

Town of Newington, NH
Economic Development Committee Meeting Minutes
Thursday, April 29, 2021 Remote Via Zoom

Attending Meeting by Zoom:

Chair Jeff Hiatt, Vice-Chair Mike Donahue, Selectman Chair Ted Connors, Jill Boynton, Alicia Busconi, Bob Raymond, Judy Miamis, Ken Latchaw, and Town Administrator Martha Roy.

Absent: Brandon Arsenault. Karen Anderson

Due to the COVID-19/Coronavirus crisis and in accordance with Governor Sununu's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this Board is authorized to meet electronically.

J. Hiatt called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm and read the required statement in accordance with the Right to Know law.

Minutes Approval: T. Connors moved to approve the minutes of March 25, 2021. M. Donahue seconded the motion with all in favor.

Business Appreciation Effort

A written report from K. Anderson had been submitted noting that an article on eating out in Newington was submitted for the town newsletter and mentioned the locations by name, with particular recognition for the longevity of IHOP and the importance of the Food Court to the Mall. The business newsletter went out with highlights being recognition of Custom Pool's 50 years in Newington, an article on the Upper Turning Basin and apprenticeship opportunities.

B. Raymond suggested that in addition to highlighting businesses that have been in town a long time, that there be a focus on the newer businesses and how they are doing. M. Donahue noted that there was an article on Aldi's and McGovern Auto in an earlier edition.

A. Busconi said that it will be interesting to see how businesses do over the next 45-60 days as re-opening starts. She pointed out that the theater will be opening soon and Aldi's will be starting a new marketing effort. A. Busconi will follow up with both Aldi's and McGovern Auto for the committee.

Retail Update

A. Busconi told the committee that the retail market is seeing a change with what tenants want as a result of the pandemic – curbside pickup has been popular and the way tenants look at parking is becoming very different. T. Connors noted that in-person visits to local businesses by the Selectmen had stopped due to the pandemic and the Selectmen hope to be able to return to doing them in June.

More tenants are coming back into the market and exploring vacant spaces, particularly food retailers that want to capture the convenience market.

Report on Conference Calls

NH Department of Business & Economic Affairs

B. Raymond said that the next meeting is going to be discussing the holding of community events and how they will move forward this year. Bob will keep the committee informed.

Seacoast Economic Development Roundtable

Three reports were submitted for review. M. Donahue said that it is valuable to have a representative participating in the weekly calls and is helping Newington accomplish a lot without a full time staff.

The weekly calls highlight opportunities and concerns of the Seacoast business community, with a current major concern, particularly restaurants is a lack of staffing. This week, parents who had been qualifying for unemployment due to having children home from school will no longer qualify since schools are open again, and it is hoped that will get some people to return to work. The state mask mandate is lifted and it is now up to each town and/or business to determine if they will require masks. Dover and Exeter have continued the mandate through their town. The topic of housing needs continues to be brought up as a deterrent for some businesses to relocate to the Seacoast. Dover is adjusting ordinances to allow more multi-family options.

Planning Board Update

M. Roy presented the update from the Planning Board as prepared by John Krebs.

1. Georgia Pacific will be constructing a new +-150' tall stack and decommissioning their two-smaller stacks to improve their operations by decreasing drying times.
2. Stoneface Brewery is contemplating a parking lot expansion (off-site) to allow more patrons at their brewery;
3. 2299 Woodbury Avenue is the site of a proposed substance rehabilitation facility and appeared before the Planning Board in April.

The Stoneface parking lot expansion is planned for across the street adjacent to Rockingham Electric with the appropriate crosswalk. M. Donahue noted that this would be a good example of flexibility if the Planning Board approved that.

Budget Review

M. Roy told the committee that their budget was in good shape, with 87% remaining. Dues and memberships and webpage funds are still fully available.

News Communications/Topics

M. Donahue said that articles K. Anderson is working on for future newsletters include medical businesses and home occupations in Newington.

J. Hiatt motioned that the Economic Development Committee send flowers to K. Anderson, wishing her a speedy recovery. Seconded by J. Boynton, unanimously approved.

Next Meeting

Td Connors asked about the EDC meeting with the Planning Board. J. Hiatt said that it was put on hold until the committee felt comfortable meeting in person at the town office, preferably under the tent.

After discussion, the committee agreed to hold the May 27th meeting at the town office.

Adjournment

J. Hiatt adjourned the meeting at 6:29 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Anderson
Economic Development Coordinator