

Exeter Economic Development Corporation

August 19, 2014

1. Call to Order

Chairwoman Kathy Corson called the meeting to order at 8:06 AM in the Nowak Room of the Exeter Town Office building. Members present were: Dave Hampson, Jason Proulx, John Mueller, Len Benjamin, Madeleine Hamel, Lizabeth MacDonald, Brian Lortie, Dan Chartrand and Barry Sandberg. Also present were Selectman Don Clement, Town Planner Sylvia von Aulock and Building Inspector Doug Eastman.

Guest: Economic Development Director Darren Winham

2. Introductions of new members

Ms. Corson introduced Mr. Darren Winham, the newly appointed Economic Development Director for the Town of Exeter. At request of Chair, Mr. Winham provided a brief summary of his work in the field of economic development and expressed his pleasure at being in Town and working on new ventures. He stressed he will be actively seeking input from Commission members as projects and plans develop.

Mr. John Mueller was introduced as the newest member of the Commission. A commercial real estate broker and as a resident of Exeter, he expressed his interest in the Commission and their activities. With that, the members present at this meeting introduced themselves and gave a brief background as it pertained to the EEDC.

3 Approval of past minutes

Ms. MacDonald stated in the July minutes the September meeting date was incorrect; it should read **Tuesday, September 9, 2014** with a start time of 7 PM. With that correction noted, she moved to accept the July 08, 2014 EEDC minutes; seconded by Ms. Hamel. Motion carried; Mr. Benjamin abstaining.

4 Subcommittee reports

- *Formation of work group on developing Economic Development chapter for Master Plan*

Ms. Corson restated the goal for the Commission to develop a chapter on Economic Development for the Town Master Plan. Mr. Winham added he just completed such a document for the town of Waterbury, Vt. and agreed to head a group for this task.

Ms. Corson outlined what is involved in committing to such a project but received affirmations from Mr. Mueller, Mr. Chartrand, Ms. Hamel, Ms. MacDonald, Mr. Lortie and Mr. Sandberg as willing to work on said chapter.

Ms. von Aulock added she has been in contact with Mr. Cliff Sinnott at the Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC) on initiating a strategic plan for updating several of the MP chapters; Land Use (Existing and Future), Community Facilities, Utilities (and Public Services) and Parks and Recreation. It was suggested the work group be in contact with RPC for consistency in format and content.

Confirming, there is at present no chapter on economic development, Mr. Winham felt this is advantageous as you can start from scratch. Hearing comments from Mr. Winham on how the process could proceed, Ms. Corson suggested the volunteers be members of the Strategic Plan for an Economic Development chapter (for the Master Plan) work group. Mr. Winham concurred and would welcome input from RPC. Any work could address any future work with form based codes as is currently being looked at for one area of the community.

Mr. Clement offered the RPC is presently writing the Rockingham Regional Master Plan and will include a chapter on Economic Development which may provide some help for the Commission.

When queried on a time frame for the completion of the ED chapter, Mr. Winham felt a solid year for a thorough and defensible document as it allows him to become more acquainted with the Town and its present resources. Although it appears most of the work will be done in house, the Chair referenced the EEDC funds available if needed for any special issues needing to be more thoroughly vetted.

- *Discussion on “Meet and Greet” event*

Ms. Corson re-iterated the event is to introduce the ED to the Town. It is tentatively set for September 16, 2014 from 5 – 7 PM upstairs in the Gallery of the Town Hall. The intent is to keep it simple and follow the format as the Business After Hours functions. Not all the details are set and ideas (from the Commission members) are welcomed.

Introduction of Mr. Winham and a brief presentation from him will be half-way through the evening. As to content, he was cognizant the public wants to know what he is going to do now that he is here. He wants to emphasize his accessibility to the residents and assurance he will be taking guidance from the people that are here.

As far as specific projects planned, the establishment of the Strategic Plan for an Economic Chapter for Master Plan certainly could be cited but the aim was to keep this event informal and more focused meetings on specific topics/projects could be held at a later time.

Mr. Winham agreed to bring an outline of his introduction to the September meeting for discussion as the meeting is before the planned event.

5 **General announcements**

Ms. von Aulock and the Planning Board have started the Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) review process. Also, the Great Bay Kids project is in the Technical Review process and anticipates it will be back to the Planning Board by the end of August.

Mr. Eastman reported on two properties going to the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) for a variance/special exception. The owner of the vacant lot on the corner of Center Street and Front Street proposes to build two residential units on the property and is seeking a variance for a third residential unit.

A special exception is being sought for establishing a day care facility in the barn at 100 High St.

When asked on the status of 1 Franklin Street, Mr. Eastman replied they are all set with the variances and the Planning Department is waiting for plans. When asked for more details about said project, it was verified it is a non-residential use (a social club) on first floor with residential on the second floor; because the social club is a for profit operation, it will add to tax base.

In further discussing the project, Mr. Chartrand noted this is an example of the town land use boards following their ordinances and guidelines as charged and not in a position to offer/impose personal views or guidance on the use of that location, must act on what becomes before them. There was never the opportunity to work with the developer on what the Town would like to see in that location. For him, this is an active role for the EEDC to impart what the vision is for the Town and their commercial development; looks forward to the ED chapter of Master Plan to lay that vision out.

Mr. Winham concurred and stated if commercial and industrial zoned properties start getting used for residential use, you can't go back. Mr. Clement stated he is not against residential development but looking to create jobs to attract people.

Mr. Chartrand offered these are his own personal views and have not been discussed with the Commission as a whole although he would like to see that happen.

Mr. Winham outlined a possible scenario in dealing with such a situation and it does mean a one on one meeting with property owner to determine what their needs/plans are and outline the Town's position and how it might mesh with the owner. Possibly, it might mean finding something that is a good fit for the owner's plans/needs. He also suggested he compile a list of upcoming projects and list on EEDC meeting agenda to bring back to the Commission for input.

Mr. Mueller raised the issue of knowing who the land owners are to make them aware of upcoming event. Ms. Hamel referred to the business visitations completed by a work group and the compiled data base although admitting it does need some upgrading.

Ms. von Aulock suggested inviting the engineers, lawyers, real estate people, people that work with the land owners. She acknowledged her and Mr. Eastman's position in the Town as being almost the middle man; not in a position to propose but to guide. She also commented on the number of properties in town that have paper conditional approvals but have not gone on to construction; might consider inviting them as well.

Ms. Hamel spoke of the possibility of combining this event with the spotlighting the RSA 79-E provision passed at March Town meeting. The Business Retention and Expansion subcommittee will continue to work on scheduling a future meeting inviting the property owners within the designated districts to learn more of this provision.

6. Confirmation of September meeting date

The September EEDC meeting will be the first evening and televised meeting on Tuesday September 9, 2014 with a start time of 7 PM.

7. Adjournment

With no further business the Chairman called for a motion to adjourn. Meeting at adjourned at 9: 14 AM

Respectfully submitted,

Ginny Raub
Recording Secretary