

**Exeter Economic Development Commission**

**August 11, 2015**

- **Call to Order**

Chairman Jason Proulx called the meeting to order at 8:37 AM in the Nowak Room of the Exeter Town Office Building. Members present were: John Mueller, Selectboard representative Dan Chartrand, Lizabeth MacDonald, Madeline Hamel, Chris Surette, Dave Hampson, Brian Lortie and Town Manager Russ Dean. Also present were: Economic Development Director Darren Winham and Building Inspector Doug Eastman.

Mr. Proulx noted there is now a vacant seat on the Commission as member Len Benjamin has stepped down.

- **Approval of past minutes**

Mr. Chartrand moved to approve the draft minutes of the June 09, 2015 meeting as presented; seconded by Mr. Lortie. Motion carried.

Mr. Chartrand moved to approve the draft minutes of the July 14, 2015 meeting as presented: motion seconded. Motion carried with Mr. Proulx and Mr. Hampson abstaining.

- **Updates old business**

- **COAST Route 7**

Although discussed at the July meeting no definitive date was set for members to ride the revised Route 7. The date selected is August 19<sup>th</sup> at 10:15 AM and members will leave from the bandstand stop; the ride to Newmarket and return is scheduled for an hour.

Mr. Chartrand reported he attended a COAST Board of Directors meeting and they were pleased the EEDC planned a group ride; hoped the Commission could raise profile of this transit system.

- **EEDC Ordinance**

Mr. Dean reported there is nothing new on this but confirming with (Town) insurance carrier there is no personal liability issues with the members in the not-for-profit structure; will follow up on this. But added when appointed, members receive a letter asking you come to Town Clerk's office to sign a letter/document confirming the appointment to serve on a Town committee, this assures you as a member of a Town committee you do have liability coverage.

As for a deadline to respond to the Selectboard, Mr. Chartrand felt the Selectboard is looking for a recommendation (on how to proceed) but is comfortable with when the Commission is ready.

Mr. Dean offered his thoughts whether the Not for Profit (NFP) stays in place with this group being its members or go back to the Board of Directors of the original NFP to

reenergize the group and make the necessary changes to the bylaws to go forward. As long as there remains no out of the ordinary liability issues that arise the group is fine. Also need to consider how the re-organized group would be utilized.

Mr. Chartrand referenced Mr. Chaffee's presentation at the June EEDC meeting and from his point of view we are not there yet. He does feel there needs to be more conversation and study done, but again the Selectboard will wait for the EEDC to decide how they wish to process

Mr. Winham noted he has worked with other communities having dual forms of economic development groups and is willing to put it as an agenda item to outline how they may operate.

Mr. Mueller offered he worked with the Newmarket group and Mr. Chaffee in the past and felt their focus was in the redevelopment of targeted buildings. He felt the Commission should be open to new development and might be helpful for a building such as the IOKA if the opportunity should arise.

The Chair expressed the feeling more discussion and research should occur before coming to a resolution; a vote possibly occurring within the next two months. Referencing Mr. Winham's offer to bring in models of other communities for reference, Mr. Dean noted along with Newmarket, the Monadnock Economic Development Corporation and the Dover Business and Industrial Authority could also serve as models.

Mr. Dean also stated part of the discussion should center on the EEDC operating under RSA 292 NFP and draw distinction between this group and any of the others; to be clear as to how this group's configuration compares to the others. Mr. Chartrand would also like to learn of any federal obligations with such groups.

Replying to Ms. Hamel question of Town exploring two parallel groups, Mr. Proulx felt we (EEDC) were open to both. And to her question of where and how the TIF would function? With that group having its on advisory board may be a draw back; not enough qualified/interested individuals to populate the different commissions/boards.

Mr. Winham will lay out the structures in his presentation at September meeting,

- EDC in the Planning Process

Mr. Dean reported the consultant MRI sent out a survey to land use board members as well as EEDC members. The intent is to take the survey data, interviews with Planning staff, review of the present process and present findings and compile: should be helpful

determining and outlining future planning processes. Developers and consultants will be interviewed as well.

Mr. Dean felt if there was someone from the EEDC to be a point person in this review it would be a good thing. Mr. Proulx was informed in his absence last month he was appointed to be the EEDC rep. Wanting to make it official, Mr. Chartrand motioned for the Chairman to be the EEDC rep to the planning process review; seconded by Ms. MacDonald. Mr. Proulx agreed to accept. Motion carried.

- Participation/attendance at other Town meetings

Mr. Winham doesn't feel there is a need for an EEDC voice at other board/committee meetings; only if there is a proposal/project that is of interest to this Commission. Mr. Proulx answered he would like attendance to receive feedback from items presented at other meetings to be brought back to this group to determine if it is something EEDC should weigh in on. It was noted the group is now receiving agendas from the other land use boards.

Mr. Dean felt it was good to hear updates on projects. When addressed, Mr. Clement from the audience and the BOS representative to the PB said there were no accepted cases with prospective economic impacts in front of the Board at this time. The 80 Epping Road project has been pushed off until September. It was mentioned a joint site walk for PB and Conservation members was being talked about (Date TBD) and invited EEDC members to join. Agreed this is what is needed; for all boards to be aware of what is on the table. As for developers going before both boards with their presentations at their expense, Mr. Clement remarked the developers/engineers often ask to present their plans to the Conservation group to get feedback before going forward, as is the scheduled presentation for the 80 Epping Road project on agenda for the August 11 Conservation meeting..

Discussion continued with Mr. Clement explaining the PB is following current Planning Board procedures, but did acknowledge there has been some modification to the present policy. Mr. Chartrand felt it incumbent for the current land use board members to be more developer friendly; perhaps having joint board meetings to facilitate the applicant's time and resources. Ms. MacDonald noted if we don't add revenue to our tax base we will not grow and accomplish some much needed updates to municipal services/projects.

Mr. Dean summing up felt this planning process review will provide a good analysis of the (present) process with the objective of producing a report with possible recommendations that can be implemented. He felt the review process would be complete in sixty to ninety days and they are about thirty days into the process.

Ms. Hamel expressed concern if there were changes deemed important to be made and needed the vote of the citizens, would there be time for the 2016 warrant or would a year be lost. Mr. Dean replied the present once a year meeting is what it is and is more concerned that a quality study is obtained as that is what is desired and needed. With fact and data gathering and the interviews all combined, he is confident a quality report will be delivered.

Mr. Eastman commented if everything isn't thoroughly scrutinized we run the risk of someone not liking the decision and then appealing the decision; now it is in the judicial system. Mr. Chartrand commented he was not looking for a truncated process, just asking for the boards to coordinate their meetings.

Mr. Winham wished to note some of the larger property owners are unwilling to verbally speak out on a Town employee, a board or the process for fear of jeopardizing a project they are sponsoring or intend to present. However they entrust him and it is his role to relay some of their concerns. He is certain they will speak in confidence to the consultant in the upcoming interviews.

Mr. Surette felt he was willing to attend some of these meetings just to educate himself. Mr. Dean commented the minutes are available on line and the actual meetings can be viewed live on Channel 22 or viewed later on Town Hall Streams and not necessary to actually attend the meetings.

Concluding, Mr. Dean wished to add the consultant will also be looking at our present process of requesting a third party review of the applicant and adding to the cost for the applicant and is it redundancy as project is also being reviewed by Town staff, the TRC and boards. Also the bonding requirements will be reviewed to see if they are in line with other communities. By a member request, the function and membership of the Technical Review Committee (TRC) was outlined; is part of site plan regulations of Town and PB makes the determination (the makeup) because they adopt the site plan ordinances. It is a standing committee of representatives of municipal services and may be called upon if the PB wishes input. .

- Project updates

Mr. Winham announced after working with Rand Whitney and Mr. Tom Monahan's associates, the company chose Dover. It is unclear at this time what the contributing factors were for such a decision; will definitely follow up.

Mr. Dean cited a recent article in the August 9, Sunday Seacoast paper of economic activity in Dover and felt it was worth reading: *City Spurs Development through Incentives*.

Mr. Winham reported the purchase and sales agreement has been extended on the Kevin King property and the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Advisory Board will hold their first meeting on Aug 13. Also, the veterinary clinic was approved for the 124 Epping Rd location, Mark King is going before both Conservation Commission and PB for the construction of storage units on Industrial Drive, Neighborhood Brewery on track for opening later this month, As for the Exeter based company looking to expand with new construction, a site at the intersection of Holland Way, Exeter RD/Hampton Road is desired. The State owns Holland Way (but Town maintains it) and BOS have asked State (NHDOT) to “surplus” the property and sell to abutters to permit development. The State has been very cooperative and has “bridged” their internal process to speed this along; good news with jobs retention and addition to tax base.

## 5 New Business

- Parking in downtown

Mr. Dean noted the last parking study was done in 2002. In the past several years there’s been much discussion on parking issues, the future of, what initiatives need to be taken to enhance the parking, . To that end, Mr. Dean and Mr. Winham prepared a proposal for a downtown parking study update with the cost of \$50,000 to be included in the Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) for 2016 budgeting. Because the CIP is a planning document its first public hearing will be by the PB at their August 13<sup>th</sup> meeting. The procedural course this proposal and any/all proposals was outlined by Mr. Dean.

Mr. Dean continued citing the need for the study to be done by a professional from their spot and cover all the issues that need to be addressed i.e. parking garage, concept of paid parking, number public parking spaces, traffic flow data.

Mr. Winham added he and Mr. Eastman are exploring the idea of a public/private partnership that would work for a parking structure.

Members suggested including the Academy in the discussion, encompassing the parking along Lincoln Street as well as the down town and reaching out to several consultants in a pre-RFP to be sure the approved dollars will indeed give us what we want. Mr. Dean added the Dover study for \$75,000 was used as a guideline for what they received; acknowledged there are differences between the two towns.

Mr. Dean suggested if the members are comfortable with an endorsement, it may be helpful for the PB to have that support when reviewing. With that, Mr. Chartrand motioned that the EEDC endorse the item in the CIP for a downtown parking study; seconded by Mr. Mueller. Motion carried. The Chair will draft a letter of support.

Mr., Winham introduced the purchase of the IOKA by the Town as an items included in the CIP proposal. He feels it is an asset that is deteriorating and is the topic of many a discussion as to its disposition. Admitted there has been active interest in the property

but for various reason they and the property owner could not come to an agreement. Currently it is being listed with a local realtor and he directs all inquiries to her. As the economic developer, he feels it his position to put it out there with the supporting statements and let the citizens decide.

He proceeded to outline the procedure for such a purchase and a means of asking for a guarantee from a future purchaser for a specific amount of investment. He acknowledged it is not the norm for public funds being used for the purchase of private property but said it has been done and successfully; felt it was worthy of consideration..

Some members expressed their trepidation in such a purchase as they were aware of the condition of the building and the possible liability issue; in its current condition is it a liability to the abutting structures. Mr. Winham conceded that was an issue but felt it was structurally sound as he has seen the interior of the building and has an idea from walking through with prospective buyers of the work and ballpark costs of the work needed.

Verified it could/would be voted on in spring of 2016 if the BOS supported such as proposal. Mr. Winham is not looking for an endorsement but to put it out there as he feels it is crucial to the downtown; can't talk about development in the downtown without this property being included. If the idea advances he can bring examples of such endeavors that are solvent. Also allows the conversation to continue and could be "free publicity" to keep the project out there possibly attracting potential buyers.

Mr. Dean felt some communication with the PB to say the EEDC is aware of proposal and understand the issues would be beneficial. He would like to see EEDC involved in this process even if possible to have a member attend PB at this first meeting.to urge the proposal get to the public for continuing dialogue. It was agreed it is very unique proposal but (has the potential of being) very polarizing. Mr. Winham understands the concerns/risks but wants to see consideration to keep the conversation going.

Determining there was a quorum; Mr. Chartrand moved the EEDC request the Planning Board allow the CIP on the IOKA purchase to move forward through the process so to have a full discussion of the proposal not just at the PB level, but the Budget Recommendation Committee and the Selectboard process; second by Mr. Mueller. Motion carried.

With no further business, meeting adjourned at 10:30 AM

**Next meeting September 8, 2015**

*Respectfully submitted, Ginny Raub Rec.Sec.*