

Town of Farmington
Economic Development Committee Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, August 14, 2018

Committee Members Present: Chairman Angela Hardin, Vice Chairman Denise Roy-Palmer, Selectmen's Rep. Ann Titus, Planning Board Rep. Martin Laferte, Randy Orvis, Elise Haig

Committee Members Absent: Secretary Sharon McKenney, excused

Others Present: Town Planner Dan DeSantis

1). Call to Order:

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:

Mr. DeSantis said the Town is in the process of applying for a \$1 million Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grant from NH Dept. of Transportation to be used to improve traffic and pedestrian access along Main Street with bump outs, sidewalk improvements, bicycle lanes, enhanced lighting and streetscapes. He said he did not know if \$1 million would be enough to complete the project but that the Town can apply for other grants. He said with the \$20,000 grant the Town received recently they must prepare plans for the former fire station lot so now is the time to "make it happen". He asked the EDC for a letter of support for the TAP program and assured them that they will be kept informed throughout the process.

Motion: (Orvis, second Titus) to write the letter passed 6-0.

Chairman Hardin said she would compose a letter and submit it to Mr. DeSantis.

4). Review of Minutes:

July 10, 2018 – No errors or omissions

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

5). Planning Board Report:

Mr. Laferte said that Stuart Arnett from the Arnett Development Group (ADG) spoke briefly about the preliminary work that has begun to revise the 2005 Master Plan and outlined the proposed contents of the new Plan.

Chairman Hardin asked if it would be of a benefit to have Mr. Arnett meet with the EDC.

Mr. Laferte said it may benefit the committee but he did not know if there was any cost to have him attend an EDC meeting.

Mrs. Hardin said she would find out if there is any cost to have Mr. Arnett attend an EDC meeting.

Mr. Laferte said that a representative from the state came before the board to discuss issues

surrounding the gravel pits in town. He said there has problems with some pit owners and she was here to discuss the problems with the board. We are looking at potentially updating some of the earth removal regulations he said.

He said last week's meeting was the workshop session for the month and next week's meeting will be a Public Hearing for applicants seeking approval for subdivisions, etc.

Mr. Laferte said the Sept. 4 Planning Board meeting was cancelled because it is the day after Labor Day.

Mrs. Roy-Palmer asked if the Town has the capability to hold a conference call with someone from ADG rather than having to pay for their travel time to attend an EDC meeting.

Cable TV Coordinator Robert Hall said the Town has that capability and showed the conference call system to the committee.

6). Board of Selectmen Report:

Mrs. Titus said that all the lots at the Sarah Greenfield Business Park have been sold.

She said the revised EDC bylaws were approved and signed by Selectmen.

Chairman Hardin said the members have received the most up to date version of their bylaws.

7). Old Business:

A). Distribution of updated and signed bylaws- see above

B). Discussion of Sarah Greenfield Business Park Regulations- Mrs. Hardin said she read the regulations and that the only difference between the original version and the 2008 version was the addition of 3 words under permitted uses for the lots which were "auto maintenance facility". She said the committee could still provide a forum to discuss potential changes but any changes are up to the lot owners and is out of the Town's hands.

Mr. Orvis asked how many lots in the park are undeveloped.

Mrs. Hardin said that all 3 of lots recently sold are undeveloped.

Mr. Orvis said that he read that the covenants were an impediment to the sale of the lots because they are tougher than the Town's site plan review regulations. He said at some point the owners may want to encroach on the setbacks to further develop their lots which will allow for more structures and would benefit the Town through more taxes on the lots.

Mrs. Hardin said she will contact the lot owners and find out if they want to meet to discuss potential changes to park covenants. She said they may want to consider revising the section that states modifications are only allowed through the Selectmen or the Planning Board.

Chairman Hardin said she also read the Commerce Park regulations and found them to be more restrictive. She said there are a few things in the Commerce Park rules the Sarah Greenfield Park owners may want to adopt such as a prohibition on animals and livestock in the park.

C). Mural Project- Ms. Haig said that the windows on the former Cumberland Farms building were measured and the dimensions for the window panels are all figured out. She said she was considering going to Home Depot to get plywood as the store participates in community service

projects but requires an official letter head for the project.

Chairman Hardin said Ms. Haig did get official permission from Cumberland Farms to paint on the side of their building downtown.

Mrs. Roy-Palmer asked if that was only to paint the windows.

Ms. Haig said the area to be painted is where the plywood is on the side of the building on the second floor.

Chairman Hardin said if they are going to do this project as a committee and on behalf of the Town they need to present a full proposal to the Board of Selectmen with all of the details about pricing, fund raising plans and a draft letter requesting donations for the project.

Ms. Haig said she was considering going outside of the Town and having a silent auction. She said the businesses she approached were enthusiastic about the plan and that she would have no problem getting gifts to silent auction.

Mrs. Hardin said if the EDC or the Town is involved in this they must get approval ahead of time to actually engage in any of these activities. She said she would leave the decision up to Ms. Haig and support her in whatever direction she chooses to go.

Mrs. Titus said the Selectmen they didn't understand exactly what is planned and they would like to see what the mural will look like. She said if there was package of information including a picture of what the windows will look like the board may approve the plan.

Ms. Haig said if the board does not approve the project they can go around it.

Mr. Orvis said the project seems as if it is being made overly complicated. He said the Conservation Commission got donations from Home Depot to do the things on the McCarthy Trail and that Dave Connolly would know how that worked.

Ms. Haig said this property is owned by Cumberland Farms and not by the Town so it can be done without the Town's involvement.

Mrs. Titus said Mr. Connolly and Jim Horgan came before Selectmen to discuss the Con Com's plans for the stations along the McCarthy Trail and got board approval.

Mrs. Roy-Palmer asked if Ms. Haig was seeking grants or donations for the project.

Ms. Haig said she doesn't see the project costing more than \$1,000 - \$1,200 total with cost for materials at about \$350.

Mrs. Hardin suggested Ms. Haig write a proposal including the cost for materials, what the artist will charge, if he will provide the paint and materials needed to do the painting and the fundraising plans.

Mrs. Roy-Palmer asked if the Town will be receiving donated funds.

Mrs. Hardin said the Town would receive and disburse the funds because the EDC does not have its own checkbook.

Ms. Haig said that sometimes the private sector can work very well and faster.

Mrs. Titus said she can't use the EDC's name or the Town on an official letter.

Ms. Haig said she could get another organization to write a letter for donations and that she

may do so if it is too complex working with the Town.

Chairman Hardin said she would assist Ms. Haig with putting the project information together and presenting it to Selectmen.

Ms. Haig said she will go whichever way works.

Chairman Hardin asked that she bring her decision and plans back to the EDC first.

Ms. Haig said it may take too long to go through the Town process and she was considering paying the artist for his materials and to paint the mural and go from there.

Mrs. Hardin said that if Ms. Haig chooses to make this a private endeavor it is totally up to her.

Ms. Haig said once the visual is up people will see it is not graffiti and will complement the building. She said Cumberland Farms liked the design and plans to have the artist include the tree from their logo in the painting.

Chairman Hardin asked if Ms. Haig represented herself as an EDC member or as a Farmington citizen to Cumberland Farms officials.

Ms. Haig said she thought she needed the clout of the committee.

Chairman Hardin said if the committee is not going to be involved with the project then she needs to go back to Cumberland Farms and clarify that it is not a Town backed project.

Ms. Haig said she is still researching the project and noted that the artist is only available for a certain amount of time.

Mrs. Hardin asked her to let the committee know what she decides to do.

D). Hay Day Booth- Chairman Hardin said the EDC will have a booth at the event and asked Mrs. Titus to unveil the new table cover for the booth.

Mrs. Titus did not open the tube and showed the members the seal and committee name printed on the tube's label.

Chairman Hardin thanked Mrs. Titus on behalf of the committee for her time and energy in taking on the task of providing the new table cover for the committee.

Mrs. Titus said the members have good intentions and are working together for the town.

Ms. Haig said the communication has to be better because if she knew she was needed at the Selectmen's meeting she would have attended the meeting but now the mural project is put off for another month. She said being left out of the loop makes things more complicated than they should be and that she feels the group isn't working as a team to get things done. People try so hard but end up giving up on projects because there is so much complexity and the red tape is dragging us down she said.

Mrs. Hardin said she did not know it would be important for them to be at the Selectmen's meeting and apologized for not notifying Ms. Haig. She said there is a process in place and she learned that she should have advised her that this was a little too soon and not to have pursued with her without following the proper steps.

Chairman Hardin said the cost for the Hay Day booth is \$30 and asked for a motion to expend

the funds.

Motion: (Orvis, second Haig) to expend \$30 from the EDC budget for a Hay Day booth passed 6-0.

Chairman Hardin said Mr. Arnett, Mr. DeSantis and members of the Steering Committee will also be present at their booth. Mr. Arnett will provide some preliminary conceptual drawings of some of the development possibilities for the old fire house. The idea is to get people started thinking and talking about it in preparation for the community forum to be held Oct 10 at the Public Safety Building from 6 – 8:30 p.m. She asked that anyone planning to attend to RSVP at the Municipal Office Building. There will be more information and flyers available at Hay Day and as we get closer to the date she said.

E). Steering Committee Update- Mrs. Hardin said much of the discussion centered on plans for Hay Day. The committee also received and discussed the responses to the Key Informant interviews which is now public information but said she did not have an opportunity to make copies for the EDC. The report contains the questions asked and what categories their responses fell into relative to what people want to see downtown she said.

7). New Business:

ATV Club- Mr. Orvis said the new club had an “overwhelming” attendance of about 40 people with standing room only at Honey Dew Donuts. He said they decided to join the Tri-City ATV Club so they don’t have to file for non-profit status with the state.

He said he learned at the meeting that the railroad beds are part of the Rails to Trails Program and motorized vehicles are prohibited from using them. Farmington could be eligible for a grant to buy back the federal funds for the railroad beds and allow ATV use there if there is a “destination” or a loading/unloading area in town he said.

Mr. Orvis said he planned to contact the head of the NH Trails Bureau, Chris Gamache and discuss the Farmington club getting a grant to utilize the former Textron parking lot as a destination place. He said once the destination spot is in place they could move forward with the grant application to buy back the railroad beds for ATV use and the trail will go right up to Johnson’s Restaurant in New Durham he said.

Chairman Hardin asked who owns the old Textron parking lot.

Mr. Orvis said the property is in a Trust and under the control of the Trustee. He said he will seek advice from Mr. Gamache about how to proceed with the request to use the parking lot.

Chairman Hardin asked about the snowmobile use seen along the side of Route 11.

Mr. Orvis said there are a lot of landowners who have given snowmobile riders permission to use their land but won’t give permission to wheeled vehicle use.

He said the group plans to try to connect the trail systems in the area together similar to the trail systems in the northern part of the state. The more trails we have connected the better it is for the economy with the potential for ATV and tourist related businesses he said.

Ms. Haig said Mr. Orvis’ idea may be the only way to get the town up and running again by

using what we already have. She said that Mr. Arnett suggested that Farmington could emulate White River Junction, Vermont as a destination for recreational activities.

Mr. Orvis agreed and said the North Country was once in a depressed state and has been revived by off road recreational vehicle use.

Mrs. Titus asked Mr. Orvis if they have a second destination place in mind in case the request to use the Textron lot doesn't work out.

Mr. Orvis said there may be a possibility of loading site in the Sarah Greenfield Business Park.

Mrs. Hardin asked about having cross Route 11 to get from the business park to the trails.

Mr. Orvis said that would have to address that issue at some point as the riders will need to be able to get to the gas station.

Mrs. Titus said there are other property owners on the same side of Route 11 as the trails that may be interested in allowing ATV use on a portion of their land but she did not want to mention them publically at this time.

Con Com Meetings- Mr. Orvis said the Conservation Commission has changed its meeting night to the first Wednesday of the month so the Budget Committee can meet on the second Wednesday of the month for more timely review of the Town budget reports.

Mrs. Titus said the Bud Com will vote to finalize the change at their next meeting.

Kayak Launch – Ms. Haig asked if there is an agreed upon time frame for the installation of the kayak launch on the property where a solar farm will be constructed.

Mr. Laferte said he was not aware of any time line for the kayak launch.

Chairman Hardin asked if there was a date for the solar panels to be installed.

Mr. Laferte said he did not know the timeframe for the installation for the solar panels. He said there were issues with the site because the previous owner did not follow the regulations when the gravel pit there was closed and with the sign calling the site the "Farmington Pit" which was removed after he raised objections to it.

Mr. Orvis said at the last Con Com meeting one of the members said he spoke with the land owner about the plans to put in a launch site and a small parking lot and that it is a better grade on that side of the river than on the dump road side.

Aroma Joes- Ms. Haig said she met with the owner of the new coffee shop and invited him to attend the EDC meeting. She said he could not attend this meeting because is on vacation but would like to attend next month's meeting. She said he was curious about Farmington and about how to get people to be able to cross over from the other side of Route 11 safely to get more business for his shop.

She said she told him about Mr. Orvis' plans to connect the ATV trails and how that could benefit his business with the traffic from people going home. He was very enthusiastic and wants to help out the town any he can she said.

Mr. Orvis asked if the committee should schedule a ribbon cutting for the coffee shop.

Mrs. Titus said she would inquire with the manager about having a ribbon cutting for the shop.

Vito's Subs and Sides -Mrs. Hardin said she was awaiting a response from the owner to schedule a ribbon cutting at Vito's. She said they have had some issues with their sign and menus but expect to be ready soon.

Rental Spaces -Ms. Haig asked if there are any potential tenants for the open space near the barbershop.

Mrs. Hardin said the space is small but has a very reasonable rent. She suggested it would make a good small retail, craft or office space and there hasn't been a bad word said about the landlord. She said she did not think the barbershop owner is interested in expanding into that space.

Ms. Haig then asked about the building near the barbershop where the first floor is rented that now has a Sold sign on it.

Mrs. Hardin said the building has been sold but any information about the new owner will not become public until the closing takes place.

Ms. Haig asked about the status of the plans to put a bakery and ice cream shop in another downtown building.

Mrs. Hardin said she has not talked to Mr. DeSantis about the owner's plans recently and to her knowledge it is still where they left off when they last discussed it.

Ms. Haig said there are For Lease signs in the windows.

Expansion of the ERZ Zone- Mr. Orvis asked what it would take to expand the Town's ERZ zone. He said it currently stops at the Main Street Bridge and that he thinks it should be expanded to Paulson Road. It might help attract something to that area if it was expanded he said.

Mrs. Roy-Palmer said it is a matter of the Town deciding where they want to extend the zone to and to submit a revised application. She said it's an easy process with about a 2 week turn-around time and suggested working with Mr. DeSantis to determine where to expand it to and come up with a plan to amend the map and decide what properties to include.

Chairman Hardin said she will include the ERZ zone as a topic on the next meeting agenda. She asked Mr. Orvis to speak to Mr. DeSantis about the matter.

9). Next Meeting: Tuesday, Sept. 11, 2018 at 6 p.m.

10). Adjournment:

Motion: (Laferte, second Titus) to adjourn the meeting passed 6-0 at 7:05 p.m.

Respectively submitted

Kathleen Magoon, Recording Secretary

Angela Hardin, Chairman