

Economic Development Committee
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, June 25th, 2020 Town Hall

Present: Chair, Jeff Hiatt, Mike Donahue, Alicia Busconi, Jill Boynton, Brandon Arsenault, Bob Raymond, Selectman Ted Connors, Selectman, Ken Latchaw, Consultant, Jerry Coogan, Planning Board Chair, Denis Hebert, Planning Board Member, Chris Cross, Residents; Mark Phillips and Brian Sempri and Town Administrator Martha Roy.

The meeting was called to order at 5:00pm

Minutes: T. Connors moved to approve the February 20, 2020 minutes. M. Donahue seconded the motion with all in favor.

Alicia Busconi updated the committee on the status of the stores at the Fox Run Crossings. A. Busconi worked out all new contracts with each tenant potentially to go to the end of June. Even though stores are now open, sales are only at 25% of sales at the same time last year. GNC will declare bankruptcy between now and August. Vendors are concerned with the next wave. They are planning for pandemic proof stores that will not be affected and can remain open. Old Navy/Gap has not paid their rent and Simon is suing them for it. Owner managed properties have had serious problems. Rent is not forthcoming from many properties.

Mixed Use Study-July 9th, 5pm-Consultants Report Meeting:

M. Donahue thought that there was nothing surprising in the report. The sources they used were good. He is looking forward to the presentation on July 9th.

Offshore Wind Initiative Update-Jeff Hiatt:

Jeff Hiatt and Ken Latchaw attended an Offshore Wind meeting that was put on by state and federal agencies. They were able to have Newington included in the environmental impact study.

Hampton Harbor is too shallow to be the location of the deep water port facility that will also be needed. They will need a deep water access land support base of 50--80 acres with laydown facility for initial assembly and subsequent maintenance and repair of turbines and very large blades. There is properly zoned land in Newington w/ deep water access. There may be need for more than one such facility --Maine has proposed Searsport. Rhode Island has a wind farm up and running off Block Island w/ a support facility @ Quonset Point.

Massachusetts is working to get the Vineyard Sound project approved by federal agencies but it has been delayed because of possible excessive impact on fishing due to the way the fixed wind platforms were proposed to be laid out without fully consulting the fishing industry. The Vineyard Sound project may have a deep water port support facility in Fall River @ Brayton Point, a former power plant or New Bedford. The floating turbines that would be required in the Gulf of Maine are so big they have the potential to have an even greater impact on fishing so the Task Force has been wise to involve the fishermen as stakeholders from the start. Newington should work through the Port Director Geno Marconi who previously met w/ the Committee and recognizes that while the State Port facility in Portsmouth isn't large enough to host a land support facility, Newington has potential site(s) to bring that economic activity to NH.

Website:

K. Latchaw asked if it is possible to find out how many hits the website is getting. M. Roy will find out.

Committee's Budget Priorities 2020:

M. Donahue said that Karen Anderson has been working on business appreciation ideas. These are on hold due to the Covid-19 pandemic. A. Busconi explained that the normal breakdown for businesses is 20% for rent and expenses and 80% staffing. Now the ratio is 40% for rent and expenses and 60% staffing. Everything has been pushed out a year to help people pay their bills. K. Latchaw stated that the Payroll Protection Act expires in August. Even though the town received some money, there could be a serious problem in October. A. Busconi is concerned about what is going to happen in the last quarter, Black Friday etc. However, Best Buy and Staples' sales are currently up 115%! B. Arsenault thought that the 15% cut in the budget might be light. It was a consensus of the ED committee to cut the webpage cost by \$1,575 as this is incorporated into the town webpage cost and to further cut \$1,500 from events. This amount of \$3,075 represents the 15% cut the Board of Selectmen asked departments to cut from their budget.

The EDC isn't 100% focused on retail. A. Busconi explained that retail will have to pivot. Plasma blood bins are looking for spots. They don't have to be located at a hospital. Buildings are getting smaller. It is going to be "mothballs" for a while and then something will happen. K. Latchaw thought that we have to reinvent ourselves. We are going to see a lot of changes. Businesses and revenue will change. K. Latchaw reminded the committee that the Power plants contribute 50% to the tax base in Newington and their value is currently declining.

J. Hiatt thought that the committee needs to get the word out about Newington.

M. Donahue suggested that the committee follow A. Busconi's lead on Business Appreciation.

M. Donahue explained that if zoning changes are proposed and it's controversial and people don't understand it, then it won't pass.

J. Hiatt thought a top priority should be a contact list for all the businesses in Newington. The Fire Department may have a good list of businesses. They will be contacted.

G. Coogan reviewed the Development Update with the committee.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 6:38pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Martha Roy
Town Administrator