

Town of Farmington
Economic Development Committee
Tuesday, January 9, 2018

Committee Members Present:

Angela Hardin, Vice Chairman
Ann Titus, Selectmen's Rep.
Martin Laferte, Planning Board Rep.
Elise Haig

Committee Members Absent:

Randy Orvis, Chairman, excused
Sharon McKenney, excused
Denise Roy-Palmer, Secretary, excused
Kathy King, excused

1). Call to Order:

Vice Chairman Hardin called the meeting to order at 6 p.m.

2). Pledge of Allegiance:

All present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

3). Public Comment: None

4). Review of Minutes:

The review of minutes was tabled due to the lack of a quorum of members.

5). Newsletter:

Mrs. Titus said the January newsletter has gone out to area businesses. She asked any members with ideas for submissions for the February newsletter to send them to Admin. Asst. Erica Rogers at least one week before the next scheduled EDC meeting.

Ms. Hardin said she researched small business entities and activities in the state and found there is not a lot going on at this time specifically aimed at small businesses. She said she would provide the online links to the resources such as the State of New Hampshire or the Small Business Administration where business owners can go to get more information.

Ms. Hardin also suggested that a commercial property for sale or for lease in town should be highlighted in the newsletter each month similar to the Business of the Month feature. She suggested that a photo of the property and the contact information of whoever is selling the property should be included in an effort to get those vacant spaces filled.

Mrs. Titus asked if the TD Bank has any information available about small business loans.

Ms. Hardin said she would check on what is available. She added that she is in the preliminary stages of planning a small business event for late February or early March and has received positive feedback from business partners about the possible event. The event will have speakers, resources, networking and educational pieces for business owners she said.

Mrs. Titus said it would also be helpful for the committee as well as businesses if someone was interested in making a presentation at a committee meeting as the meetings are televised on the local Cable TV channel.

Ms. Haig reported that there was a good turnout for the First Night event considering it was the town's first New Year's Eve celebration and the very cold temperatures that kept many people inside.

Ms. Hardin and Mrs. Titus agreed and said the Friends of Farmington building was packed and the Art Show, karaoke and musical performances were a hit.

Mrs. Titus said they sold 90 First Night buttons so there would have been many more attendees except for the extremely cold weather.

Ms. Haig then suggested the town should also hold a "Fire and Ice" event in late January-early February when the winter doldrums start to set in. She said it be a good time to dispose of Christmas trees as fuel for a bon fire as is done in Wakefield.

She said if the First Night committee is able to get a skating rink constructed in time for next year's celebration the rink could also be available as part of the Fire and Ice event.

Mrs. Titus explained that there wasn't enough time to construct the skating rink this year and a long list of liability concerns from the Town's insurance carrier accompanied the project. She suggested that maybe a non-profit group may want to consider helping out with the rink and the First Night Committee could "piggy-back" with the group to get the rink constructed.

She said more volunteers, planning time and fund raisers will make for an even better event next time.

Ms. Haig said the town should also consider having an event in the spring such as a plant/seed exchange and promote the local agriculture and Farmers' Markets.

6). Goals:

Short Term Goals-

Engage with UNH Coop- The Town Planner plans to reconnect with them this month to discuss scheduling a meeting with them about their economic development programs.

Update EDC folders- There are 6 folders on hand with 50 folders on order. The new Planning Applications Guide will be added to the folders.

Mrs. Titus said the folders are on order but she has not be informed of their arrival as of yet.

Communicate with the NH State Liquor Commission- Ms. Hardin said it seems the Farmington state liquor store will close and be moved to the new state liquor store at the Granite Ridge plaza in Rochester so this item will be removed from the list of goals.

Ms. Haig asked about the future of the Rite Aid currently next to the liquor store near Route 11.

Ms. Hardin said she didn't think the store managers always have the latest information about their stores.

Mrs. Titus said that she and Mrs. Roy-Palmer visited the store about a year ago to talk to the manager and at the time he said the store roof needed to be fixed and that they planned to purchase some land abutting them and put in a drive-up window.

Ms. Haig or Ms. Hardin will stop in and get an update on the store's future plans.

Subway Mural- Ms. Haig will contact a local artist and ask if he available for the Feb. EDC

meeting to discuss the plans to paint a mural on the side of the former Subway building.

Ms. Hardin said they will schedule the agenda to his availability.

Encourage Building Owners to make vacant spaces look occupied- There was no update on this issue. Ms. Haig said the store fronts in downtown Rochester have been lit up at night and is more attractive despite the fact that many of spaces are empty.

Small Business seminar- Ms. Hardin said the event is in the early planning stages as mentioned earlier in the meeting.

Attract a bistro or ice cream shop downtown- No update. Ms. Haig said 2 restaurants, Subway and Pizza Shack have left the downtown and there is an opening for a type of food not currently offered in town.

Mrs. Titus said it would also be a great time for anyone who bakes cakes at home or looking to operate a bakery that would like a small business to consider one of the available spaces right on Main Street downtown.

Encourage Zoning Board to re-word certain ordinances- Pending the Planning Board work on Form Based Codes. This item will be moved to long term goals.

Explore featuring local businesses in prominent locations- No update.

Display the EDC newsletter- Ms. Hardin said this is on-going as Mrs. Titus is currently making copies and distributing them to spots around town.

Mrs. Titus said she placed copies at NAPA, Honey Dew Donuts, both laundries and Farmington House of Pizza. She said starting in Feb. she will also include the Farmer's Kitchen.

Ms. Hardin made copies available at TD Bank.

Erica's e-mail address- Ms. Hardin said getting Mrs. Roger's e-mail address to reflect her EDC duties (it currently only states she is the Welfare Director) is in progress as the town has just gotten the new website up.

Try to find ways to bring more craftspeople/artisans downtown- Mrs. Titus said more artisan were downtown during First Night and some paintings were sold at the Art Show. She suggested the Farmington Town Players may have ideas on how to attract artisans or to promote the artistic community.

Update town website business list- Ms. Hardin asked if any updates were done as the website was transitioned over to the new site.

Mrs. Titus said any e-mail/mail coming back as non-deliverable is being taken off the list and is still a work in progress.

Long Term Goals-

Ms. Hardin noted that much of the work for the following items is being conducted through the Town Planner and the Planning Board.

Review and revise zoning ordinances to ensure they are business friendly without sacrificing small town feel

Bring natural gas to town

Expand water and sewer lines

Install new sidewalks and curbing along downtown roads and update lighting

Mrs. Titus said the new sidewalks have been completed in the school area through the Safe Routes to School Program. She added that the sidewalks in the area of the new Main Street Bridge have been fixed.

Ms. Hardin suggested they plan to review the goals every few months or when there is an update to be added.

7). Planning Board Report:

Mr. Laferte said he did not have anything to report from the last Planning Board meeting because the meeting was canceled. He said the next meeting is scheduled for Jan. 16.

Mr. Laferte said there are a lot of committees in town and new members are needed for vacant seats. He said he represents the town on the Strafford Regional Planning Commission and while going through some paperwork there he found an application to apply for a grant for diesel equipment. He gave the paperwork to the Town Administrator and the town applied for and will receive a grant to purchase a new front end loader. He said serving on these committees sometimes makes a big difference to the town and there are plenty of committees to choose from. He said anyone interested in becoming a board/committee member should see the Selectmen's Secretary in the Municipal Office Building and fill out an application.

8). Natural Gas & OHRV: Tabled due Mr. Orvis' absence.

9). Old Business:

Ms. Haig said she was curious about the status of the auctions that were scheduled to be held at the AMC Metals (metal farm) facility. She said she heard that the owner may now be considering selling the property.

Mr. Laferte said he was not aware of any changes with the business. He said the Planning Board approved the site plan review, Mr. Sacco was working with the Police and Fire Depts. and it has been pretty quiet since then he said.

10). New Business:

TIF District- Ms. Hardin said in an e-mail Mrs. Roy-Palmer asked if the EDC should be working more closely with the TIF Advisory Board to understand their goals and how the EDC can help them.

Mrs. Titus said she would ask the Town Administrator about the committee's status. She said she understood that when money or businesses start going into the TIF District is when the committee would begin meeting.

Ms. Hardin asked if information is available about the purpose and responsibilities of the TIF committee.

Mrs. Titus said there is an informational sheet that she will provide to the EDC at the next

meeting.

Officer/Membership Terms-Ms. Hardin asked about the membership and officers of the EDC. Mrs. Titus said new committee officers would be chosen by the committees every March but the EDC would either have to change their meeting date to later in March or postpone the meeting until April because Town Meeting will be held on the same day as the scheduled March EDC meeting. Any member whose term is up in 2018 must apply for reappointment, be approved by Selectmen and sworn in by the Town Clerk she said.

Solar Power Facility- Ms. Haig said the Zoning Board approved a plan to put a solar power generating facility on the property next to the Transfer Station. She said the property owner has agreed to install a kayak launch on a portion of his property that abuts the Cocheco River. Mr. Laferte said he understood there may be a problem with the building permit for the solar farm at the site. He said the issue is currently before the Selectmen and has something to do with the fees for the building permit.

Mrs. Titus said the board is still trying to reach an agreement and to work it out for everyone involved. She said Selectmen have asked for more information and no decision has been made.

Coffee Shop- Ms. Haig asked if anyone knew when the Aroma Joe's coffee shop would open.

Mr. Laferte said the shop should be open and there is no problem with the town.

Mrs. Titus said there is no planning or zoning issues and it appears they are on their own timeline at this point.

11). Any Other Business that may come before the Committee:

February Agenda- Pledge of Allegiance, Public Comment, Review of Minutes, Newsletter, Goals Update, Planning Board Report, Mural Presentation, Old Business, New Business, Any Other Business to come before the committee, Next Meeting.

12). Next Meeting: February 13, 2018 at 6 p.m.

13). Adjournment:

Motion: (Laferte, second Titus) to adjourn passed unanimously at 6:48 p.m.

Respectively submitted

Kathleen Magoon

Recording Secretary

Angela Hardin, Vice Chairman