

**Exeter Economic Development Commission**

**February 3, 2015**

**1. Call to Order**

In the absence of the Chairman and Vice Chairman, Clerk Jason Proulx called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm in the Nowak Room of the Exeter Town Office building.

Members and Town staff present were: John Mueller, Selectman Representative Dan Chartrand, Lizabeth MacDonald, Brandon Stauber, Madeleine Hamel, Economic Development Director Darren Winham and Town Manager Russ Dean.

Mr. Proulx announced Chairwoman Kathy Corson submitted her resignation from the Commission because of personal and business obligations.

**2. Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Chartrand moved to accept the draft minutes of the January 6, 2015 meeting as presented; seconded by Mr. Mueller. Motion carried with Ms. MacDonald abstaining. Ms. Hamel was not present for the vote.

**3. Election of Chair**

With Ms. Corson stepping down, election of a chairman was set as the next agenda item.

Mr. Stauber asked this be postponed until next month's meeting as the posted agenda did not reference this action nor was Vice Chair Mr. Hampson present to give him a chance to move up to the position of Chairman.

With the arrival of Ms. Hamel, it was determined there was a quorum. Mr. Proulx explained what business had transpired and referenced Mr. Stauber's request to postpone any decision on electing a Chairman as the agenda given to members that evening was not what was mailed to members last week. Mr. Winham acknowledged the meeting notice he sent out last week did not list specific agenda items. Mr. Dean added the agenda he prepared for this meeting were talking points.

As for Mr. Hampson assuming the position of Chair, Mr. Winham said he spoke with Mr. Hampson and confirmed he would not be able to accept the position as Chairman because of his new business venture but would like to stay on till the March meeting.

Mr. Chartrand felt postponing was reasonable and perhaps in the interim the BOS could fill the vacant seats on the Commission and perhaps the Planning Board could appoint a representative as Ms. Corson was their representative. In the interim the Executive Committee can prepare an agenda to vote on the officer positions at least that of Chairman for next meeting.

**4 Update from Economic Development Director**

Mr. Winham felt very positive about how the TIF initiative was progressing. The proposed wetland buffer amendment was approved by the Planning Board with a 5 – 2 vote and that will be on the March ballot. The Board of Selectmen also approved the proposal unanimously. The second hearing will be at

the Feb. 9, 2015 BOS meeting. At the deliberative session on January 31, 2015 there was a strong discussion on the articles but came out with articles remaining as written to be on the Town ballot.

Next step is to educate the voters and this is where he hoped the Commission would become involved. First and more importantly, he would like the EEDC to help get the message out; to be the conduit for the proposal. Also, he thought of the Commission to host/sponsor one or two informational meetings to include not only the three warrant articles but the wetland buffer amendment also. These meetings would take place at the Town Hall and have a knowledgeable panel on the stage ready to present and answer questions/concerns. Also, at these meetings they would like the public to weigh in on what they would like to see on Epping Road; what type of businesses-something to work from. He did acknowledge there are two factions with opinions on types of housing; if any should/could be included in these districts. With the recent formation by the BOS of a Housing committee he hopes to garner some information from that group.

In a meeting with Mike Schidlovsky of the Chamber he reported the Chamber group is fully behind the proposal and will be sending out a message to their membership asking for a vote for full endorsement of the proposal including the setbacks.

From the public, Mr. John Hauschildt spoke to the housing issue and the dilemma of creating a tax base (with residential projects) while the possibility of it becoming a tax burden; was unsure what the answer was. Mr. Chartrand referenced the discussion at the deliberative session on housing and children being brought into the schools. Ultimately he felt the real project is to diversify tax base and give tax relief to the residential tax payer. That means to get more of whatever we can do out there on Epping Road; is an economic development issue.

Mr. Stauber spoke of bundling the wetland setback amendment into the TIF proposal; something the Commission generally doesn't know about nor have formally had an opportunity to explore as part of the TIF package; then expect the Commission to endorse having only seen the pieces.

Secondly, Mr. Stauber expressed his feeling that putting housing in an area designated commercial is a zoning change and setting a precedent. There is the risk that later on the neighborhood might oppose any further commercial development for the area. The goal of the TIF was to diversify the tax base and housing does not work toward the goal.

Mr. Winham stressed only the ZBA can control what uses go into one zone that is not allowed in that zone: not EEDC or BOS. Continuing, he stressed the present market forces being placed on property owners/developers are for residential projects. Agreed (residential) isn't what we would like, but with some property owners, having had the property for some time they are ready to move forward. We may be seeing a project with commercial in the front and residential to the rear. We can't control and is working with the owners. And that is why he will be looking for input on what the Town wants on Epping Road at the upcoming informational meetings.

As for the wetland buffer amendment Mr. Winham responded it was just not getting the infrastructure to certain parts of the TIF district but dealing with the current wetland regs dictating setbacks and what could be placed on the properties proved to be more encumbering. Ultimately, a wetland scientist was brought in to take into consideration the functions and values of the existing wetland and to make a matrix

for the setbacks. He did concede he did not go through all the pertinent departments and commissions but did not have the time and felt the more people around the table tended to confuse the objective and cited the Portsmouth Avenue flexible zoning initiative that was withdrawn before the second public hearing because of a last minute review with professionals. Agreed more information could have been provided but a (EEDC) monthly meeting does not allow that to happen. He stated he would be willing to meet with members for more information

Mr. Stauber did not disagree the wetland setbacks warranted review but was uncomfortable as a member of the EEDC to endorse a proposal that included pieces they, the Commission, had not reviewed; doing so was a disservice to the community.

As for “bundling” that includes the wetland setbacks, Mr. Winham stated it was not feasible to do one and not the other; what the area needs to get what we want. Discussion continued on the current wetland regs and the Commission not seeing the wetland amendment but being asked to endorse the three warrant articles creating the TIF and the one warrant article amending the wetland setbacks.

Mr. Chartrand motioned the EEDC sponsor a public meeting on the three warrant articles establishing the TIF and the Zoning article addressing the wetland setbacks; seconded by Ms. MacDonald.

Mr. Winham assured the group Mr. Gove would be on the panel to address and present the information on the environmental questions. Mr. Dean suggested members review the tape of the deliberative session when Mr. Winham presented and responded to questions on the TIF proposal.

Mr. Mueller responding to prior comments by members that if the focus of the public meetings is to provide information he felt it was a neutral position and had no problem supporting/endorsing such a venue.

Mr. Proulx asked for a vote on the motion of Mr. Chartrand. Motion carried. As for any particulars of a meeting, Mr. Winham cited a number of factors determining when the session may be held.

Mr. Chartrand made an additional motion for the EEDC to endorse Articles 10, 28 and 29 on the March Town warrant pertaining to the TIF initiative; seconded by Ms. Hamel. Motion carried.

Mr. Winham then spoke of other economic projects that are going on within the Town. Mr. Dean remarked that it looks to be a very busy year for the Town; dam out, articles on downtown sidewalk projects, approved for sidewalks and bike path on Kingston Road, new water lines in the Lincoln Street neighborhood.

## **5 Economic Development Chapter for Master Plan**

Mr. Winham definitely feels the need for a chapter but until the Commission is fully seated he is unsure how to proceed. The fact that this meeting was not televised this evening wants to have candid discussion; would like to the public to have confidence in the group undertaking a project. The meetings can be open to the public but not televised at this time. Did the Commission want to proceed as a subcommittee or as a whole.

Mr. Proulx expressed his feeling that now Mr. Winham is doing the work that the former subcommittees were doing can most likely do now collectively at monthly meeting; no need to meet outside.

Ms. Hamel felt the kind of detailed discussion needed for this project could not be had at a public meeting. Mr. Stauber commented having a master plan subcommittee was discussed at the September and December meeting, but it is critical however the Commission proceeds it be an open and transparent process; that was one reason for the vote last year to have the meetings televised. As for engaging the members in ongoing economic projects, if it is a private discussion it should not be brought up, private or televised.

Mr. Chartrand made the motion not to televise the March meeting, to reorganize the Commission and have this discussion for a more permanent decision at the meeting; seconded by Ms. Hamel. Motion carried.

Mr. Dean commented that there is now a full time staff (resource) person to do things on the Commission's behalf; it is an understanding how to work with someone that is full time here. It is an important transition period and learning how that job is done. He feels we are moving forward.

Mr. Chartrand continued saying we do have a learning curve going on and Mr. Winham is now staff and can provide resources; the learning curve continues and is confident we will get there.

Mr. Dean expressed how he would like to see the Commission proceed with the Master Plan as he knows the Planning Board would like to see the initiative begin. The question raised was when the PB wanted this and should there be a visit to discuss the schedule. Mr. Winham agreed to bring a draft for a starting point. It was suggested it might be worth looking at the Newmarket chapter as was discussed early on as a model.

Mr. Mueller commented on his appreciation of Mr. Francese's presentation but was troubled by the conflicting arguments between his premise (housing/children did not impact schools) and the discussion at the deliberative session that increased housing does impact the schools and ultimately taxes. He asked if there was data to support the supposition that housing projects bring children into the school system creating increased demands on their resources. Mr. Steve Norton of The NH Center for Public Policy was suggested as a source for data that may address that issue.

With no further business, Ms. MacDonald motioned to adjourn; seconded by Mr. Chartrand,

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Ginny Raub

Recording Secretary