

**Exeter Economic Development Commission**

**December 10, 2013**

**1. Call to order**

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

**2. Approval of past minutes**

Mr. Chartrand moved to approve the minutes of the November 11, 2013 meeting as presented; seconded by Mr. Hampson. Ms. Corson asked to abstain as she was present for only half of the meeting.

**3. Town Updates**

Mr. Dean provided some updates in the economic arena:

- A microbrewery with a tasting room and retail outlet wishes to locate in an existing building at 156 Epping Road; will be going before Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) at Tuesday, December 17<sup>th</sup> meeting for approval on the needed variances.
- A re-hearing for the expansion of the Green Bean restaurant will also be held at the December 17<sup>th</sup> ZBA meeting.
- He and Ms. von Aulock continue to work arduously on the complexities in acquiring the Baggage building (Welcome Center) on Lincoln Street. The engineering firm retained to do the engineering study is presently on site working on this first phase required by DOT before moving on toward the goal of acquisition.
- Ms. Corson reported the Form Based Code group, a subcommittee of ZORC, is working with Ironwood Design Group on a conceptual plan for Portsmouth Ave from the High St. intersection to Walgreen's. It anticipates holding a visionary meeting sometime in January and take a walk along this section of Portsmouth Ave. to record what you see; feels you would find much different than view from automobile. Ultimately, adoption of a FBC will aid the property owner in this area in re-configuring his property but aiming to make the section multi-modal to accommodate pedestrians, bikers and the automobile. She welcomes any member of EEDC to attend Visionary session and participate in the survey. At the request of the Chair, a more formal presentation on FBC will be a part of the February agenda.
- Ms. von Aulock invited the members to the CAPE (Climate Adaptation Plan for Exeter) Year 1 review set to meet December 12<sup>th</sup> in Exeter's Nowak room. Members of the UNH team will present what was learned from community discussion, activities of the Citizen's working Group, science-based models of changing flows over Great Dam and downstream ecological analysis and stormwater management issues.
- A public hearing on the proposed zoning amendments for the 2014 Town warrant will be on the Planning Board's agenda for the December 12<sup>th</sup> meeting. Ms. Corson stated several of the changes deal with parking ordinances and allowing the PB to make decisions on parking issues without going to ZBA; basically, changes are clarification in wording.
- Ms. von Aulock reported the PB will be seeing a preliminary conceptual plan for a multifamily residential project at 2 Hampton Road (the old concrete plant) at the December 19<sup>th</sup> meeting.
- The Chair noted he and Vice Chair, Ms. MacDonald, spoke during the Public Comment portion of the Budget Recommendation Committee on November 19<sup>th</sup> in support of the proposed Town position for an

Economic Development Director, the EEDC endorsement of such a position and the importance for such a position as the Town moves forward with the intent of expanding the commercial base. The vote for the position was in the affirmative with the Chair of the BRC casting the deciding vote (with one abstention); now goes onto BOS for action/inclusion in the budget submitted to voters.

- Mr. Dean noted Mark Manganiello has left his position as an intern with the Town; if there is the interest, Mr. Dean will return to UNH with a request for a graduate student, hopefully at start of the 2<sup>nd</sup> academic semester. Mr. Sandberg commented on the many accomplishments of Mr. Manganiello during his stay as a Town intern.

Discussion ensued noting there are existing projects in need of assistance as well as new projects not yet assessed. The Chair and Vice Chair will work with the Town Manager on drafting the job description

4. **Presentation/Discussion: TIF presentation.**

The Chair turned the discussion over to Mr. Chartrand. Mr. Chartrand as chair of the TIF work group initiated the discussion by recounting some lessons learned along the way in his term as Selectman; that of the necessity of consensus. Consensus is what drives things forward. Without a united Commission or Board of Selectmen the citizenry is unlikely to support a proposition/proposal. He felt that was evident when speaking before the Budget Recommendation Committee in support of the Economic Development Director position. With the positive backing of the Commission and the BOS the vote was in the affirmative with the BRC knowing it was the consensus of both groups.

Acknowledging he found himself in a difficult position as chair of the work group and as a selectman on what the next steps or how to proceed with the TIF proposal. At this time he feels the BOS would not vote for the proposal with perhaps only a 3-2 vote. There appears to be agreement with the concept of a TIF but there is a variance of opinions on the mechanics of the designated Central Business district within the TIF district. Personally, based on the difference of opinions amongst the Board, he feels the Commission should ask the Select Board to put the adoption of the RSA that allows for the adoption of a TIF district on the ballot but forego recommending to them the specifics of creating a Central Business district TIF and not include the formation of the advisory board or any recommendations of specific projects; just doesn't think the unanimity is there for adoption.

He added he may be wrong and values the opinion of the Commission members. But that was his feeling at this time adding he appreciated all the work of the TIF subcommittee and work of volunteers and staff on this project and did not feel it was the lack of work/efforts of the subcommittee for the project not going forward. It was his suggestion to forgo presenting the complete package this year and perhaps will have a better idea if citizenry supports the TIF concept.

The Chairman stated he would open for discussion after asking/hearing comments from the subcommittee members.

Mr. Dean recounted when the group was requested by the BOS in Jan '13 to explore a TIF and what has been accomplished to date: do have a document, a district chosen with boundaries determined, number of businesses within district and their value. Do not have a dollar amount for build out value and still need the educational component; adoption (of RSA) seems to be first step towards the next step. When queried, the adoption of the RSA would allow the Town to fulfil some of the requirements of the actual

RSA; that public hearings within the municipality must be held and in this case it would be more in educating the citizens on the TIF concept and what can be done without going into any specifics of a designated district.

Mr. Benjamin: if the RSA, without the specifics, goes to the voters in March and passes would you need to go back to voters a second time once the specifics of the plan are determined.

Mr. Dean replied passage grants the Town authority to have TIF(s) town-wide. When something is boiled down to a specific proposal, the plan and the formation of the board would go to the voters but *once the enabling legislation is adopted* you have the ability to go to the next step without having to re-adopt.

Continuing, Mr. Dean re-iterated with adoption (of the RSA) you have the ability to create a plan (which does exist in a draft form for the downtown), submit to BOS for approval, then bring that forward to the Town as an article to essentially adopt the specific plan, form a (TIF) advisory board and adopt the article. Passage (of the RSA) this March only allows the Town to form TIFs but specific districts and the specific plans then go back to Town meeting to be voted upon; with passage you are then ready to go.

Ms. Corson expressed her feeling that presenting it twice has the potential to be confusing to the voter; does not feel comfortable in the two step approach. It is apparent the plan is not complete so there will be the need to educate the voter-twice. She expressed her opinion that with the possibility of an Economic Development Director on staff in the coming year that would be a perfect first task for them to spearhead the education of the voter.

Dialogue continued on the need for the business owners need to be educated, wherein Mr. Chartrand felt they were very supportive and educated. They have invested their time and capital in the downtown over the years and not have the Town reciprocate in meeting the needs of the downtown infrastructure. It was confirmed the Chamber is supportive and may be positive but Ms. Corson felt not totally educated on the specifics.

Continuing on with the topic of education and not going forward with the RSA statue as a warrant article, Ms. MacDonald felt with a scaled back proposal there was less chance of failing than an article with all the components listed; this focuses on the issue and doesn't include the specifics. A dislike or disagreement over one component resulting in a negative vote takes the concept out of play for a whole year. Ms. Corson, continued by saying she feels the Town should hold off on presenting any article this year and if a staff person is on board next year the proposal could be refined, the education done and you don't run the risk of voter confusion.

Ms. von Aulock spoke of appreciating Mr. Chartrand's opinion on the need for consensus and Ms. Corson voicing her opposition to presenting it now and then again next year. She acknowledged she does not have the answers. But from her position as the Planner she would like to see it go forward as there is activity out there even though not all is public; would hate to lose that opportunity by being cautious. In her opinion there is the need for aggressive education; among the Commission and the voters.

Mr. Dean added there appears to be misinformation out there that there is some direct financial benefit to the business owners in the specified district. This is not the case: they (any projects proposed) are public improvements to a specific area. Also, in this draft TIF document there is no provision for the Town to partnership with a developer for certain infrastructure projects as can and does happen in other TIF documents. Later in the discussion Mr. Chartrand commented on the premise held by some that the developers are going to do what they want regardless if such a provision was in place. The feeling is the downtown is a vibrant thriving community when actually it is not; drainage, sidewalks, curbing and lighting has been neglected for some 25 years and is responsibility of Town to maintain.

Mr. Dean responded to status of document by saying it is available and nothing much has changed; consultant does need to confer with assessor and planner to work out the build-out values as mentioned. Also there is the need to re-visit the costs of some of the proposed projects.

Mr. Hampson agreed he would like it presented as a whole be it 2014 or wait until 2015; would prefer 2014 to capture future anticipated economic activity but realistically was uncertain if the necessary education could be accomplished in the next 90 days.

If it was to go forward as a total package there would be the need for a required public hearing and that would most likely occur the same night as the 2014 Budget hearing; on January 21, 2014.

Continued discussion on the role of BOS; it could go on warrant as recommended or not recommended. But if and when a TIF and the specifics are approved, a TIF advisory board must be formed to manage the fund and projects for which the funds may be used. There are no funds in the TIF account until development occurs within the specified district. Again, the voters must approve the use of the funds for the specific project upon the recommendation of the TIF advisory board; the amount of funds applied to the project may vary from a percentage of to the total amount. TFI funds are reported annually on the Town valuation sheet and the funds are subject to an annual independent audit.

Mr. Benjamin inquired is there not a brief explanation accompanying each warrant article and could it not be worded to inform the voter as to its intent; no funds expended.

Mr. Chartrand added a comment from the consultant, Don Jutton of MRI, saying each time a step is taken forward toward adoption, it sends a positive message to the property owner, developers, business proprietors that their efforts will not be in vain; that our behavior is going to change .

Ms.von Aulock suggested if Mr. Chartrand was able to provide even a majority vote amongst the Selectboard to support the placement of the article for adoption of the RSA with the caveat of no tax obligation for the citizens; then the education could start.

Ms. Corson asked if any contact with the school district has taken place as their support/understanding is important as that has the potential to de-rail any further action. Mr. Dean has been in contact with School Superintendent Michael Morgan and it is being passed it on to local school board. They have copies of the draft document and now are awaiting a mutual time for a meeting.

The Chair noting the upcoming schedule, felt the Commission has the opportunity at this time to endorse the recommendation of the work group to put forth only the approval of the RSA and not entire plan or take no action and say this group is still working on the plan as the scheduled January EEDC meeting comes after the night of the BOS meeting.

Ms. Corson wished to make it clear the subcommittee has not had a conversation on this form of action; just learned of it today at the meeting. She will not endorse any thing the subcommittee has not discussed.

Mr. Benjamin understood Ms. Corson's concerns over the work group not having discussed this approach and the possible confusion of voting twice on the proposal the concept but he would like to see any steps taken to indicate our support and show the business community we are moving forward and opened for business. (It was determined the EEDC as a whole has not endorsed the draft TIF plan as a final report was presented to the group.)

Following a discussion on the intent of message to BOS, Mr. Benjamin moved the EEDC support a warrant article for the adoption of RSA 162-K (to allow the formation of a tax increment financing district) on the March 2014 ballot; seconded by Mr. Chartrand. The Chair recognized the views of the members' present span the spectrum but in calling for a vote, motion carried with five (5) votes in the affirmative, one (1) opposed and two (2) abstaining. Motion passed. (Mr. Dean circulated a prepared draft statement on how the warrant article would be worded.)

**5. General announcements:**

Mr. Hampson announced the Business After Hours event will be on February 18, 2014. He spoke to Mr. Jerry Nadeau of Nadeau's Catering (Nadeau's Subs) and he has agreed to co-sponsor the event. He will also confer with Ms. Tokos and Ms. Hamel on the development of materials to give attendees.

Ms. Tokos showed the presentation folder developed for EEDC materials.

Mr. Sandberg reviewed the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter dates for EEDC meetings in 2014; January 14, February 1 and March 11.

With no further business, Mr. Chartrand moved to adjourn; seconded by Ms. MacDonald.  
Meeting adjourned at 9:31.

Respectfully submitted,

Ginny Raub  
Recording secretary