

**Exeter Economic Development Commission**

**June 09, 2015**

**1. Call to Order**

Chairman Jason Proulx called the meeting to order at 8:36 AM in the Nowak Room of the Exeter Town Office building. Members present were: Len Benjamin, Brian Lortie, Dave Hampson, Planning Board representative Kelly Bergeron, Madeleine Hamel, Selectman representative Dan Chartrand, Chris Surette and Town Manager Russ Dean. Also in attendance: Economic Development Director, Darren Winham and Building Inspector Doug Eastman.

Guest: Arlon Chaffee, former member of the Newmarket Community Development Corporation

The Chairman introduced the Commission's new member, Chris Surette and members proceeded to introduce themselves to Mr. Surette.

**2. Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Chartrand moved to approve the draft minutes of the May 19, 2015 meeting as presented: seconded by Mr. Lortie. Motion carried. (Ms. Hamel was not present for the vote.)

**3. Old Business (updates)**

- EDC Ordinance (not for profit)

Mr. Dean reported participating in a Chamber sponsored Economic Development Forum in Newmarket at The Millspace on June 3, 2015. Also participating in the forum was Mr. Arlon Chaffee, a former and longtime member of the Newmarket Community Development Corporation (NCDC). As this Commission attempts to sort out the current not for profit status and how to proceed, Mr. Dean asked Mr. Chaffee to address the EEDC on the history of the Newmarket Economic Development Corporation's not for profit structure and operating model/procedures.

Mr. Chaffee noted in the 80's when NH Fish and Game gifted the Town with a downtown building on the river the Town reactivated a previously organized 501c3 not for profit group. Ultimately, the sale of that building provided the seed money for future ventures. With no existing bylaws found, a set was drafted creating a private nonprofit group but effective with a public interest. A membership stipulation stated the eight members (plus Town Administrator ex-officio) were to be Town residents, Town business owners although not residents, appointed Town Council members and members at large. He added most all the members had previous or present Town service experience or a vested interest in the community so did not experience any rogue behavior. The major advantage was they were able to operate without the public forum type of meetings, but did work with existing Town boards and committees.

He felt it was an advantage to have a building or project to coalesce around. For them, it was the aging, deteriorating 300,000 sq. ft. industrial mill building in the downtown. He outlined the challenges facing the group with no revenue stream to move forward to address the immediate needs of the structure. He acknowledged they were fortunate in having 2 physical structures; one on the main street and another behind on the other side of river. They had a private developer construct residential units in this building. A designated portion of each residential sale went back

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to the NCDC and allowed them to make needed repairs to the larger building. Also, a consultant was brought in for a publicly facilitated design charrette; what did the town want and what is realistic.

Members asked various questions on their endeavors and workings. It was established they received no Town appropriated funds. If this (EEDC) group was considering going that route, he suggested initially setting up the 501c3 as it is a bit of a procedure and then it will be ready when the opportunity presents itself.

Mr. Dean noted this EEDC is not a 501c3 organization but operates under RSA 292 using the Town's tax ID number; the NCDC has its own Tax number, own bank account. Mr. Dean had additional questions on the operating procedures of the Newmarket group and explained this Town has two similar but different groups; an Economic Development Committee (EDC) formed in the middle 70's and a Town ordinance that allows this group to function; looking for best way to proceed to have one functioning organization. Mr. Chaffee stated Newmarket also has a town Economic Development Committee as well as the NCDC. But in his opinion, the Town group has not found a specific agenda; was formed to write the Chapter 6 on Economic Development for Master Plan.

His suggestion was if you have a specific project, would go with the 501c3 as you would get greater results. And yes the NCDC was the target of comments and opinions of working behind closed doors; things were being done without public input/knowledge. But felt the success speaks for itself.

After referring to parking being an issue in downtown Newmarket, he outlined a project where the town purchased a property destroyed by fire, razed and level it in anticipation of future development downtown and subsequently allowed the NCDC to negotiate a lease /purchase agreement to bring to the developer; an example of the town and NCDC working together. Proceedings on establishing the parking lot vetted in the public but negotiations with the developer were "behind closed doors." But Mr. Chaffee acknowledged people want to know and he encouraged questions and found he could most often provide answers to satisfy the inquirer; just not specifics; conceded they were blunt but felt it was necessary.

Mr. Chartrand summarizing what he heard was that 501c3 was a valuable entity and it gives flexibility to the town, but noted the differences between Newmarket and Exeter in their forms of town government; Town Council versus an annual Town Meeting. Mr. Chaffee concurred it was a valuable entity, but without a project it would be a challenge to keep the group challenged.

As to fund raising, Mr. Chaffee mentioned the success fees (a portion of the sale of the residential units) and then a separate non-profit was formed to operate the Lamprey Arts and Cultural Alliance and an series of lease arrangements between developer and NCDC that ultimately can/will supply funds.

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Mr. Proulx thanked Mr. Chaffee for coming and in addition, Mr. Chaffee received applause from the members of the EEDC.

- **COAST 7**

Mr. Dean recounted the old Route 7 has been restructured to interface with Wildcat Transit (at the stop in Newmarket) and new stops in Exeter being established. When the locations are finalized will see a greater frequency of service stops in Exeter. More information will be forthcoming and will start to promote on Town web site. Also, when stops are finalized, some members of the EEDC are interested in doing a ride-along to support COAST and promote the new Route 7.

- **T.E.A.M Exeter (Town Exeter Arts and Music)**

Designating the first Friday of the month for downtown festivities with musicians and merchants participating, the organization had another successful event on June 5, 2105. The group is in the process of doing a not for profit incorporation, but was noted in doing so the Secretary of State wants the Town to grant permission for the organization to use the Town name in their organizational title; Town is presently addressing the matter. It is hoped T.E.A.M continues to receive support from the residents

- **EDC Ordinance**

The Chairman stated a great deal of information was heard in Mr. Chaffee's talk and felt the conversation needs to continue but was unsure how; perhaps a subcommittee.

Mr. Chartrand expressed his willingness to serve on a subcommittee if formed but offered comments on what he heard from Mr. Chaffee and their NCDC. He was unsure if there was a project to embrace but was wary of walking away from the non-profit status currently in place. He would like Town consul to weigh in as to where the Commission is now and where it needs to go to shore up any non-profit in existence.

Mr. Dean referenced the technical questions he asked Mr. Chaffee and noted it would be re-charting if looking at a 501c3 and recommending to the BOS as a way of operation; is it worth considering.

Following general discussion among members, Mr. Dean stated at a previous meeting the Executive Committee was charged with the ordinance review process. Mr. Proulx stated the Executive Committee agreed to try to meet before the next scheduled meeting to discuss agenda items etc. this would be addressed moving forward.

#### **4. Project updates/announcements (Darren Winham)**

Mr. Winham, because of time constraints abbreviated his updates but wished to focus on the issue of parking in the downtown. Acknowledged there have been studies in the past but thinks it needs to be revisited and should be an agenda issue for this Commission and for others to join in the discussion; feels it is inhibiting investment in the downtown.

Mr. Chartrand was asked, as a business owner, his view on downtown parking. He conceded there were parking issues at certain times of the day, but for his business there were less issues in late afternoon and

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early evening; but he acknowledged he was an exception. He did add other downtown businesses are beginning to extend their business hours.

Exeter is the only town of comparable size that has completely free parking. Some of the business owners are strongly opposed to paid parking as they feel it is a competitive edge. He disagrees and feels it would create a revenue stream to apply to downtown improvements.

Mr. Winham provided updates on ongoing and prospective economic endeavors. Also noted an information and marketing strategy for 79-E will be forthcoming. He has started a draft of the Economic Strategic Plan; will take some time but will provide updates as it progresses. Also on his agenda, is to personally look at the present planning, zoning and permitting regulations from an economic development standpoint.

He also acknowledged the efforts of Mr. Eastman and Jay Perkins of DPW for assisting in the new veterinarian office coming to 125 Epping Road. He reminded the group the majority of the projects listed are in the TIF district and will contribute to the TIF fund.

Because of the physical and wetland issues associated with the Shafmaster and the King properties on the Epping Road, he feels the need to take a look at the zoning out there and see what can be sited on the properties. He and Mr. Dean walked and drove on these properties the last week and feels it is important for anyone with an interest and a voice in what is proposed for the sites to see the actual challenges; the size of ledge outcrops on the Shafmaster property and the water/wetlands on the King property. He personally plans to arrange for public walks, probably on a Saturday in July. He acknowledged any weekend in the summer is difficult but will arrange to take any group/individual on a tour.

The IOKA is now re-listed with a local realtor at a higher asking price than was this winter; no apparent reason but continues to be the focus of any development in the downtown. Mr. Winham felt it was vital to verbally market the property to keep the building in the public eye. Mr. Chartrand thanked Mr. Winham for all his efforts in highlighting this historic property.

Mr. Eastman joined in the economic updates by reporting on the new projects at 100 Domain Drive: the expansion of the Bauer Company and the location of Garnet Hills, a retail distributor. With these projects this address will be completely occupied.

### **5. New Business**

- EEDC participation in planning process.

Mr. Dean stated with the present Town Planner leaving her position on June 19, the Town will be working with Rockingham Planner Commission. A senior staff member, Mr. Glenn Greenwood, will serve as an interim planner while working toward filling the position. The Town has contracted with a consultant, Municipal Resources Inc. (MRI), to come in and do an objective review of the present planning and permitting processes. Mr. Dean feels it would be beneficial to have a member of the EEDC be a part of the process; speak to the Chair if interested.

- EEDC Website/Facebook page

Mr. Proulx re-iterated his idea of creating a Facebook page as a marketing piece; highlighting development. Mr. Dean listed what Town Departments had active fb pages but the only Town

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committee, the Conservation Commission, has such a page and it seemed to be going well. Mr. Chartrand spoke of his interest in having a small line item in the budget requesting dollars to hire intern(s); feels it would be perfect activity for an intern. He feels it could promote what is being done and re-enforce public perception; hopes all would advocate for some funds at budget time.

Mr. Dean remarked there is a history for having interns; both the EEDC and other municipal offices have/had such. And added with this outside review of planning and development they may have suggestions on how to integrate economic development into the overall structure.

Mr. Chartrand felt the more specific the request for funding the better chance it has of receiving the approval of the Budget Recommendation Committee.

- EEDC participation/attendance at other Town Meetings

Mr. Proulx spoke of being unable to attend other Board meetings as often as he would like but would like to see members attend the meetings and report back to this Commission; if the meeting is addressing an (EEDC) agenda item, weigh in at public comment portion of meeting. Ms. Bergeron stated from a Planning Board perspective, she would welcome representatives from other boards to attend their meetings in an effort to integrate the boards; to keep everyone on same page. She recently spoke to Planning about sending out agendas, not necessarily the posted agendas, but working agendas to the Chairman of the different groups to keep them updated on what PB is doing. Then if they see a topic of mutual interest they may send a representative to speak. PB is currently redoing their procedures to be completed soon and moving forward can work on that board integration.

Mr. Winham noted at the Newmarket Economic Forum, developer Eric Chinburg said the biggest deterrent to developers are the naysayers; those that appear at the meetings, in most every town, to downplay the efforts of development. You/we need someone to stand up and speak positively for the endeavors. With no current projects in need of verbal support, Mr. Winham stated he would be willing to send out notices of upcoming meetings where a presence would be appreciated.

Mr. Chartrand noted the public comment at beginning of each BOS meetings; would welcome positive comments on economic development as it helps keep BOS focused on economic development and not distracted by naysayers.

Mr. Dean stated the importance of Commission members to communicate with other entities. With the outside review coming up there will be more on zoning issues and will have the opportunity to be educated on such and be more confident to interface with the other committees.

**Next meeting: Tuesday July 14, 2015 at 8:30 AM**

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

Meeting adjourned at 9:40 AM

Respectfully submitted,

Ginny Raub

Recording Secretary