

Economic Development Committee
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 9, 2020 Town Hall

Present: Jeff Hiatt, Chairman, Vice Chair, Mike Donahue, Alicia Busconi, Bob Raymond, Selectman Ted Connors, Selectman Ken Latchaw, Economic Development Consultant, Jerry Coogan, Planning Board Member Denis Hebert, Special Projects Coordinator Karen Anderson.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm.

David Choate, Colliers International was the guest speaker and spoke to the committee on the commercial and industrial trends that are tracked through Colliers. The Office Market Insight Report was reviewed with a vacancy rate of 3.3% in Portsmouth and 1.3% in Dover. These vacancy rates show that there could be a demand for office space in Newington. The Industrial Market Report shows that there is little to no inventory with many companies looking. The Portsmouth vacancy is 1.5% and 5.8% in Dover. The major issue currently in the industrial market is the cost per square foot for construction has increased due to the demand.

D. Choate noted that Newington's zoning has been problematic and suggested that the Office Zone be re-examined to allow retail and that a portion of the Office Zone be rezoned as industrial. Newington does not allow multi-family uses at this time. He added that across the country, malls are changing and those that are changing successfully are becoming lifestyle centers that include retail, residential and recreational aspects. He pointed out that large areas are being used for family recreation such as golf simulators, axe throwing and other recreational concepts. D. Choate said that there are some exciting opportunities for Newington in the Mall area and some housing along the perimeter of the mall could be a benefit. He emphasized that flexibility is critical in order to encourage innovative uses.

K. Latchaw questioned the addition of residential units in the malls and what would happen if the retail space then became needed. D. Choate said that it is unlikely that existing commercial units would be converted to residential uses – the residential component would be in addition to complement the retail uses. D. Choate pointed out that unless located in a downtown area, multi-family housing requiring ground floor commercial does not work.

D. Choate said that there is a lot of legislation being proposed in 2020 that the town should be aware of. The Bills include one for "Housing Opportunities Zones", which is an expansion of the RSA 79-E (Revitalization Zones) program; also a Bill that would require any town that provides density bonuses for elderly housing developments must apply the same density incentives to all housing developments.

M. Donahue said that if Pease is close to being built out – does the concept of having office space available in Newington make sense. D. Choate said that it would be good to know how much of the office zone is already encumbered by industrial uses. Denis Hebert noted that the office zone does include light industrial.

D. Choate also suggested that the town look at the residential zone criteria to allow smaller lots for smaller homes – there is a need for more starter and/or retirement homes.

Minutes:

M. Donahue suggested an amendment to the November 21, 2019 minutes to separate the two topics referenced on Page 1 Business Appreciation – Debrief and Business Appreciation Week. All agreed.

T. Connors moved to approve the November 21, 2019 minutes as amended.
A. Busconi seconded the motion with all in favor.

Economic Development Website Review:

J. Coogan told the committee that he had sent the link for the new website to M. Bergeron, NH Economic Development and Stu Arnett --. Both thought that highly of the site and supplied some comments for the committee to review.

K. Anderson will make the changes that have been suggested as well as insure that the logos are sized appropriately for the screen, verify that the video does not stop early and verify that the site is "mobile enabled". A. Busoconi's presentation will be added to the site as a resource.

G. Coogan will work on getting additional business interviews, particularly Cars & Coffee to add to the site.

Development Update-Jerry Coogan:

J. Coogan reviewed the current and proposed projects that are taking place in Newington. Early discussions have been had regarding office space with housing in the area of the new Northeast Credit Union / former China Buffet / Wilcox. The Planning Board has indicated they would like to see a cohesive look. McGovern Auto (former Toys R US) may get approval at the next meeting, Aldi's is scheduled to open in April/May and the proposed hotel is still in the planning process. The Planning Board has also contracted with two consultants to do a study on mixed use.

J. Coogan was asked to determine the value of the commercial / industrial that has been added to the town assessment since March, 2018 for the annual town report article.

Meeting Schedule

The next meeting will be February 20, 2020.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Anderson