

Town of Newington, NH
Economic Development Committee Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, November 23, 2021 – Town Hall

Attending Meeting:

Chair Jeff Hiatt, Mike Donahue, Selectman Chair Ted Connors, Bob Raymond, Alicia Busconi, Jill Boynton, Judy Miamis, Town Administrator Martha Roy, EDC Coordinator Karen Anderson, Paul Deschaine

Absent: Ken Latchaw, Brandon Arsenault

J. Hiatt called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Minutes Approval:

B. Raymond asked about the appropriateness of the Board continuing the meeting last month when there was no quorum and no votes could be taken. He pointed out that the minutes are labeled as non-meeting notes and that there was a lack of a quorum. M. Roy pointed out that the meeting was posted and was being recorded. M. Donahue pointed out that where a quorum was expected based on member Arsenault's response to a specific inquiry, it would make no sense for the Committee members who had made the effort to attend, to stop the meeting and perhaps run into a late arriving member in the parking lot. Since there were no substantive votes and everything said was on the public record, it was beneficial to the EDC's mission to discuss items like the very successful Business Appreciation Event, which Member Raymond had been unable to attend, on which many Committee members had recently worked very hard. He expressed concern that the question was designed to discourage the committee from carrying out its work for the Town. B. Raymond indicated that was not his intent and it was a question he had for the future. J. Hiatt reiterated that the notes of the meeting were specifically labeled Non-Meeting to fully inform the public. J. Boynton said that she understood Bob's concerns and wondered if it was productive to meet. J. Miamis noted that she is on an association board that will continue a meeting if there is not a quorum and no votes are taken.

K. Anderson said that efforts were made to contact all members to verify a quorum after she learned that three people were not able to attend. B. Raymond asked how many members were required for a quorum and if it made sense to increase the number on the committee. The current membership is eight, five are required for a quorum.

T. Connors moved to approve the notes from October 28, 2021. Jill Boynton seconded the motion. Approved.

Old Business

Budget Update / 2022 Budget Submission

M. Roy reported that the budget was in good shape, with 35% of the budget remaining. M. Roy told the committee that K. Anderson has accepted the position of Town Administrator

for Hampton Falls and Paul Deschaine will be taking over many of her current duties for the committee, while other duties will be handled by current administrative staff.

M. Donahue expressed appreciation for the efforts and enthusiasm K. Anderson has shown in the position and explained that there will be a gradual transition of duties to P. Deschaine.

2022 Budget Submission

M. Roy told the Board that the current proposed budget for the town for 2022 is \$450,000 higher than 2021 and the Board of Selectmen have asked all departments and committees to look to see if there are any areas that they could reduce their submitted budgets.

J. Boynton asked about the funds budgeted for membership/dues that has not been spent. M. Donahue explained that has been designated for participation in an Economic Development Consortium, with advertising aspects. It was not done for 2021, with efforts focused on the group Seacoast group that meets via Zoom that Karen has been participating with. The program will be reviewed again for 2022.

After discussion, noting the fact that the 2021 budget had been reduced by \$5,000 and the proposed 2022 budget is less than 2021, no reductions were able to be offered. A. Busconi noted that the budget is stable and any further reduction would reduce the scope of the committee.

Committee members were encouraged to attend the budget presentation on December 1st at 6:55 PM.

Continued Discussion – Tax Incentive Program RSA 72:81

The Committee talked about the importance of understanding the aspects of adopting the tax incentive program for new construction/expansion of commercial properties. T. Connors recommended that a public informational hearing take place, some time in January with a speaker to really explain the program.

Business Appreciation Update

M. Donahue expressed appreciation for the efforts of Judy Miamis, Alicia Busconi and Jill Boynton on the recent Business Appreciation event. J. Hiatt pointed out that benefits from the event continue as a result of connections made during the event.

Retail Sector Update

Alicia Busconi told the committee that Crumbl Cookies was hoping to open on December 17th. Buffalo Wild Wings has closed and is moving to West End Yards in Portsmouth. The Crossings has one box vacancy, the former Kitchen Store and she will be monitoring how long it will take to fill it. She noted that smaller spaces are filling quicker than the larger spaces. B. Raymond asked what types of leases is she seeing. A. Busconi said that the smaller spaces are able to get shorter lease terms whereas national chains seek 10-15 year terms. She noted that the current trend with malls is smaller, more local companies taking spaces.

M. Phillips, from the audience, told the committee that the current 70' setback is no longer appropriate for smaller, commercial buildings. He also pointed out that Newington needs to respect the needs of today, such as affordable housing/ multi-family housing which is not addressed in Newington's zoning. M. Phillips said that Newington is fortunate with the mall, in that the three anchor stores own their own land.

Report on Conference Calls

NH Department of Business & Economic Affairs

B. Raymond told the committee that the recent call was regarding workforce challenges. Commissioner Caswell provided statistics regarding net migration patterns between 2015 and 2019. Also discussed was the resignation of people from the workforce, as more than 4 million people left their jobs in both August and September for various reasons.

Seacoast Economic Development Roundtable

The weekly calls were reviewed. Presentations have been made on the regional organizations including the Rockingham Economic Development Center (REDC) and their role to provide technical and funding assistance to communities and businesses. The REDC is responsible for producing the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, a regional master plan, to guide the economic growth of the region. The role of the Rockingham and Strafford Planning Commissions have also been reviewed. The focus is on how the organizations can best work together.

P. Deschaine informed the Board that he was on the Board for the REDC and is knowledgeable about the organization. He pointed out that there would not be any conflict of interest for him working with them, but wanted to disclose his prior relationship.

Commercial Development Update

There was no update this month. M. Phillips pointed out that Stoneface received the needed variances for the new building and will be going before the Planning Board next month.

M. Donahue told the committee that he attended the recent CIBOR meeting and learned that there are businesses interested in Newington but there are concerns about the lack of workforce housing. The Planning Board commissioned a study about mixed use development, although no actions have taken place about moving forward with recommendations. There is a potential that the EDC can sponsor a CIBOR meeting.

E-News Articles

M. Donahue said he will write an article about the dredging that is going to be taking place soon to widen the turning basin. The materials dredged are going to be sent to an off-shore disposal site as well as having clean sand brought to Salisbury and Plum Island, MA for beach replenishment.

Next Meeting

January 27, 2022 6:00 PM

Adjournment

M. Donahue MOTIONED to adjourn at 7:15 PM.

T. Connors SECONDED VOTE: UNANIMOUS

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Anderson, Economic Development Coordinator