

1. Call meeting to order

Chairman Barry Sandberg called the meeting to order at 8:04 am in the Nowak Room of the Town Office building. Members present were: Kathy Corson, Brian Lortie, Cynthia Tokos, Dave Hampson, Len Benjamin, Brandon Stauber, Selectman Dan Chartrand, Madeleine Hamel and Town Manager Russ Dean. Also in attendance: Town Planner Sylvia von Aulock, Building Inspector Doug Eastman, Selectman Don Clement and intern Mark Manganiello.

2. Approval of minutes

The Chair entertained a motion to approve the August 12, 2013 minutes. Mr. Stauber stated he had some additions to the minutes regarding the discussion for the position of an Economic Planner. At the meeting he stated in his opinion the position should be an active position, going out and interacting with organizations, companies as opposed to a sedentary office position and how to incentivize the individual to accomplish their goals. Also, he suggested looking at the towns of Rochester and Dover that both have Economic Development professional positions as part of their staff and how they are doing it. He did agree the points are mute as the job description was approved at the previous night's BOS meeting but did want the additions to the minutes to reflect his points made during that discussion of the position.

Mr. Dean stated he has had conversations with the Dover Town Manager and its Economic Development position and intends to invite Ms. Pollard, Director of Community Development for Rochester, to come and speak at a future EEDC meeting. Mr. Chartrand wished to move to approve the minutes as presented; seconded by Ms. Hamel.

Mr. Benjamin corrected the title of the federal statute responsible for working with the released Stop and Shop workers as WARN (Workers Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act). With that noted, Mr. Chartrand moved to accept the minutes with the correction. He acknowledged his motion to approve did not include the points outlined by Mr. Stauber. Ms. Corson added she felt the comments of Mr. Stauber be included in the minutes to provide more information on the discussion of the position for other Town committees i.e. Budget Recommendation Committee. With no further comments, the Chair called for a vote. Motion passed with 5 votes in favor, 2 opposed and 2 abstaining.

3. Town updates

• **RSA 79-E (Community Revitalization Tax Relief Program)**

Mr. Manganiello at the August meeting gave a prepared presentation on the RSA and its application as an economic development tool. Working from a prepared worksheet and displayed onto the screen, he outlined the basic criteria in the RSA and proceeded to address concerns/questions expressed at the August presentation. As to what constituted "public benefit", he found it to be very broad from increasing office space, creating residential units, affordable housing, and rehabbing underutilized building(s).

With such leeway, it appears it can be a bargaining tool by a town. One town did consider job creation a public benefit by granting the conversion of a residential unit to office spaces under the provisions of the RSA. It was clarified any tax relief applies to all four tax entities, not just the municipal rate.

There is a time restriction of 5 years (for completion) but a governing board may extend the tax benefits for up to 2 years for residential projects and 4 years for affordable housing for a total of 9 years, but may negotiate down to 2 or 3 years. Cautioned was expressed for issuing the provision to a larger project thus resulting in a large tax relief to one entity that may cause resident discontent.

Originally the areas considered for inclusions were C-1 and C-2 zone areas but at the suggestion of Mr. Stauber to extend the area of consideration to the Urban Compact Area; more information was desired on the UCA. Using a map provided by the Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC), the boundaries of the Area were noted: to the town line, along, Rt. 111, Rt. 88, along the PEA campus, portion of Epping Rd., Rt.111A and following basically the boundary of the Little River. Noting it is a large area for inclusion but also may include areas to which you might not want the policy to apply. A suggestion to simplify the areas by eliminating the R zones but include the C zones, WC, CT and MP. Mr. Stauber wanted to be sure Holland Way and the entire Epping corridor is included. Ms. Corson suggested R-5 be included as it is a major portion of the proposed TIF. But added she is still not convinced the two are not counterproductive.

Mr. Chartrand offered his explanation as they are two tools in the development tool box; one being to capture development; the other an incentive for tax relief. Mr. Dean offered supporting details to the explanation; emphasizing they both can work together. Ms. Corson thanked both; felt it was cleared. Ms. Tokos felt whatever was decided, documentation delineating the similarities and the uniqueness of each proposal be prepared to aid the voters in making an informed decision.

Discussion continued on the two resolutions. Ms. von Aulock acknowledged they are two different tools but for her timing is a key issue. Whatever the Commission decides whether to present one at a time; one this year and the other the following year so as to not befuddle the voter and losing both in the process. With the 79-E and being relief for “blighted areas” she isn’t sure that such a wide area as depicted in a modified UC is “blighted”. Perhaps portions of Epping Road and Lincoln St. could use some makeovers but doesn’t consider Portsmouth Ave. to be blighted.

Mr. Dean conceded there remains (public) education to be done and to stay positive as there is time for public education. He did conclude if the Town votes to have an Economic Development director it is essential the individual have these provisions available for their use.

The Chair asked the Town Manager what is the role of the EEDC at this time in regards to 79-E. Mr. Dean felt the designated area needs to be pinned down, endorsed by the group with their support for the article. This will then go on to the BOS for their concurrence with the designated district and the EEDC support/comments; will then decide if they wish to sponsor a warrant article for a March vote. A simple majority vote by the voters is needed for adoption.

After listening to the discussion, the Chair asked if the group is ready to make a recommendation to the BOS at this meeting.

Mr. Stauber agreed with Ms. von Aulock on the need for education. Noting the presented UC Area

map with the broad area does not appear to work for the group at this time. He asked that Mr. Manganiello do further research and come back with a more defined area with boundaries that include Holland Way and Epping Road and if it makes more sense to present one proposal this year and the other the following year (It was determined 79-E could be used for expansion to existing buildings on Holland Way.)

Reviewing, Mr. Sandberg spoke of hearing two discussions; what the area of the district would be and another on timing and if the group should go forward with the proposal.

Mr. Hampson asked if Mr. Manganiello knew of any towns that had presented and passed both a 79-E and a TIF at the same time. Mr. Manganiello was not aware of any specific towns but will research and report back at October meeting. The Chair asked that several options be presented so a decision may be made at October meeting.

- **Economic Development position**

Mr. Dean reported the BOS had a final discussion at the previous night's meeting and did endorse the job description with a few small changes in the draft as shown to the EEDC at the August meeting. Mr. Dean did say he would electronically send the resulting job description to the members shortly and did invite feedback. The salary range at this time is between \$58,000 and \$102,000 but may be altered when determining how it will fit into Town compensation schedule. As for some ancillary startup costs, the Board wants it to be a permanent position; not anticipating it will be a budget item reviewed annually. Mr. Dean reiterated it is created to grow the commercial base and as the position is talked about there is the need for understanding this position must be setup for success.

Mr. Stauber reported he attended the previous night's BOS meeting and thinks it is a great move. But he did speak in the public comment portion of that meeting to remind the Board in addition to logistical concerns, there is the need also to have a budget for travel, membership in professional associations and have access to industry publications; the internal tools to be successful.

In response to Ms. Hamel's question on the position affecting zoning changes, Mr. Dean said no, but that they may review and suggest changes; would be a co-ordination process. Ultimately that is a Planning Board process.

Ms. Tokos asked what would be the priorities of this position; to recruit new industry, expansion of existing business or focusing on the downtown. Is one any more important than the others? She feels there will be a host of demands initially and how is one to decide what to do first. Mr. Dean outlined a series of responsibilities and functions he envisioned for the professional. Mr. Sandberg also added there still will be an ongoing relationship with the Commission and the professional staff.

Mr. Hampson asked how is this person going to be recruited; is there any monies budgeted for a professional recruiter. Mr. Dean replied that will need to be looked at, but noted there are professional websites and publications that allow for posting.

4. Presentation

Mr. Kevin King, leaseholder for the former Stop and Shop supermarket, was unable to attend the EEDC meeting as originally scheduled.

5. Review

- **2013 EEDC priorities**

Mr. Sandberg distributed a prepared handout listing the five (5) Strategic Priorities as adopted at April 2013 Visioning session and the action items under each priority:

Listed were:

- (1) *Implementing development and support fundamentals*
- (2) *Ensuring Exeter's growth*
- (3) *Providing for a sustainable EEDC*
- (4) *Networking and relationship building*
- (5) *Developing and maintaining tools for the EEDC*

Mr. Sandberg proceeded to review the topics/action items listed under each priority. Some of the listed tasks are accomplished, others on going and other topics appearing on agendas since the April session i.e. the Baggage Building project, TIF exploratory committee.

Also, the Chair put in place teams for each of the five stated priorities; each member listed on two priorities. An attempt was to place members in areas of interest, expertise. (Mr. Dean and Town Staff were not assigned a particular area as they serve as resources for the entire EEDC). It was stressed the committee assignments were for discussion; wished to determine they are still priorities and does the group have the resources to adequately carry out said actions; should they scale back.

The EEDC is fully seated with 12 members; 9 citizen members with Mr. Dean representing the Town, Mr. Chartrand representing the BOS and Ms. Corson representing the Planning Board. But it was noted volunteers for subcommittees are welcomed and they need not be Exeter residents.

Discussion followed with members asking and suggesting distinctions, definitions and additions. Mr. Dean felt priority 2 should read *Exeter's commercial growth* and an additional task be added to the same priority "commercial and industrial recruitment and expansion"

Mr. Stauber added the EEDC has an outcome they want to happen i.e. increased development and then the actions that hopefully inspire the outcome; feels the effort should be to focus on the action steps that produce those outcomes. He would like to see take specific action steps and have the committees structured around taking action and not just hopeful of outcomes. He spoke of looking at factors that may be limiting future economic growth and what specific actions may be initiated to help facilitate development.

The Chair agreed and commented if this priority list was accepted, then the subcommittee needs an action plan. Again, he acknowledged this was a strong list. Are there three priorities that need immediate attention? There was agreement many (tasks) are underway and some members can do some action every day in their own way such as networking. Mr. Dean suggested with the assistance of Mr. Manganiello a 12 month calendar of networking events be prepared and members can be aware of upcoming opportunities and choose who might represent the EEDC.

Continuing, Ms. Hamel felt on several of the listed priorities the Commission is taking the next steps and not starting from ground zero. Mr. Sandberg inserted his preference at this point; to get a status on where we are, acknowledging the leadership of Ms. Hamel and Mr. Stauber, and will ask others to be a lead on these tasks to get a status update and action plan of what needs to be done and what to do next. He asked if current subcommittee assignments are satisfactory. Mr. Stauber asked to be included on priority 2; *ensuring commercial growth*.

Ms. Hamel asked if there was the possibility of stepping in and out of a subcommittee if there was an interest in a task of interest.

It was noted that some of these tasks may become a staff function if the position is approved and the Commission can go back to its' responsibility by statue to advise the BOS from a strategically policy direction the EEDC wants to go.

Mr. Eastman spoke of recent economic activity in Town. Digital Prospectors will be relocating to 100 Domain Drive (on the Exeter side) and there is movement on the former concrete plant and their plans for the Hampton Road location. Mr. Dean also added he had an opportunity to speak with Mr. Kevin King and another property developer and found the conversations interesting to get a developers perspective; need to understand what differentiates us from other communities. We are poised to attract interest but are we able to follow through.

Mr. Hampson spoke of the Chamber of Commerce availability for Business after Hours in January through March and some summer months. The cost would be \$400 plus cost of catering; felt would want to budget approximately \$1200. Mr. Stauber spoke of having a co-host or two to share in cost. Also, with new Town alcohol policy could have at Town Hall. Discussion seemed to favor a date before Town elections but by a motion from Mr. Stauber authorizing Mr. Hampson to place our name and give the \$400 deposit for a Business after Hours evening event in either February or March with the stipulation to seek a co-host(s) but if no co-hosts is obtained may spend up to \$1200 for catering. Motion seconded by Mr. Benjamin. Discussion determined if snowed out, history has shown they do re-schedule. Motion passed.

Mr. Dean spoke to the BOS sponsored All Boards meeting to be held Sept 24, 2013 at 6:00pm at a site TBD. It invites Town Boards and Commissions to participate in a broad discussion on their perspective on a number of topics pertaining to the future of Exeter. Invitation is open to all members of the commissions. It is the first meeting, but probably not the last.

The Chamber has asked the Town to again participate this year in an event promoting Exeter as a stop on the Downeaster; more info to follow.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Ginny Raub, Recording Secretary