

Exeter Economic Development Commission

September 09, 2014

1. Call to Order

Chairwoman Kathy Corson called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm in the Nowak Room of the Exeter Town Office building. Members present were: Beth MacDonald, Dave Hampson, Jason Proulx, John Mueller, Len Benjamin, Brandon Stauber, Madeleine Hamel, Barry Sandberg and Town Manager Russ Dean. Also in attendance: Economic Development Director Darren Winham.

2. Introduction to the EEDC

The Chair noted because this was the first EEDC meeting held in the evening, being televised and welcoming Economic development Director, Mr. Darren Winham to the group she felt the public might want a brief history of what the Exeter Economic Development Commission (EEDC) was all about and the accomplishments and tasks of the group. She asked the past Chairman of the Commission, Mr. Sandberg to give a brief presentation on the history and background of the EEDC.

With that introduction, Mr. Sandberg continued with a PowerPoint presentation noting the EEDC is a Town committee of 12 members; nine (9) citizens, and three (3) Town officials representing the Planning Board, the Board of Selectmen and the Town Manager. In the mid 60's there was an Economic Development group voted into place by the voters at a Town Meeting but it had a definite mission and responsibilities. It later was to become dormant for a number of years. In 2010 a group of citizens representing different backgrounds were invited to come together and look at the economic development in town; what was done in the past, where the town was presently and what efforts could be taken to revitalize the Committee.

The group that began meeting in 2010-2011 was aware of the activities and efforts of the earlier group but was unsure the direction/focus for a revitalized group. An offsite all day facilitated Visioning Session was held in the fall of 2011 and from that evolved three major priorities to become the guide lines for the present working group.

- Branding our community, differentiating and marketing that branding.
- Organization and leadership for growth of the economic development entity
- Retention and expansion of existing employers through advocacy and problem solving

With these objectives in mind, action plans were created being divided into short, medium and long term activities; short term being 4-5 months and long term carrying into 2014-2015.

Mr. Sandberg reported on various tasks completed and other in various phases of implementation. Acknowledgement for the support and success of these activities was given to

the various Town departments, the use of graduate student interns and the dedication of the Commission members.

With new members to the Commission, a second offsite Priority Session was held in spring of 2013 to re-check the goals of the EEDC. There was re-affirmation as the group goes forward to embrace the diversity of Exeter and to remain mindful of all these elements while promoting economic development in our region. He added he felt very fortunate to have the new staff member, the Economic Developer Director, at the table this evening as the Commission moves forward.

3. Town updates/announcements

The Chairwoman thanked Mr. Sandberg and invited comments from members and urged the public to submit queries at any time. Mr. Winham was then re-introduced as the Economic Development Director and invited any updates from his two week tenure with the Town.

Mr. Winham reported meeting with local business people, larger property owners, and State Economic personnel. In discussion on their properties and their plans he felt the message he was hearing was to simplify the permitting process and a review of land regulations to be more “user friendly.” All parties did agree investing in the downtown was paramount. Also, the State would like to be advised of available parcels for their inventory.

In reviewing the minutes from the August meeting when members agreed to serve on developing a Strategic Plan for an Economic Chapter for the Master Plan, Mr. Winham felt because of the time commitment for such a task, he would like to break up the task and form four committees with one or two members from the Commission serving along with other members of the community on the committees. The four proposed committees:

- The Strategic Plan for the Economic Chapter
- Project Assessment for Exeter
 - Review and track approved projects under construction or in approval stage; offer opinion to appropriate Board/Commission before project comes before such group as to economic value
- Investigating, Researching and Marketing Economic Tools
 - Determine what Town provisions exist; researching other available programs i.e. State programs. What (programs/tools) makes sense for Exeter
- A Formal Downtown Revitalization Group
 - is cognizant of others working on downtown plans

Mr. Stauber wished to verify the Retention and Attraction efforts are included in one of the proposed committees. Also, he acknowledged the downtown did need attention but not at the expense of other parts of town needing re-vitalization; Epping Road, Holland Way, Lincoln St. Mr. Winham assured him they were not being side stepped.

Responding to a question from Ms. Hamel on these committees interfacing with other committees, Mr. Winham outlined his thoughts on how the committees would operate: meeting once a month and he being a member of each group but stressing the focus would be on economic development. They would then report back to this group on activities. Continuing, he envisioned 5 member committees with perhaps 2 to 3 members from this Commission with interested citizens rounding out the membership.

Members then expressed their interest on which committee they wished to participate.

Down Town Revitalization: Beth MacDonald, Jason Proulx and Brandon Stauber as needed

Project Assessment: Dave Hampson and Len Benjamin

Marketing Tools: Brandon Stauber and John Mueller

Strategic Plan for Master Plan Chapter: Barry Sandberg and Madeleine Hamel

Discussion then focused on favorable meeting times for members of the Committees.

Mr. Chartrand and Mr. Lortie will be contacted for committee preference and favorable meeting times.

4. Subcommittee reports

- Discussion of “Meet and Greet”

Ms. Corson stated the event for the Town residents to meet Mr. Windham in an informal setting will be September 30, 2014 from 5 – 7 pm upstairs in the Art Gallery of the Town Hall.

5. General Announcements

- Economic News

Ms. Corson, as a member of the Chamber Ambassador program, stated she met with the owner of Loaf and Ladle who will be going before the Historical District Commission (HDC) for approval for renovations to the Water Street property. It will be a restaurant on first floor with apartments above and welcomes any members support at the HDC meeting.

Green Bean is continuing with their extensive restoration/renovation to their facility to what was once the firehouse here in Town.

Mr. Dean reported:

- There is an upcoming COAST (Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Travel) meeting this month to discuss sustainability issues. Funding is provided by the serviced towns but not all neighboring town are contributing to the service.

- The Welcome Center (Baggage Building) is in the Capital Improvement Plan this year and will be looking for new estimates/costs to determine what the next steps will be.
- Ground breaking for the YMCA on Linden St. is set for Tuesday September 16 at 8:30 am.
- A recent draft report detailed the amounts of I & I (inflow and infiltration of wastewater going into our sewers) dropped significantly as the town continues to make sewer improvements in various areas of town; these improvements add value to the town's infrastructure and ultimately on the design/size of a mandated wastewater treatment facility.

Mr. Stauber spoke of an upcoming meeting of the FreeCoast group designed for those starting or wanting to start businesses in the different fields of the technologies to the region; will email notice to Mr. Winham.

Ms. Corson, as the Planning board representative, reported the Great Bay Kids project came before the Board and in one meeting approved the building plan. Part of the parking area will remain undeveloped until needed.

Mr. Mueller inquired if there is material to handout at some of these events promoting Exeter. Mr. Stauber referenced the Town website as a resource to point people to as often the attendees at some of these meeting are at various stages of business development, although there are some printed material on hand that perhaps needs updating with contact information.

Ms. Hamel spoke of the marketing material developed for the Business After Hours function last February but although it could use some updating, it will be at the Meet and Greet event.

Mr. Proulx spoke of members possibly having business cards with links to Town website and Mr. Winham's name, email address (dwinham@exeternh.gov) so there is a direct point of contact; agreed that could perhaps be a task for the Economic Marketing Tools meeting group. Discussions then turned to using the website as a point of reference as the material listed there could be updated easily and not incur printing costs on information that often does go out of date.

Ms. Corson stated now that Mr. Winham is attending these meetings, the Town Planner, Ms. von Aulock and the Building Inspector and Code Enforcement Officer, Doug Eastman would not be in attendance at the meetings unless needed, but as the Planning Board representative she will verify with both what is scheduled on the respective agendas.

6. Approval of minutes

Mr. Benjamin made a correction to the heading of the minutes of August 19, 2014. With that noted Mr. Proulx moved to approve the minutes as amended; seconded by Mr. Benjamin. Motion carried with Mr. Stauber and Mr. Dean abstaining.

7. Confirmation of October meeting date.

It is set for the first Tuesday of the month, October 7, 2014 7:00 pm

With no further business the Chair called for a motion to adjourn. So moved by Ms. MacDonald; seconded by Mr. Hampson.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm

Respectfully submitted.

Ginny Raub
Recording secretary