

Town of Farmington
Economic Development Committee Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, April 10, 2018

Committee Members Present:

Randy Orvis, Chairman
Angela Hardin, Vice Chairman
Denise Roy-Palmer, Secretary
Ann Titus, Selectmen's Rep.
Martin Laferte, Planning Board Rep.
Elise Haig
Sharon McKenney

1). Call to Order:

Chairman Orvis 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). Election of Officers:

Chairman- Ms. Hardin said she would accept the nomination for Chairman of the committee.

Motion: (Titus, second Laferte) to nominate Ms. Hardin for Chairman of the EDC passed 6-0-1 (Hardin abstained).

Vice Chairman – Ms. Hardin said she would like to nominate Mrs. Roy-Palmer who is not currently eligible to become Vice Chairman of the committee. She suggested the vote could be suspended until the next meeting if the members agreed.

Motion: (Laferte, second Orvis) to table the nomination for Vice Chairman until the next meeting on May 9 passed unanimously.

Secretary- Chairman Hardin called for nominations for committee Secretary.

Members discussed the duties of the committee Secretary which include taking the meeting minutes (in the absence of the Recording Secretary), receive and date stamp documents presented to the committee, preparation of certified documents and EDC votes if necessary.

Motion: (Titus, second Hardin) to nominate Mrs. McKenney for committee Secretary passed 6-0-1 (McKenney abstained).

5). Review of Minutes:

Nov. 14, 2017- No errors or omissions

Motion: (Laferte, second Titus) to accept the minutes as written passed 6-0-1 (Roy-Palmer abstained).

Jan. 9, 2018- No errors or omissions

Motion: (Titus, second Orvis) to accept the minutes as written passed 6-0-1 (Orvis abstained).

Feb. 13, 2018 – No errors or omissions

Motion: (Orvis, second McKenney) to accept the minutes as written passed 5-0-2 (Laferte, Titus abstained).

6). Steering Committee Update:

Ms. Haig said the committee is going very well so far and everyone is in agreement for the end result they want for it. She said Town Planner Dan DeSantis is enthusiastic about the project and his friend is providing the consultation work pro bono.

Ms. Hardin said the Steering Committee was formed following the receipt of a \$25,000 PLAN NH grant awarded to the Town to explore options for the old fire house property and extending that to the immediate downtown area.

She said the committee has met twice and at the last meeting they decided who they would interview and the questions to be asked. Each committee member will ask the interviewees eight to 10 open ended questions and are looking for honest feedback she said.

Ms. Hardin said the members will take notes at the interviews and submit them to Mr. DeSantis. He will send the data to the UNH Cooperative Extension who will produce a report giving the group a general consensus of people's opinions which will guide the Steering Committee on their next steps she said.

Mr. Orvis asked if the committee is interviewing people from just the downtown area or from all over town.

Ms. Hardin said the committee will be speaking with people from all over town including business owners, long time residents, new residents and young families.

7). Planning Board Report:

Elections: Mr. Laferte said the Planning Board held their elections the previous week and David Kestner, himself and Bill Fisher were re-elected as Chairman, Vice Chairman and Secretary.

ADU's: He said that over the last few months the board has seen a "run" on Accessory Dwelling Units. The ADU requirements state the homeowner has to live in one part of the home and a portion of the rest of the residence can be divided into a separate living space with its own kitchen/bathroom facilities and a separate entrance.

Ms. Hardin asked if the owners are looking for living space for their family members or for rental opportunities.

Mr. Laferte said many of the applicants came from the Baxter Lake area and most of the ADU's are intended for family members.

Mr. Orvis said that a lot of the ADU applicants are looking for rental opportunities.

Solar Garden: Mr. Laferte said the board approved the solar farm to be constructed on Main Street/Cocheco Road and showed the committee a copy of a map depicting the locations of 254

solar panels that will be installed at the site.

Ms. Haig asked if the plan includes a kayak launch on the Cocheco River as previously discussed.

Mr. Laferte said the original parcel was subdivided into three lots one of which has a small home on it and the boat launch is included in the approved plans.

Chairman Hardin asked about any activity regarding the Sarah Greenfield Business Park.

Mr. Laferte said there has not been any activity regarding the park that he is aware of.

He added there have been some lot line adjustments before the board but no plans for any commercial development.

8). Mural Presentation:

Ms. Haig said she has been keeping in contact with painter Donald Maker who may be interested in painting a mural on a building downtown. She he currently has an art show going on and is temporarily unavailable to meet with the committee.

She said that Mr. Maker said he may be available in July and that he requested a ballpark payment figure for the art work.

Ms. Haig said they agreed that the brick siding of the Cumberland Farms building would be a better surface for the painting as it would last longer and that area is more visible to passers-by. She said she contacted the Cumberland Farms corporate office and was turned away because of their policy to keep a uniform appearance to their stores. She said she has another contact within the company who seemed more interested in the plan who may be another avenue to get the project approved.

Discussion included the colors and content of the mural including the history of the building and the town's mill history, the Cumberland Farms logo and potential for reimbursement for the advertising to help with costs.

Members also discussed the EDC budget, whether the mural would be considered a sign and if it would violate the sign ordinance, if any permits/approvals from the Town are required and when to approach the Planning Board for a discussion about the project.

Ms. Haig said her next step is to try to obtain a sample of the artist's work and submit it to the Cumberland Farms offices.

Mrs. Titus said that she would find out how much remains in the EDC budget line.

Mr. Laferte said he will mention the mural/sign question during his report on the EDC at next week's Planning Board meeting.

9). ERZ Sign Update:

Chairman Hardin said Mr. Orvis attended a Selectmen's meeting to discuss putting up Economic Redevelopment Zone signs in the downtown area and asked if he has gotten any follow up from the discussion.

Mr. Orvis said he has not heard anything more on the issue.

Mrs. Titus said Selectmen have not received an update on the matter. She suggested that Mr. Orvis follow up with the Town Administrator who was looking into the matter.

10). Old Business:

Rite Aid Expansion - Chairman Hardin said she spoke with the manager of the Rite Aid drug store and asked if the store planned to expand into the portion of the building vacated by the NH Liquor Store at the Route 11 location in Farmington. She said the manager said the wall in the middle of the building that separated the two stores is a load bearing wall and can't be removed so there are no plans to expand into the former liquor store space. The Rite Aid is on the list to be remodeled but the manager did not have start date for the work. The liquor store space will be leased to another business she said.

Mr. Laferte said every pane of glass at the former liquor store site has a sign announcing that they have moved to a new location. He said former liquor store location in Rochester doesn't have any moving signs at all.

Chairman Hardin said the plan was for Great Bay Community College to expand into the rest of that mall (in front of the Lilac Mall) where the Rochester liquor store was located and they may have already begun to move in.

Off Road Recreational Vehicles- Mr. Orvis said he started a Face book page for off road recreational vehicle riders and 50 people signed up the first day the page was up. He said he could tell from the response that there are a lot of people looking for places to ride. He asked area landowners to let him know if they have existing trails or would be willing to allow trails on their property.

Mrs. Titus said that recently someone's property was damaged by a truck and that users need to recognize that property owners who have opened their lands to riders are doing something kind and their land should be respected.

Mr. Orvis said that is why he would like to start a private club locally so the trails can be policed by the club members. He said if the club was big enough and had a budget he would not be opposed to paying the Town to assign a part time Police Officer to patrol the trails in town.

Mrs. Roy-Palmer said there is a 13 acre parcel of land in Commerce Park and asked if that would be a good place for trails.

Mr. Orvis said the lot is somewhat isolated and is not easy to get to. He suggested a better place for trails would be in a portion of the Sarah Greenfield Business Park which has bigger acreage and a better place to park and unload the off road vehicles.

Mrs. Titus asked what types of vehicles the Face book page is aimed at.

Mr. Orvis said the name of the page is the "FARM Trails" which stands for Farmington Area Recreational Motor Sports Trails for Everyone. He said that includes ATV's, side-by-sides, dirt bikes, horses and mountain bikes. Multi-use trails can work for everyone as long as everyone is courteous he said.

Mr. Orvis said he tried four times to meet with the New Durham club at their meetings and

each time no one showed up at the published time and location.

He said he tried contacting the Tri-City Club in Somersworth because he was told they were interested in expanding their trails into the Rochester area but never heard back from them. He said if they could get use of the parking lot at the former Textron facility a trail system could be developed from there and it could be the southern access point to the trails that go north all the way up to Pittsburg, NH.

Game Stop- Ms. Haig said owner Matt Brown announced on Face book that he is moving his business from his current downtown location due to the need for more space. She said he looked into some other spaces downtown but could not justify paying the amount of rent being charged for run down spaces.

Chairman Hardin said she put Mr. Brown in touch with the building owner where the Blue Collar Barbershop is located as there is a vacant space there that has a larger storage area in the rear of the building. She added that resident Stephen Henry suggested that Mr. Brown look at the space where the Farmington House of Pizza was formerly located.

Chairman Hardin said she would follow up with Mr. Brown to see if he has found a new location for the business. She added that the old liquor space is open and has a lot of space.

Mr. Orvis said the building at the corner of Route 153 and Route 11 next to Honey Dew Donuts is also vacant.

Ms. Haig then spoke about the potential to consign items with Mr. Brown if he can find a space large enough for his business and her efforts to promote local businesses on Face book.

Mrs. Titus said the committee can help local businesses but the business owners also have to be pro-active and promote their businesses.

Mr. Orvis asked if there is any place in town that sells items on consignment.

Mrs. McKenney said that the Cardinal's Farmhouse Sampler on Route 11 takes items on consignment.

Ms. Haig said that business owners take a risk because they have to buy inventory and if the inventory doesn't sell it's their loss. If consigned items if don't sell they are given back to person who made them and there is no loss to the store owner she said.

Chairman Hardin noted that many of the available spaces in the downtown area are set up with kitchen equipment to be restaurants and are not suitable for other uses. The property owners want the renters to use the space as it is set up and then they can charge more rent for the space she said.

Eastman House- Ms. Haig said she learned that the bank has put the Eastman House up for auction with a reserve price of \$115,000 and that the Historical Society is interested in the property.

Mrs. Titus said the starting bid is \$88,000 and the Historical Society has bid \$45,000.

Ms. Haig said it would nice to get the Eastman House designated as a Historic Site to preserve the property.

11). New Business:

Better Committee Communication- Chairman Hardin said there have been times when the members have become sidetracked from tasks or have become stuck and unsure of what to do next and that she would like to explore ways to improve communication among the members outside of the monthly meetings. She cautioned members to avoid conducting committee business outside of meetings with a quorum of the members by e-mail and that she planned to discuss the “legalities” with the Town Administrator.

Mrs. Titus suggested that the committee could meet every two weeks instead of once a month. Chairman Hardin said the committee could benefit from better communication with the Town Administrator and the Town Planner and suggested there should be a point person from the EDC to communicate with them on a regular basis to keep the committee updated and aware of what is going on in town.

She said another option is to form subcommittees where a few people would work on an issue or a project and remain focused on what needs to be accomplished.

Chairman Hardin asked Mrs. Titus about meeting with Selectmen and asking them what is their expectation of the committee. We are here to advise the Selectmen but we don’t know what we are supposed to advise them on she said.

Mrs. Titus encouraged Chairman Hardin to get on the agenda for a Selectmen’s meeting and have this discussion with the board.

Chairman Hardin said she also plans to have a conversation with the Town Administrator and the Town Planner about what they would like to see the committee focus on.

Mr. Laferte said this is why he is reporting on what the Planning Board is doing every month and is trying to keep the message going back and forth between the board and the committee.

Mrs. Roy-Palmer said the EDC bylaws spell out the tasks and responsibilities the committee is supposed to carry out.

Chairman Hardin then read the first paragraph of the bylaws aloud to the members. She said the paragraph is “fantastic” in describing the purpose of the committee but that there are no instructions on how to get to those goals. Some feedback from the other Town boards, the Town Administrator and the Town Planner may point the committee in the right direction such as whether to concentrate on the downtown area or to focus on the Route 11 corridor.

Chairman Hardin said Mrs. Roy-Palmer is a wealth of information because of her work (Executive Director of Wentworth Economic Development Corporation) and that she could offer insight to things that have/haven’t worked for other communities.

Mr. Laferte said that when he first started attending EDC meetings the committee was doing good to have a quorum of members show up for a meeting. He said there has been a massive change in the last year and a half and that they are getting more done than they use to.

Chairman Hardin said they have started moving in the right direction since then and the committee has the potential to make an impact and get some things done in a positive way.

TIF Advisory Committee- Mrs. Roy-Palmer said she has been asked to serve as the EDC Rep to the TIF Advisory Board and has agreed to the request.

DRED Restructured- Mr. Orvis asked about the restructure of the NH Dept. of Resources and Economic Development.

Mrs. Roy-Palmer said the dept. has been divided and the economic portion is now called the Division of Business and Economic Affairs. She said many of same players and programs are still there but there is a new Commissioner (Taylor Caswell) and the offices will move to Main Street in Concord.

Mrs. Titus asked if the dept. would be willing to conduct a workshop for the EDC.

Mrs. Roy-Palmer said it would depend on the type of workshop the committee is looking for. She suggested if the committee is going to move to two meetings a month it may be a good idea to schedule one meeting to focus on the business at hand and the other meeting for workshops or presentations.

Mr. Orvis said the presentations may be a way to bring the public to their meetings.

Mrs. Roy-Palmer said her company is involved with the Explore Moose Mountains Initiative and they would be happy to meet with the EDC and discuss some plans for the future that will involve Farmington.

Consensus of the committee was to tentatively schedule the May meetings for Tuesday, May 8 and Thursday, May 24.

Mrs. Roy-Palmer will check on the availability of the Moose Mountains group to meet with committee on May 24. She added that some members of the Strafford Regional Planning Commission that have been involved with the Moose Mountains Initiative may also be available for that meeting.

12). Any Other Business to come before the Committee: None

13). Next Meetings: May 8 and May 24, 2018

14). Adjournment:

Motion: (Laferte, second Titus) to adjourn the meeting passed unanimously at 7:20 p.m.

Respectively submitted

Kathleen Magoon, Recording Secretary

Angela Hardin, Chairman