

Exeter Economic Development Commission

March 18, 2014

1. Call to order

Chairman Barry Sandberg called to the meeting to order at 8:08 am in the Nowak Room of the Exeter Town Office building. Members present were Kathy Corson, Brandon Stauber, Len Benjamin, Cynthia Tokos, David Hampson, Madeleine Hamel, Jason Proulx, Selectman Dan Chartrand and Town Manager Russ Dean. Also in attendance: Town Planner Sylvia Von Aulock, Building Inspector Doug Eastman and Selectman Don Clement.

2. Approval of past minutes

Mr. Chartrand moved to approve the minutes of the February 11, 2014 EEDC meeting as presented; seconded by Ms. Hamel. Mr. Stauber noted at the February meeting a request was made for a copy of Ms. Gilman's presentation "March Through History" be sent electronically to members; no report has been received.

The vote for the motion for approval passed with Ms. Corson abstaining.

3. Town updates/announcements

• ***Chamber Business After Hours February 15, 2014***

Mr. Hampson reported in spite of the heavy snow falling out of doors, those in attendance were welcomed and relationships were established. Because the attendance was not what is normally had at these events, the Chamber offered the EEDC a space—at no charge—at the Small Business Expo on April 9 at the Talbot Gym co-sponsored with the SST Marketing students.

Ms. Tokos and Ms. Hamel were thanked for all their prepared marketing material and displays as well as local businesses for donating raffle prizes. Nadeau's Catering was acknowledged for the fine refreshments and Mr. Hampson thanked the Arts Committee for sharing the space with their exhibit on the second floor gallery.

• ***Election results***

Mr. Dean confirmed the passage of the warrant articles allowing for the adoption of the 79-E provision as well as the passage of the Town Operating Budget that included the funds for the Economic Development *Director* position.

As for the *Director* position, the funds included are for just a half year. When questioned, Mr. Dean responded the final job description might be ready by May. The outline for the position is in place but will seek input from BOS, the EEDC and from representatives of the business community.

Mr. Chartrand spoke in spite of the failure of the warrant article allowing for the formation of a TIF district, feels the outcome was a success; thanked members of the Commission for their efforts and support. Mr. Dean, acknowledging the workings of our form of town government, felt the adoption of two out of the three major articles/budget initiatives was indeed very good for the first time being presented to the voters; hopefully just the beginning.

Mr. Sandberg, speaking as the Chair, did wish to acknowledge in spite of all not in agreement but as a Commission we recognize these are the results and continue to question and challenge those questions/ areas members feel the need to be explored. But as the Commission continues to move forward these are the decisions the Town made and as part of the mandate is to see they are carried out; to publically advance the cause of an Economic Development *Director* and the 79-E. He thanked the members and added he was proud of the work the group has done over the past year(s) to get to this point but as a Commission it needs to continue to work as a body.

Mr. Stauber acknowledged the voters had spoken on the TIF proposal and the EEDC should respect the outcome. The Commission has the infrastructure (of a proposal) in place and a consultant retained; perhaps the Committee needs to re-align, get a final report (from consultant) and focus on other activities i.e. the planner position and 79-E. He was unsure how to make this into the form of a motion.

Ms. Corson responded saying she felt the initial step should be to return the proposal to BOS for further discussion as it was the BOS initiative giving the Commission the charge of investigating and pursuing the concept of a TIF. With new members on the Board, they may wish to re-visit the proposal and respond to the Commission; did not feel the EEDC was the decision maker in this matter.

Mr. Dean felt the Commission should talk conceptually about the TIF and the next steps. He wished to hear from the other members of the group and what they felt the next steps should be.

Mr. Sandberg then distributed a Memorandum prepared by current TIF work group Chairwoman Beth MacDonald. It provided an update of the work group's activities as of March 10, 2014. A copy of the invoices submitted by the consultant Don Jettum of Municipal Resources, Inc. was included. (Copy of memorandum on file with Recording Secretary)

Selectman Clement responded the new BOS have not had a meeting to date and felt it did make sense to have all seated members evaluate the election results and give them an opportunity to digest the proposal and how they wished to proceed; perhaps would be an agenda at their anticipated April goal setting session as was economic development in 2013; did say he was not speaking for the Board.

Mr. Benjamin felt it came down to a timing issue (when BOS could address the issue) but did feel the voters had spoken and the selectmen being representatives of the voters should decide.

Ms. Tokos agreed; the BOS ought to discuss first before any further EEDC action. Later, she commented if the plan does go forward again, it would need more vocal support from the business community and developers; those people that would benefit or be impacted by a TIF.

Mr. Hampson also agreed it should go back to the BOS but from what he heard at the deliberative session citizens felt the warrant article was too general, with no specifics; they seemed to want

more details. Perhaps the EEDC could play a role if the BOS does decide to go forward with a TIF article on the 2015 ballot with more specifics outlined.

Ms. Hamel expressed her opinion that more education needs to be given if it does go forward again; how to define a nebulous and general proposal. She felt it was worthy of consideration but needs to be re-worked.

Mr. Proulx doesn't agree with getting rid of TIF but determine what is going to be useful to the developers, large landowners in any proposed TIF districts. Do need to re-tool what has been talked about these past months and reach out to those that could possible use the program. But does agree it does need to go back to BOS.

Mr. Chartrand, reviewing the election results for the article, felt the vote was a close split (46% in favor, 54% opposed) for what was being asked. He was reluctant to make a decision without the Chairman of the working group weighing in; suggested placing on agenda for April meeting when Ms. MacDonald could attend. In his own assessment he feels he should pull back from an active role as it was intimated he as a business owner in the downtown could benefit from such a proposal.

The Chair thanked all for their comments and noted the city of Dover just initiated a TIF and perhaps could be used as a model for how to make happen with consideration Dover has a Town Council form of government; Exeter's form of governing can often be challenging as the voters make the final decision.

After some further discussion, Mr. Stauber made the motion for the EEDC to refer the work of the TIF subcommittee to BOS for further advisement. Motion seconded by Ms. Corson.

In discussing the motion, Ms. Hamel felt it was the role of the EEDC to advise the BOS on matters of economic development. She felt it was appropriate to review the methodology, the election results and findings of their ground work and advise how to proceed when giving it back to the Board. She reminded the group the EEDC initially initiated investigating the TIF concept as a tool and methodology, for at that time, development along the Epping Road. That information went from the Commission to the BOS for their feedback. BOS did not initiate the idea.

Mr. Benjamin expressed his reason for supporting the motion; not for Commission to spend any more time (on concept) without the advice of the BOS. Mr. Dean conceded it was a difficult concept to understand and referring to Ms. Corson's comment on her support of the TIF but not how the (EEDC) went about it. Acknowledged it does needs to go back to BOS but would like the topic vetted at another meeting so a list can accompany the proposal with some specifics of want we think didn't go well and this is how we think it could be done better and/or things to consider.

Discussion continued with members expressing specific comments on the intent of the motion. Opinions offered suggested the voters rejected this particular article but unsure if it was they did

not support TIF in general; need more investigation. Others expressed their opinion the BOS had the same impressions/thoughts of why it did not succeed as Commission; still could very well send back to EEDC for additional input. Would further discussion just drag the issue out further?

The Chair noted there was a motion on the floor that could determine how the Commission should proceed and called for a vote. Those voting in favor of sending the TIF back to the BOS (without any further discussion): four. Those opposed to the motion: four. Mr. Dean stated he would not be voting. The Chair noting the tie cast his vote opposing the motion. Motion defeated.

Ms. Tokos expressing her concern of the possibility of any decision being put off for varying reasons made the motion to place a definitive date for a decision on how to proceed with the TIF and that date be the April EEDC meeting. Motion seconded by Mr. Chartrand.

As a point of information, Ms. Hamel asked on the status of the consultant. Mr. Stauber reviewed the listing of the invoices and surmised they were for review of the draft document and did not include any economic analysis. The total for the invoices showed to date \$2,936.25 has been expended of the \$4000.00 approved amount. Mr. Dean offered that Mr. Jutton did have conversations with Ms. von Aulock (who was not present at this time) and the former Town Assessor on the downtown area and the development potential but does not think a definitive conclusion has been determined.

The Chair calling for a vote on the motion on the floor; motion carried with Ms. Corson opposed and Mr. Stauber abstaining. Mr. Sandberg will advise Ms. MacDonald to be prepared to lead the discussion on the TIF at the April meeting.

Mr. Stauber requested to see any final deliverables completed between December 17, 2013 and this date of March; also any additional invoices for such work. Mr. Benjamin asked that no further charges be approved on work done by the consultant. Mr. Dean will see to that matter.

Continuing on election results, Mr. Sandberg commented on the failure of the warrant article for the Great Bay Kids Co. to enter into a land lease agreement with Town/Board of Selectmen. The Chair noted the business had provided services to the community for a number of years and did the Commission wish to reach out to them in any way to offer support. It was suggested perhaps the Business Expansion and Retention subcommittee, chaired by Ms. Hamel, might contact them to offer assistance in whatever way the Commission could. Mr. Proulx reported he had been in contact with them, as a parent and as a Commission member, and reported they would like to come and speak to the EEDC on various options they are exploring. Ms. Hamel also spoke with several of the principles of the organization and urged them not to give up on Exeter as a site.

Thinking of GBK and their needs, Ms. Hamel asked Mr. Dean when he thought the recently approved article for a town wide assessment of Town facilities would be complete. Mr. Dean felt because it was just recently approved it would be several months before RFP would go out; mostly likely be complete inside of two years.

Mr. Sandberg, echoing Mr. Proulx's comments on the goal of this Commission is to keep an active and vital part of the business community within our boundaries, asked Ms. Hamel as Chair of the Business Expansion and Retention subcommittee to take this on as a matter; she agreed. He also indicated he would be willing to meet with their executives if they wished and welcomed them as presenters at a meeting; contact him to block out time on agenda.

4. Report: Executive Committee nominations

Mr. Sandberg reported he, Ms. Corson and Ms. MacDonald as members of the Executive Committee had met and discussed a nomination process for Executive Committee for the next term. The by-laws just call for nominations on a yearly basis. Last year the election occurred in June, but does not have to be that date; June just seems to be a reasonable time allowing new officers to meet during the summer and review work completed and remaining tasks.

Discussion continued on various options but consensus was to have Reorganization as an agenda item for the April meeting. At that time nominations would be put forth; may be self-nomination or nomination by someone else and may have multiple individuals interested in any one position. The vote would then take place at the May meeting with new slate of officers seated in June.

5. Town update: Town Manager's report

- a. Mr. Dean wished to address the item discussed at the February meeting on the Town web site and let people know we do have the capability to have rolling business profiles but have not taken advantage of the feature to date. It was set up by a previous intern who has since moved on but will follow up on the feature.
- b. An agenda item for the BOS will be the scheduling of the 2nd All Boards meeting; will be forthcoming.
- c. The April 9th Business Expo to be held at the SST from 4-7 pm.
Mr. Hampson moved to accept the Chamber's offer of free exhibit space for the event; seconded by Ms. Tokos. Motion carried. Mr. Hampson agreed to coordinate the exhibit and materials.
- d. Reported on renovation activity for Loaf and Ladle property.
- e. Understood a P&S was on the Kevin King property on Epping Road (across from the Mobil station); no further details at this time.
- f. Cited the discussion on the Academy's proposal for renovating properties they own (at the entrance to Swasey Parkway) for a performing arts center and a number of issues involved; parking, effects to tax base and change of complexion of the commercial downtown.
- g. Mr. Dean suggested an agenda item to be a review of the EEDC's Strategic Plan for the work accomplished and what tasks needed to be addressed.

6. Next EEDC meeting: April 8, 2014

7. **Adjournment:** With no further business, the Chair accepted Mr. Chartrand's motion to adjourn; seconded by Mr. Hampson.
Meeting adjourned at 9:27 am

Respectfully submitted,

Ginny Raub, Recording Secretary