

Town of Farmington
Economic Development Committee Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, October 8, 2019

Committee Members Present:

Angela Hardin, Chairman
Denise Roy-Palmer, Vice Chairman
Randy Orvis
Stephen Henry, Planning Board Rep.

Committee Members Absent:

Dave Connolly, Selectmen's Rep., excused
Sharon McKenny, Secretary, excused
Chad York

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: None

4). Review of Minutes:

September 10, 2019 – No errors or omissions

Motion: (Orvis, second Roy-Palmer) to accept the minutes as presented passed 3-0-1 (Henry abstained).

5). Board of Selectmen Update:

Mrs. Hardin said Mr. Connolly said that the majority of the Selectmen's time is being used to work out the details for next year's budget. His other update will be discussed under the Adopt-a-Spot portion of the agenda she said.

6). Planning Board Update:

Mr. Henry said the board is going to start reviewing the rules and regulations and consider if any potential changes are needed that will go before the voters at Town Meeting in March. If there is anything the EDC members think is hindering business development this would be a good time to say so he said.

Mrs. Roy-Palmer asked if there is anything in particular the board is focusing on right now.

Mr. Henry said they were going to start the review at the next meeting and see what things they want to look at. One thing that keeps coming up is the prohibition on building a structure (such as a barn or garage) on a lot without a primary use for that lot.

Mr. Orvis said if you own a vacant lot and want to build your garage before you build your house you can't do that.

Mrs. Hardin asked if these were situations where the property owner wants to live on one lot and put a business on his second lot.

Mr. Henry said it wouldn't necessarily involve a business and that sometimes people want to put their house on one lot and put the garage on the other lot with possible future plans to sell the second lot or give it to one of their children. They don't want to join the lots because they may not be able to separate them in the future if they are non-conforming lots he said.

Mrs. Hardin asked what the down side would be to allowing someone to build a garage on a lot without a house for example.

Mrs. Roy-Palmer said that it was just the way the regulation was written at the time.

Mr. Orvis said the way an accessory structure was defined it was subservient to a primary structure and if you don't have a primary structure you can't have an accessory structure. That is how a previous Planner interpreted the regulation and that the Building Inspector agreed with her interpretation he said.

Mr. Henry said the regulation has not changed for quite some time but the way it has been interpreted has not been consistent.

Mrs. Hardin said she was trying to get to the "why" behind the way the regulation was written and the interpretation of it to find out why we would not want to do this. She said there is usually a "We don't want to do this because this will happen" behind most regulations.

Mr. Orvis said he never could figure it out. He said he has seen occasional problems such as when someone built a barn on their lot and was unable to build the house because they put the barn in the only suitable spot for a septic system. He said he didn't see it harming the public and it was usually people harming themselves.

Mrs. Hardin asked if there was a tax implication to doing it this way in terms of the assessed value because each lot would get taxed separately.

Mr. Henry said a buildable lot has a much greater value than a non-buildable lot so people who have 2 lots are now merging the lots which lowers their taxes because most of the value to a buildable lot is in the land.

Mr. Orvis said when you merge lots you are giving up a big value in the future of the property.

Mr. Henry said if you have 2 one acre lots in an area that has a 3 acre minimum lot size if you merge them you can never subdivide them again so you may want to keep them separate. He said he could only speculate why the regulation was written that way in the first place but added that if you can't build just an accessory use on the lot and you have to build a house first and then the accessory structure it would be taxed at a higher rate. As a private property rights guy I think you should be able to build what you want on property that you own he said.

Mrs. Hardin said that in the Village Center area there is chart of Permitted Uses and a list of the things that you can do and if it doesn't "cookie cutter" fit into there you have go through a process. It seems like it would be friendlier if there was a list of a few things that you absolutely cannot do in this area and everything else is pretty much on the table she said.

Mr. Orvis said Farmington used to be the only town in the state that had permissive zoning which allowed you to do anything except for the prohibited uses on the list. He said that

approx. 10 years ago we instituted restrictive zoning like every other town which restricts the uses to the list of permitted uses.

Mrs. Hardin said they still had the ability to control what came in without having to have a specific list of permitted uses.

Mr. Orvis said because it wasn't the standard zoning seen everywhere else and if their particular business wasn't on the list people moved on past Farmington because they didn't understand our zoning and that was the impetus behind changing the zoning.

Mr. Henry said the Table of Permitted Uses has different labels for each type of use including Permitted (P), Permitted with Review (PR) and Special Exception (SE) which needs a Variance from the **Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA)**.

Mr. Orvis said he did not think that property owners should have to come to the Town as often as they do for a change of use on their property.

Mr. Henry said the Planning Board did look at the Table of Permitted Uses and loosened it up a little by moving more uses into the Permitted list but it was not finished in time to go to Town Meeting last March.

Mrs. Hardin joked that she wanted to just open up the doors and let everything come in but then agreed there are certain restrictions that make sense for environmental and town image reasons.

Mr. Henry said that in the Village Center District the **Code Enforcement Officer (CEO)** essentially acts as the Planning Board. He said when he changed the use for his business from the former restaurant site to a retail use the CEO was able to sign off on it so it did not have to go through the Planning Board or notice the abutters. I had to have a safety inspection and show that I was doing what I said I was going to do and I still had to pay some money but it didn't cost quite as much he said.

Mr. Henry said if you need a Special Exception you must go before the ZBA such as if you wanted to put in 2 apartments upstairs in a building where the lot lacked sufficient square footage. The CEO couldn't sign off on that he said.

Mrs. Hardin said it was a positive note to know that the Planning Board is looking at ways to make it a less restrictive.

Mr. Henry said he didn't say that is what they are doing. He said the board is reviewing the regulations and he hoped that is how it will go.

Mr. Orvis asked if it would behoove the EDC members to attend the Planning Board workshop meetings.

Mr. Henry said it behooves every resident to attend every meeting. He said in Mr. Orvis' line of work (surveyor) he would have seen some situations where this rule doesn't make much sense. He recalled when Mr. Orvis came before the Planning Board on behalf of an applicant and the site plan review and subdivision regulations didn't match and asked which rule book he should follow. We fixed it at the last Town Meeting with the voters' help he said.

Mr. Orvis said that was regarding the road frontage requirements that didn't match. He said they didn't fix it but redefined it to the way that they wanted it.

Mr. Henry said Mr. Orvis may not like the definition but at least they matched.

Master Plan Survey- Mrs. Hardin asked if there had been any results received since the survey closed out or if it has been extended.

Mr. Henry said the survey was extended to Oct. 15.

Mrs. Hardin advised the viewers this would allow anyone who has not yet completed the survey to do so either online or by a paper copy available at the Municipal Office Building and several other locations around town. She said the consultants (ADG) have started compiling the data and will add the data from the additional surveys as they come in.

7). Old Business:

a). TIF District – Mrs. Roy-Palmer said she spoke with the Town Administrator and he asked that the next meeting of the Tax Increment Financing District Advisory Board be held in November as he expects to have more information for the members then.

b). ATV Club – Mr. Orvis said he was still working on getting permission from landowners to allow their properties to become part of a trail system and following up with his contacts. Chairman Hardin asked Mr. Orvis if someone could contact him through an e-mail link on the Town website.

Mr. Orvis said he was not sure.

Mrs. Hardin then suggested that if Mr. Orvis' contact information is not listed anyone interested in contacting him could do so through her e-mail link under the list of committee members on the EDC page on the Town website and she would get a message to him. She said people could also call the Town Offices at 755-2208 and the Selectmen's Secretary would relay the message to Mr. Orvis.

c). Adopt-a-Spot – Mrs. Hardin asked if anyone had taken any photos of the current adopted spots in town as discussed at the previous meeting.

None of the members present had taken any photos.

Mrs. Hardin apologized for not taking any photos either but added that she did send the letters out to the current adopters asking them to complete the new paperwork and return it to her. She said she still has not found out who maintains the "Welcome to Farmington" signs at either end of town. She asked if anyone listening knew the answer to please contact her with the information.

Mr. Orvis suggested that it was the Woman's Club because they installed the signs.

Mrs. Hardin said she asked one of their members who said she planted some flowers there but does not otherwise maintain the spots and she was not sure who does maintain them.

She said in addition to obtaining the information on who is the adopter, she also wanted to thank them for doing a very good job in maintaining the spots. The finalized paperwork is available at the Town Offices and will soon be available on the Town website she said.

Mrs. Hardin then thanked Dan Woodman of New England Furniture for donating some mums for the front of the Town Office Building and she is waiting for him to submit the paperwork to officially adopt the spot.

Mrs. Hardin said that Mr. Connolly contacted 3 local sign companies and only received one response and he is in the process of obtaining more information on pricing from this individual. She said the company will make the signs as needed so they are not committed to purchasing any certain number of signs and they only have to supply what will be printed on the signs and the number of signs needed and they will make them. Once the pricing is received I will put together a proposal and get it to the Budget Committee she said.

She then asked Mr. Henry (who is also a member of the Bud Com) for advice on how to present the proposal to the Bud Com.

Mr. Henry said that it would be a line in the Town budget and that he could speak to it as an EDC member. He said at their last meeting the Bud Com members expressed an interest in keeping presentations short and he didn't think they would spend a lot of time with this line item and would either slash it or say they don't care and move on.

Mrs. Roy-Palmer expressed concern about budgeting too little if there is a lot of interest in the Adopt-a-Spot program.

Mr. Henry said the Selectmen can spend whatever they want on the signs or not spend any money on them. They would probably be happy to have the problem of too many people wanting to beautify the town and would take care of it he said.

Mrs. Hardin said she planned to include all of the existing and potential spots and ask for a budget that will cover the signs for all of the spots.

She said if the members could get some photos taken of the spots before it snows she would work with the Town Office to get them posted on the Town website.

d). SBA Presentation – Mrs. Hardin said she met with Miguel Moralez of the Small Business Administration and he explained what he would present at a meeting with the committee. There are a lot of different programs to help start a business, help businesses grow and help aimed at specific groups such as veterans and women. We scheduled his presentation for our next EDC meeting which is on Tues., Nov. 12 she said.

Mrs. Roy-Palmer noted that Mr. Moralez scheduled the presentation for Nov. 6.

Chairman Hardin said she would confirm the meeting date with Mr. Moralez.

Mrs. Hardin said she planned to hold the presentation at the regular 6 p.m. meeting time and would start the meeting with Mr. Moralez's presentation which is expected to last about 30 minutes. The public would be given an opportunity to ask questions followed by a brief recess and then the committee would attend to any business that needs to be addressed she said. She said she asked Mr. Moralez if he had any marketing materials to help the committee advertise the event and he sent her a sample of a flyer he used to advertize his presentation held last July at the Secretary of State's Office in Concord. She suggested they could use the

same format and just update the date, time and place for their event.

Mrs. Roy-Palmer asked if they would be interested in having the new Small Business Development Adviser Amy Sterndale attend the meeting and make a presentation as well.

Chairman Hardin asked Mrs. Roy-Palmer to contact Ms. Sternsdale and invite her to take part in the meeting and to ask her how much time she will need for her presentation.

Mrs. Roy-Palmer said the Small Business Development Center is a program of the SBA through the UNH Cooperative Extension and is a free and confidential business advising resource.

Mrs. Hardin said she planned to ask the Administrative Assistant to send the flyer out by e-mail to the businesses listed in the Business Directory on the Town website.

Discussion also included sites to advertize the event online, locations to post flyers around town and the venue for the presentations.

Consensus of the members was to hold the meeting in the Selectmen's Chambers.

Mr. Henry suggested they may want to consider having a special poster stating this space is currently for rent for the store fronts downtown to plant the idea in someone's head to bring their business to that store front.

He asked Mrs. Hardin to send him a copy of the SBA flyer when it is complete and he would modify it to include that the space where the flyer is posted is currently for rent.

8). New Business:

SRPC – Mr. Orvis said at the last **Strafford Regional Planning Commission** meeting there was an update on Comprehensive Economic Strategies. He said the commissioners discussed interviewing people to get their ideas about what types of economic development strategies they should have and then tasked the Planners to obtain the names of people that are willing to be interviewed. He asked if any of the members were willing to be interviewed.

All of the members present agreed to be interviewed.

Mr. Orvis will send their names to SRPC.

9). Any Other Business that may come before the Committee: None

10). Next Meeting: Tuesday, November 12, 2019

11). Adjournment:

Motion: (Henry, second Roy-Palmer) to adjourn the meeting passed unanimously at 6:42 p.m.

Respectively submitted

Kathleen Magoon, Recording Secretary

Angela Hardin, Chairman