through the prepared material including what objectives could be fulfilled with a commitment of a full time staff person and supporting facts i.e. salary range, position criteria reporting responsibility. Also included were sample copies of job descriptions from the towns of Somersworth and Claremont with similar positions. Mr. Dean asked members to look through example job descriptions and offer feedback on what major components should be included into the job description for an economic manger; wishes to consolidate/incorporate the responses into a job description to present to the BOS at their August 26, 2013 meeting. It was also noted there is a series of review before it is brought before Budget Recommendation Committee for inclusion in the 2014 budget.

Response from members present was favorable. Mr. Chartrand added the discussion on the position at the BOS meeting was also very positive. The Chair asked for those with thoughts and feedback to reply to Mr. Dean in a timely manner so as to be incorporated into the report for BOS.

Ms. von Aulock asked if any consideration was given to offering a temporary 3-5 year contract and after review at that time determine if the funding was available or the need still in place; if so, a contract would be issued. Mr. Dean did say that was not considered but felt there was a feeling of

negativity in offering a position on a temporary basis when all other Town positions are permanent; feels would see positive results in 3-5 years.

**5. General Announcements**

Mr. Sandberg wanted to go back to EEDC priorities. He credited Ms. Hamel for preparing a draft of the subcommittees work and some thoughts for 2013 plans. A worksheet, EEDC Strategic Planning 2013-2014; subtitled **Strategic Priorities** was distributed and asked that this be “homework” between now and the September meeting. The projects identified for EEDC action were listed by priority as adopted at April 2013 vision session. Space was allowed under the columns *lead/ team* and *schedule* for members to indicate areas they wished to contribute their energies. The Chair referenced this work sheet when completed to be the “blueprint” for action as the group goes into the fall; to be returned at September meeting.

Ms. Hamel prepared a handout outlining the Business Retention and Expansion subcommittee plans for the fall of 2013. Acknowledging it was ambitious; she summarized how the subcommittee might approach the plan and perhaps condense the list through actions. Referring to Mr. Sandberg’s worksheet, Mr. Chartrand summarized by saying the Chair is looking to a commitment to action and where you wish to give your time and efforts.

Mr. Stauber reported the Marketing and Branding subcommittee met and after discussion decided to cancel the proposed EEDC 375<sup>th</sup> event scheduled for early October. The program entitled an Economic History of Exeter was to be held at the Town Hall, but with the renovations to the building set to be completed only one or two days before the event—if all went on schedule— felt it was taking a chance. Also a contributing factor was the lack of attendance at other 375<sup>th</sup> events. Hearing Mr. Stauber’s efforts in putting this together, consensus was this could be postponed to another time and not necessarily a 375<sup>th</sup> event; felt too much groundwork has been done to abandon the program.

Also his work group discussed changes/updates to website, perhaps sponsoring an EEDC table at Chili Fest and sponsoring a startup competition as has been done in other towns ( i.e. Rochester and Manchester.) highlighting technologic, incubator-type of projects; inspiring innovation.

**6. General Announcements**

- Mr. Hampson wished to verify if there was still interest in hosting a Chamber After Hours event. If so funds would need to be allocated and approved. As to a date, the Chamber’s calendar is filling quickly; can check the day before September meeting to determine dates available and then determine how to proceed; September agenda item.
- The proposed replacement sewer pipe lines on Portsmouth Ave. and the detour in traffic and possible economic impact; September agenda
- The opening of Nadeau’s sub shop in a newly renovated space (formerly occupied by Gadolfi’s sandwich shop) next to Walgreen’s. Members were encouraged to stop in and say hello.
- Mr. Stauber had his lap top with Sales Force program displayed for those wanting to see what it could do for maintaining Commission’s data base

**7. Adjournment**

Mr. Chartrand motioned to adjourn; seconded by Mr. Hampson. Meeting adjourned at 9:44 am.

Respectfully submitted

Ginny Raub, Recording Secretary