

DRAFT MINUTES

Exeter Economic Development Commission

May 23, 2017

Present: Lizabeth MacDonald-Chair, Don Clement-Selectman Rep, Kelly Bergeron Planning Board Rep, Darren Winham- Economic Development Director, Chris Surette, Ian Smith, Madeline Hamel, John Mueller, John Tremblay and Mike Dawley

1. **Call to order:** The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Lizabeth MacDonald.

2. **Approve Minutes** – April 28, 2017

MOTION: Mr. Mueller moved to approve the minutes, Mr. Surette seconded. The motion passed 3-2. Mr. Smith and Ms. Bergeron abstained.

3. **Update on the Master Plan Steering Committee Meeting:**

Mr. Smith attended this meeting and they reviewed the first draft of the master plan including the sections. The important thing from the meeting is finalizing the date for the next public forum which will be June 14th at the Exeter High School from 6-9PM. Childcare will be provided at the meeting and they are looking for volunteers to man some of the booths. Members of the public may attend at any time during the 6-9 timeframe.

Ms. Hamel wanted to ask if they would have a separate topic on the EDS with the master plan and Mr. Winham said he did not want to interrupt their process. He would help and provide information but he would not take it over. Ms. Hamel said at the open house they will have the public contribute and then they will break down the topics. She wondered if Economic Development would be one of the topic stations. IT was said it was and it was under growth.

4. **TIF Advisory Board Update:**

Mr. Winham explained they meet when they need to meet for a subject, and the current proposal for Mr. Shafmaster to pay the “carry” is being reviewed by counsel for the parties.

5. **Economic Development Project Updates:**

Mr. Winham said there has been a lot of action in the last month but not all can be announced with names right now.

- They are negotiating with a business to go into 80 Epping Road area. Mr. Shafmaster’s project has been to the Planning Board and now they are at the stage where they have to get the road piece completed to make it happen.
- Things are going well with the Seacoast Sports Complex.
- There is a couple things happening on Epping Road with businesses leaving, and another business is up for sale.
- They are working with Mr. Monahan on the King property and this is moving along slowly.
- Thursday night at the Planning Board, there will be a conceptual plan for Mr. Carlisle’s property.

- Seadog is still moving forward, the 79E has been approved and the covenant has been recorded with the county.
- A downtown restaurant project is rescheduled to be before the ZBA in June, and this is a great use of the site. Mr. Winham encouraged board members who supported it to attend the next ZBA meeting.
- Two cell towers potentially being built, one at Cross Road and then one on Kingston Road. Kingston road tower appeared before the ZBA last week but no decision was made and they will be back on the next ZBA meeting agenda as well.

Mr. Clement said there was a lot of residents who did not want to see the Kingston Road tower be built but the Board also wanted to see more data on the impact on property values and more information on why this was essential. They also asked them to show the lack of coverage overlap. Mr. Surette asked if the towers were for a specific telecommunications company, it was explained some are but not these. The Kingston Road one has a current deal with T Mobile but it is being built by Varsity Wireless. Mr. Winham will be giving updates at Riverwoods at three different times to their residents.

Mr. Dawley had questions about the request to support the tentative plan for the potential restaurant near String Bridge, a project at the ZBA meeting, he felt it had a huge parking piece that should be considered. Mr. Winham said that it is true there is negative parking in this case. One of the issues they have in regards in parking, because they have businesses looking to come downtown they may or may not have a parking problem. The unfortunate positions the ZBA is in without specific data they have to almost pick winners or losers. They only know they “may” have a parking problem. This is a difficult position for the ZBA. This application is looking to get rid of parking because it is not easy to use as it is currently configured. Mr. Dawley felt they were at a difficult position with this application because it is on an island. He felt they should request a traffic study. Mr. Dawley said it could muck up downtown and it should be considered.

Mr. Clement said they were in the very early stages of this potential development. It is a challenging site, it is difficult for any board to make a judgment one way or the other. He felt they wanted to make sure it didn’t cause any economic development problems in other parts of town. This application has many hoops to jump through. Mr. Surette said it seems this parking variance may be at the ZBA next, if it gets denied it could be the end of it. That’s why it is good to be discussed at this Board now. Mr. Smith felt they needed to look at economic development piece, it wasn’t this Boards mission to discuss if something should be approved or not that is what the ZBA and planning boards are for. They discuss how to bring businesses into town and attract them here. Mr. Winham felt that since everyone in this room is also a citizen they could go to the ZBA meeting and voice their personal opinions and request a parking study as a citizen if they feel that one should be done. Mr. Clement felt the traffic study would not be decided by the ZBA, but could be done by the planning board. The ZBA has a narrow focus and can only discuss the relief they are requesting them for. Mr. Surette said he is in favor of more restaurants coming to town.

6. Discussion: Workforce Attraction & Retention:

Mr. Smith had some conversations with different people, one small business owner was excited and surprised to see this conversation. They discussed different ways of learning from the challenges

small businesses face in town. A group of people in town have a similar discussion going, how do they either match all 3 of the silos together. Mr. Gutstein discussed support for existing businesses, this small business harped on why keep this business in Exeter. His thought as getting local business owner together to get the raw truth on all sides.

Ms. MacDonald is glad this is broadening she started this using the word incubator but is happy to see this expand and bring together stakeholders and have a conversation on what the needs are. Mr. Gutstein said they asked people to come to a meeting but then backed off because people may not want to share pieces of their business on television. Mr. Winham asked Mr. Tremblay what he thought. Mr. Tremblay said he has a couple plants under his supervision and there are obviously issues. He feels the better mix would be small and moderate sized business, as he can discuss large businesses but the mix would be important. Mr. Winham asked if he thought a forum was important. Mr. Tremblay said a twofold approach works very well. If you talk individually you would get very different answers then in a group. He felt start here, and then getting a group together to hammer out the key points. Ms. Hamel suggested they look into the business forum, they have discussed this previously to talk about their issues and concerns and the last meeting they mentioned a survey. Having a business forum and pulling in other organizational partners to participate they would get a few round table discussions, etc.

Mr. Clement said if they are serious about this, and he feels they are. They should develop a project plan, nail things down. Mr. Winham said he had one in front of him. Mr. Clement just did not want to talk about this for months without it going anywhere. Mr. Winham explained that UNH has a program and the packet handed out explains the process to go and meet businesses. This is a 3-year process they are discussing. This just gives an idea, they do not have to follow this. It is more of a playbook to start with. Mr. Clement asked if the individual who created this be interested in coming in to discuss this. Mr. Winham said he felt he would, Mr. Clement said this would be helpful to get ideas. He felt they could do this in house but it was up to the Board. Mr. Winham would contact him to get an idea if he would be able to do this. They would try to have him attend the next meeting in June.

7. Communication

Nothing to report.

8. Updates on Related Items at:

Select Board: Mr. Clement explained that a couple weeks ago they approved the Soaring Hawk 79E. Recently they have been discussing infrastructure in the area. Some projects could create traffic problems in the short term. They are moving to the bid process for the sidewalk and work on Kingston Road. They are also will be doing sidewalk rehab on Epping Road to the floating sidewalks on the Aroma Joes. There will be a lot of infrastructure work this summer, which is necessary.

Planning Board: Ms. Bergeron said the planning board did not meet last week, the prior week they approved the plan for the car wash on Portsmouth Ave. The applicant was willing to work with abutters to address concerns. This Thursday they are having conceptual design review for the Epping Road project that was mentioned earlier. The cell tower is also on their agenda.

Housing Committee: Mr. Mueller explained they presented their final project to the Selectman the previous night. There is a lot of data and a lot of information. Ms. MacDonald asked if he could present this at a future meeting and this was confirmed. Mr. Clement said there were recommendations in there that said they should review their zoning in R1 to provide affordable/workforce diverse housing. Discussion ensued on this.

HDC: Ms. Bergeron said they met last Tuesday, they are talking about a walking tour that exists in town that is focused on the downtown. They would like to expand this out through more sections of town. They have mapped some areas out to give historical significance of different neighborhoods and buildings.

Next meeting: Tuesday, June 27, 2017

Mr. Winham said he looked up some stats on births in Exeter, in 2016 there were only 16 births. The number had been dropping over the years and he felt this should be kept in mind in terms of school enrollment. The numbers for enrollment are from people migrating here.

ADJOURNMENT: Mr. Smith moved to adjourn, Ms. Bergeron seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Dionne