

Town of Farmington
Economic Development Committee Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, October 11, 2022
356 Main Street-Farmington, NH 03835

Committee Members Present:

Penny Morin, Selectmen's Rep
Stephen Henry, Planning Board Rep
Taylor Crawford
Dan Woodman
Danielle Harris, Secretary

Committee Members Absent:

Chad York

Others Present:

Kelly Heon, Admin Asst.
Jason Lauze
Kim J. Cardinal, Jr.

1). Call to Order:

Mrs. Morin called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

2). Pledge of Allegiance:

All present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

3). Public Comment: None

Mrs. Morin began by thanking Kelly Heon for being a driving force in getting the committee back together and moving Farmington in a positive direction of economic development and planning. She thanked Mrs. Heon for all of her outreach to our community members and to our business leaders. I appreciate all of your efforts she said.

4). Introductions:

Mrs. Morin asked Mrs. Heon to start the introductions.

Kelly Heon said she has been working for the Town of Farmington since 2014 primarily in the Assessing Dept. but over the last year she has been helping out and doing more work in the Planning Dept. She said she did not know what her role is right now except for stepping in to wherever she is needed. I hope to finally land in the Planning Dept. because over the last year working in that dept. I can see what is coming down the road and I think it's really exciting for Farmington and there is a lot that's going to be happening and I hope to be a part of it she said.

Taylor Crawford said he moved to Farmington in May 2021 and he sees a lot of opportunity in this town. He said seeing that opportunity to grow it and to hopefully be a part of that magic that's going to bring in some new development and what they can do makes him really excited.

Danny Woodman said he has been a Farmington resident for a long time and they have a family business that started in 1970 and for 52 years they were out on Rt. 11. He said he is the president of the Farmington 500 Boys and Girls Club and he is excited to see if they can start

making some changes in this town so he is committed.

Penny Morin said she grew up here, graduated here and her children graduated here. She said she is currently one of the 5 Selectmen and one of her biggest things was moving economic development when she ran for election and she is really excited to get more things moving in town and see if they can make it happen as a group of people who see the same vision.

Stephen Henry said he has lived in town since 2004 when they bought their house. He said has served on the Town's Budget Committee and has been on the Planning Board for a number of years and is here as the Planning Board rep and he teaches at the school now.

Danielle Harris said she has lived in Farmington for many years and previously served on the EDC and on the Downtown Revitalization Committee. She said she is excited to see some progress and hopefully some improvements in the future.

5).New Members Needed:

Mrs. Morin said one thing they need to decide as a group is how many members the group will have.

Mrs. Heon said the bylaws are pretty broad as far as the number of members and read that it says not less than 7 or more than 11 members. She gave copies of the bylaws to the members and noted that they were updated in 2018 and there is also a sheet called Roles and Responsibilities that was created in 2015 but she is not exactly sure what the purpose of that document was. They are both documents that the EDC is working under as of now until if/when any change is made she said.

Mrs. Morin said one thing that slowed them down and stopped them from moving forward was the lack of participation so if you are interested in being a member and a driving force here in Farmington and joining this committee they are open to up to 11 members but not less than 7. She said but if they decide to go with 11 they have to remember that a quorum of the members is 6 (needed to hold a meeting) so they would always have to have at least 6 people here.

Mr. Henry asked if the quorum is based on the number of seats or the number currently on the board or committee.

Mrs. Heon said she was not sure and would ask Planning Dept. Director Kyle Pimental to weigh in on that.

Mr. Woodman said since they are starting a new committee they can make their own rules.

Mr. Henry said the definition of a quorum is not our rule and that would be a state rule.

Mrs. Morin said if they go with 11 people a quorum would be 6 and if they go with 7 members a quorum would be 4 members.

Mr. Henry asked if they are allowed up to 11 members but have 7 members if the quorum is 4 or 6 members.

Mrs. Heon said she would clarify that even if she has to ask legal counsel tomorrow.

Mr. Henry said if the quorum is based on members he'd leave it at 11 but if it's based on potential members they are going to have to change it.

Mrs. Harris said since this was a challenge in the past maybe having a lower number would enable a quorum so they can meet.

Mrs. Morin asked if Mr. Henry was saying if they stuck with 11 but only signed up 7 members they could still meet.

Mr. Henry said that is what he is asking-if a quorum is defined based on the number we could have or the number that they do have.

Mrs. Heon said Mr. Woodman was correct and asked everyone to take the bylaws home over the next month and read through them to see if there is something that doesn't make sense, they wouldn't be able to accomplish or is too restrictive, etc. She said this committee hasn't met since May 2021 so if there is a way they could make it easier to continue to meet even with a smaller number of people that would be great. The Conservation Commission is struggling to conduct any business because they're not getting a quorum at their meetings she said.

Mr. Henry said the Con Com barely has any members and they may have 3 active members.

Mrs. Harris suggested having a calendar invite that went out so if someone couldn't attend they could press decline or tentative. She said in the past they only had e-mail and that was part of the reason they didn't know who couldn't attend.

Mr. Woodman asked if the people sitting on the old EDC in 2021 left because nothing got done.

Mrs. Harris said at the end they couldn't get a quorum so they couldn't conduct a meeting and during the pandemic they just fizzled out at that time.

Mr. Henry recalled that 1 or 2 members moved out of town as well.

Mrs. Heon said in light of wanting to have more members, she and Mrs. Morin put together a letter and they have a list of people that they sent the letter to. She asked the members to look over the list and if they see somebody that they know personally maybe they could contact them or speak with them when they happen to meet up with them when they are out and about. She said in the past the Town has put a notice on the website looking for volunteers but they haven't utilized personal invitations to sit on boards and that is usually the best way to get new members. She added if they know of someone that's not on the list to feel free to contact them. We just brainstormed all the businesses and organizations in town we could think of as a place to start she said.

Mrs. Morin said it doesn't have to be a business it could be somebody who lives in town and stakeholders could be somebody who has family here.

Mrs. Heon said the bylaws are pretty broad on who can be a member as it says "residents, business owners or other stakeholders" and "other stakeholders" is a pretty broad term.

Mrs. Morin said if they know of anyone they want to add to the list they can e-mail her or Mrs. Heon and they will make sure they get a letter or a verbal communication.

Mrs. Heon said Mr. Cardinal (seated in the audience) was not sure he has the time but he was willing to come to the meeting to gauge his interest in it. She said people could come as members of the public if they don't want to join because they can't commit to being here every

month as that would help them hear what people are thinking and what ideas they have.

Mrs. Morin said they want to be able to drive what Farmington needs and wants not just them sitting here saying this is what we're going to do because that's not necessarily the driving force for Farmington. She asked if anyone has any issue with meeting on Tuesdays at 6 or 7 p.m. and it doesn't matter to her if it's 6 or 7 p.m.

Consensus of the members was to meet at 6 p.m.

Mrs. Heon said currently they are slotted in for the 2nd Tues. of every month but next month the 2nd Tues. is Election Day (Nov. 8). She said the following Tues. is available so they could meet on Nov. 15 and then go back to the 2nd Tues. of each month.

Mr. Henry said he probably won't be available as there is probably a School Board meeting that night and they usually meet on the 1st and 3rd Tues. of the month.

Mrs. Heon asked if they wanted to try to do it on Nov. 8.

Mrs. Morin said she has to work the election.

Mr. Henry said he was thinking about if there would be a quorum and asked if Mrs. Heon was considered a member of the committee.

Mrs. Heon said she is not a member right now but she could be a stakeholder.

Mr. Woodman asked if the committee was "official" yet.

Mrs. Heon said Mr. Crawford, Mr. Woodman, Mrs. Morin, and Mr. Henry are members. She said Mrs. Harris is still technically a member even if her appointment has expired if she wasn't replaced she can be a member and she'll just have to figure that out.

Mr. Crawford asked if there are other members not present today that they are waiting on.

Mrs. Morin asked about the remaining name plate on the table in front of them.

Mrs. Heon said that was for Chad York and that was just in case he showed up. She said she sent him an e-mail but he didn't respond and he was on EDC previously. There are some other people who were on the committee previously that I haven't had a chance to reach out to so I can reach out to them again. Some of the previous members have gone on to other committees or they don't want to be on it anymore she said.

Jason Lauze arrived and said he would be happy to join at the next meeting. He said the EDC is important and he is invested in the town and he would like to be part of it.

Mrs. Morin informed him of the change in meeting start time and the move to Nov. 15 for next month's meeting.

Mrs. Heon said what might be helpful to the committee is the chapter on Economic Development from the Master Plan. She said the Master Plan was revised last year and it is the road map for where Farmington wants to go as the residents spoke about different topics. She said to get an idea of the direction the committee could go she would pass out copies of the chapter to the members and that she would have full copies of plan at their next meeting.

Mr. Woodman said he thought it should be a two-fold plan because it would be nice to have the downtown/Main Street area as the economic hub but the Rt. 11 corridor and the TIF

District is maybe more important on some levels so it has to be both. He asked if there was a goal in the plan for both areas.

Mr. Henry said it's in the bylaws under policies that the EDC will encourage diversity of local economic opportunities consistent with Farmington's community character and to avoid to the greatest extent possible the negative effects of cyclical economic trends, will work to increase the real property valuation on a per capita basis by encouraging high quality commercial and industrial development, recognize all established TIF Districts and Economic Revitalization Zones as locations for commercial and industrial activity as well as help educate business owners with regards to the community revitalization tax relief incentive RSA 79-E and will work to address barriers to economic development. I think we should probably move the last one to the top he said.

Mrs. Morin agreed and suggested some of their first movement should be to review the bylaws and make sure they align with what their vision is as a committee because if they don't meet what they're reading in the chapter that came from the tax base then this piece of paper isn't worth the paper it's printed on.

Mr. Henry said he didn't see anything that conflicts with the Master Plan.

Mr. Lauze said if you look at the Village Center District as a whole vs. the Main Street area and more of what would pertain to the EDC they are very different and asked what their focus is.

Mr. Henry said the EDC's borders are Farmington.

Mr. Lauze said so they could focus on Main Street or Rt. 11 vs. just the VC District and zoning has nothing to do with it.

Mr. Henry said if they wanted to promote a lot of agricultural development in the agricultural zone they could do that too.

Mr. Lauze asked if this board identifies areas that are important to try to improve the economic development if they have any ability to work with those boards to change zoning and to say the EDC's opinion is that agriculture should be beyond the Rt. 11 corridor.

Mr. Henry clarified that there is a Planning Board and a Zoning Board and the Planning Board establishes the zoning and the Zoning Board of Adjustment interprets and sometimes provides exceptions to the zoning regulations. He said that they would propose any changes to the Planning Board and if you were making an appeal to something it would be the ZBA he said. He said if the EDC said they see an area that really isn't good for anything other than commercial development or it's adjacent to or they want to change what's in the zone they haven't changed the physical boundaries of any zone since he has been on the board. He said as far as what's allowed in zones, since he has been on the Planning Board the board is generally pro-business and pro-development and they've made a lot of changes that for the most part are pro-business. I haven't agreed with everything I tend to be the property rights guy on the board he said.

Mr. Lauze said his concern as a business owner and taxpayer is all the routes between the Rt.

11 corridor and even Rt. 16 and the downtown area. He said in order to make the downtown more appealing to businesses those routes need to be esthetically pleasing and sometimes agriculture and esthetics don't necessarily line up when it comes to those particular routes. Mrs. Heon asked if at a future meeting she provides copies of the zoning ordinance to the members if Mr. Henry would educate the committee on where to find things in the zoning ordinance, the Table of Permitted Uses, and explain the different zones and what's allowed so if the committee wanted to look at something and make a suggestion to the Planning Board about something they see as a barrier to businesses. She said the zoning ordinance can be a little daunting if you don't know how to read it and asked if he would be willing to do that. Mr. Henry said he could do that. He said one of the things they did last year was along Rt. 11 we used to have the Commercial Business (CB) zone and the Industrial Business (IB) zone and an overlay district that overlapped parts of each zone.

He said within the overlay district if it was allowed in one zone it was allowed in both and they removed the overlay district and set the rules for the 2 zones as the same for the industrial and commercial uses. He said then they realized there were some other uses that don't quite align so they are aligning the rest of them like churches and educational uses so that along Rt. 11 the rules are the same everywhere but they maintain different zones because as things development they might say as it happened all the industrial went into this zone so we're going to keep it that way. The thought was things kind of sort themselves out so if someone comes in and wants to build a retail store on a large piece of land but that's industrial not commercial so they can't build their store there now they can or it could be the opposite where they want to build a warehouse but it needs to be a store based on the zoning he said.

Mr. Lauze said the rules are built based on if you were going to build a new town from scratch but we have a 200 year old town that's always going to be a moving discussion.

Mr. Henry said Rt. 11 is now a mix of all kinds of things like a house next to a coffee shop across the street from a furniture store.

Mrs. Morin asked if there is an alternate Planning Board rep to the EDC.

Mr. Henry said he didn't know.

Mrs. Heon said she thinks there is an alternate and she will find out who that person is.

Mr. Cardinal said he enjoyed the personal letter (inviting community members/business owners to join the EDC) reaching out directly and that would be an effective way to target people. He asked if there is way for people to join meetings remotely or if they have to be here.

Mrs. Heon said a lot of people ask but they don't have a way at this moment. She said she would ask about it and that she wanted to make sure there are no legal barriers.

Mrs. Morin said for a quorum there is a legal barrier that you have to have so many people physically in the room.

Mr. Henry said the state changed some rules temporarily during COVID.

Mr. Cardinal said that should be changed in general with the way that the world is in general.

He said he is on the board at the country club and when they don't have a quorum present they remote the members in. Depending on what you're trying to do with it, it can be difficult if you're trying to do all these "bells and whistles" with it but if you just focus on the members it shouldn't be and it could potentially help he said.

Mr. Cardinal said as for the vision for what the committee should do Farmington has a bad rap and changing that image to some extent is easy. He said it comes down to showcasing the people that are here and economic development isn't just about the TIF District and bringing sewer to Rt. 11 and getting some big shopping plaza.

He said it's what are the businesses we have and the amazing multi-generational businesses that could be showcased to let people know this is a Farmington business and what these places are currently doing. If there are some things the public could see of what is going on here it could attract a business and those ideas should be hand in hand. It's not just the physical let's build a new business don't forget the businesses that are here he said.

Mrs. Morin said it was brought up a while back about doing some sort of business showcase with our TV station but Cable TV Coordinator Robert Hall had said we can't do that.

Mr. Cardinal said it may be because it's a commercial on the public airwaves and that may be the last way they would want to do it because only the people in town are watching it. He said they are not trying to promote to people in town as much as they are trying to appeal to people outside of town so they might want to go the route of the internet and it could be as simple as starting a Face book group or a website.

Mr. Henry said it could also be training for businesses on how to better promote themselves and how to show up on Google, Face book or set up a website.

Mrs. Heon said there are a lot of new residents in town that they could still outreach to that don't know about New England Furniture or A.J. Foss or any of these other businesses.

6). Short Term Goals:

a). Update Business Directory on Town Website- Mrs. Heon said one thing that is bothersome to her and Planning Director Kyle Pimental about the EDC page on the Town website is that it is wildly outdated and there is a business list that was done 10 or more years ago so one of their short term goals is to update the website and the local business listings and to make it a less boring format. She said like to talk to Mr. Cardinal about how they could accomplish that and she would like each of the members to take a piece of the list such as A-F and figure out if those businesses are still in business and who is missing from the list. There are new businesses and we'd love to get them on here so when new residents are looking on the Town website for a particular type of business it would be right there.

b). EDC Newsletter- Mrs. Heon said another thing the committee was doing was newsletters and she would love to see it get revamped but fresher and more sophisticated with more graphic art. She said she and Mr. Pimental discussed that in the first newsletter they would like to showcase Mr. Lauze and his building downtown as his building is the only building downtown

that has utilized RSA 79-E tax incentive program and maybe people don't know about it.

Mr. Lauze said he didn't know if the people buying properties in town realize the building could have the historic registration or has the age to meet the criteria for the RSA.

Mrs. Heon said it could be a huge tax savings for multiple years for people who are investing in the downtown so they would like to put together some type of newsletter that gives education on what this is and shows a success story and maybe do some snippets on the 3 businesses in his building because they're new and bringing some great stuff to the downtown.

Mr. Lauze said he would not want to see those businesses overlooked. He said between the RSA 79-E and some state grants for energy efficiency that a lot of these buildings probably could take advantage of, a lot of the cost that he put into that building was recouped through those things and that's great for the buildings but without the businesses coming in and investing in it he would still have an empty building so it's definitely both.

Mrs. Heon said they would like to not only showcase the businesses in town but also showcase the programs that are available and get the education out there.

Mr. Lauze said the other thing that's been lost from the Town's standpoint is the Community Development Block Grants that don't exist anymore but other grants do through the same basic groups where he got the grant money for energy improvements. He said they do sidewalk improvements and there is a ton of stuff there for the downtown.

Mrs. Heon said our challenge in that is not having the staff to be able to write those grants and if we had a full time Planner that would be a good portion of his or her job.

Mr. Lauze said UNH did do a study on the Rec. Dept. /old Town Hall but there are resources there that would help the Town with the lack of staffing to access and utilize some of those grants because the grants are there specifically to make sure that towns like ours can improve and do better. It's not like they make it really difficult to get they're trying to give that money away to towns like this he said.

Mr. Woodman said UNH has grant writers and asked if they have been utilized.

Mr. Henry said Mr. Pimental has been working on a grant working with New Durham to get a full time grant writer to be shared between the 2 towns and that person will be able to focus on chasing the things they are talking about. I think that's probably going to come to fruition and then we'll see some results from that he said.

Mrs. Harris said in the past UNH did come here and provided a lot of great feedback and resources. She said we did receive a lot of grants and that was around the time of the Revitalization Committee and they reviewed the old firehouse and different options at those town meetings but she was not sure if anyone had heard any updates on how that funding was used or where it was allocated. She said they had a lot of ideas where those resources would go but the aftermath of that was not communicated at a certain point.

She said she was curious to know how the historical aspect of it and would love to hear how that has gone. She said she has heard that if a building was identified as historic it might have

challenges to the renovations and a lot of our buildings require a lot of renovations and a lot of work and they want to make sure they could still get those necessary renovations and it wouldn't be limited to door knobs and doors and things like that.

Mr. Lauze said it is very different if your building is registered as historic vs. eligible to be registered as historic because to meet the RSA 79-E requirements it has to be eligible to be registered as historic and doesn't have to be on the list of historic buildings registered with the state. He said the other difference was he met with the company doing the energy audit and he had a lot of assistance with the grant writing itself and he also had the NH Preservation Alliance visit the building and walk through the renovations that were needed and they advised him of the things he could and couldn't do. He said they were really helpful when it came to looking at the project as a whole and helping him with how to make those changes and there are a lot of finite details involved in it.

Mrs. Harris said she hopes that any barriers can be looked at so that buildings can be renovated so they can be used in modern times.

Mr. Woodman said the owners of some of the buildings downtown don't live around here and asked if they know that. Maybe it's our job to reach out to them and say this is what you can do to fix your building up.

Mrs. Heon said they have staffing issues in the Town and this is where a group like this would maybe step in and help us with getting that information out to new businesses. She said for example the Metal Farm on Rt. 11 was just sold to a MA company and they may not know that that building is in the Economic Revitalization Zone which allows for tax credits and there may be some opportunities for them to get some kind of grant to rehab the building.

She said there are buildings for sale on Rt. 11 that they'd love to be able to reach out to and find what is going on before the fact but they don't have time and she sees that as part of the role of the EDC in making those relationships, outreach and networking. She said that is what the bigger cities and they could look at them as a model to get in that direction.

Mr. Lauze said the current Code Enforcement Officer has been great and it's another one of those things where he tells him what he wants to do, asks how he should do it and he's full of information and he has had nothing but great experiences with him and Firefighter Waite on the inspections and that both positions have improved since he started getting involved with that stuff. Both people are happy to come out, walk through with you and make sure you know ahead of time what needs to be done and how it needs to be done before you buy it he said.

Mr. Henry said one of the barriers to economic development here is perception. He said he still hears people say that Farmington is anti-business, it's hard to open a business here and that may have been true at one time but it's been a while since you go before the Planning Board and get a lot grief. He said they're not chasing people away and they generally do their best to bend over backwards without throwing out the rule book.

He said he has seen comments from people that the rents are too high but they don't even call

the landlord to see what the rent is they just assume it's too much. They assume it's too hard to open a business here because 20 years ago somebody gave somebody a hard time. He said we need to overcome that perception and he didn't think anybody that has gone into Mr. Lauze's building was given a hard time with the changes of use, etc.

Mr. Lauze said no and that part of it was having to make some changes to the building that were difficult but they were not Town rules and were put there by the state or other agencies.

Mr. Woodman said over the years he has heard that Rt. 11 needs sewer because when you have to put in a leach field and a septic system you lose space.

Mr. Lauze said to install and maintain a well and septic system vs. connecting to Town water and sewer is a significant investment by itself and that's a deterrent. He said if they can go 2 miles down the road and cross the Rochester border and connect to public utilities they're probably going to.

Mrs. Morin said when the sewer was built it was built for what we have now plus a little more.

Mrs. Heon said she thinks there is an upgrade and the Water/Sewer Dept. Supervisor is going to get them some information on exactly what it can handle.

Mr. Henry said when they upgraded the plant approx. 10 years ago they built a lot of additional capacity into it because that upgrade was supposed to last for a long time. He said the TIF District is supposed to bring the water and sewer mains out further but he didn't think it would go all the way to Rochester.

Mrs. Heon said there is approx. \$130,000 in the TIF District fund right now and at the current assessed value of the TIF District there is about \$40,000 going into it a year. She said that changes as the values go up then more money will go in for example the Metal Farm which was just sold and if they make improvements and the assessed value goes up then all of the new tax revenue from that would go into the TIF fund.

Mr. Lauze asked about the status of the TIF District Advisory Board.

Mrs. Heon said they never really met and nothing happened. She said one of their goals was to get this committee and the TIF District Advisory Board off the ground again and there are certain rules as to who can sit on the TIF board depending on if you are business owner or live in the TIF. She said some of those have been relaxed as there were some law changes but one of them says there has to be an EDC member that sits on the TIF board so that's why they decided to get this committee going and then work on creating the TIF Board.

Mr. Henry said there's also a clock on the TIF.

Mrs. Heon said there is a clock on the TIF but she has not determined what that is yet. She said she can't find anything in the minutes as to when the TIF District development plan got voted in as to what that clock was so she doesn't know if there is a NH statutory limit or if the town voted something in and they are looking into that.

She said one thing they could do and it may be something that happens at Town Meeting this coming March is to amend the plan and if they amend the plan may be able to amend the clock.

Mr. Cardinal said he and Mr. Woodman were involved with that when it was trying to get off the ground but he didn't remember the timeframe. He said it wasn't an official meeting because they didn't have enough board members then but the idea was once there was enough money to actually pay for a plan to be designed for how they were going to get the sewer in there as step one and it could be a \$30,000 or \$40,000 job just for the plan design in order to know what they'd be getting into.

Mrs. Heon said they knew that at least a portion of it was going to have to be bonded and they hoped that the amount of money going into that fund would cover the debt service. She said that may not be realistic depending on if they get members and a plan in today's dollars because this plan was written in 2014 so they have to assume that is outdated as far as the prices would be now. If it is something that Farmington really wants and thinks that it would help drive development on Rt. 11 they may have to look at other alternatives and not focus on building up the TIF fund because it's never going to cover the whole thing and probably won't cover the debt service and the town may have to accept some of that she said.

Mr. Cardinal said the town voted on a warrant article at Town Meeting so the town has already spoken on this as to what they want.

Mrs. Heon said the plan talked about not going forward until there were enough funds in the TIF fund and then only bonding what could be covered by the amount that was going into the TIF fund. She said those numbers might not be realistic based on what it costs to actually bring the sewer lines to Rt. 11 in today's dollars so one of the first things that has to happen is to get a real plan or an estimate so we would know how much money we'd have raise, bond and get in grants to make this happen.

Mr. Henry said he voted for a TIF District with the money going into the TIF fund would service the bond with no other impact on the tax base as a whole.

Mr. Lauze said they would have to use another warrant article to allocate money for that.

Mr. Henry said he didn't think this is the time for that because they'd be asking to support a bond they're not ready to go forward with.

Mr. Lauze said he meant to establish an account and to allocate something and it could be small but at least it would get it moving.

Mrs. Heon said if this is something they're interested in she would give them a copy of the plan. She said that she and Mr. Pimental are starting to go through the plan because it needs to be updated because the numbers are not accurate and if they are going to go forward with it they need some realistic numbers.

Mr. Henry said another thing they've talked about at the Planning Board but haven't taken a lot of action on is changing some zoning in the area of the gravel pits along Rt. 11. He said they're only zoned industrial commercial back about 600 ft. from Rt. 11 then it's all residential so when you think of all of that open area that's currently gravel pits right now the only thing that can be built there is houses which may or may not be appealing to the town. He said if that does turn

into subdivisions it will certainly impact the schools and the money needed to support them. Mrs. Morin asked for the number of acres there.

Mr. Henry said he didn't know but it's a number of different parcels and some of them seem to go from Rt. 11 all the way out to Chestnut Hill Road. He said some of the gravel pits are multiple lots it's not just one big parcel back there but most of it is currently zoned residential so we talked about how we might re-zone that area with the landowners to see what they would want too. That's something for this committee to think about as well because I see a lot of potential for commercial development there but currently it's not zoned for that he said.

He said that zoning change might also impact people's opinion on a Capital Reserve Fund or some sort of a savings account to bring utilities out there that might spur some growth there.

Mr. Lauze said all of the business investments he has are on Main Street or in the in-town area so it is almost counterproductive for him to spend money on Rt. 11 but as a resident and taxpayer he doesn't feel the school budget, the Town budget and the tax rates are ever going to meet in an area they should until they do a better job of utilizing Rt. 11 and get some businesses out there that carry the bulk of the tax burden.

Mr. Henry said if that turns into houses a house will put students in school that cost more than the house pays in taxes. He said it's having that balance of enough business that isn't putting kids in the schools to offset the houses although not every house puts kids in school.

Mr. Lauze said the bulk of your school funding is based on property taxes and if your town doesn't have enough businesses to fund your schools, that's always going to be a fight like it has been forever in this town.

Mrs. Harris said at one point Middleton students were coming to Farmington and it was a huge cut losing that and asked if Farmington ever considered sending students to another district.

Mrs. Morin said she was on the School Board at that time and they did consider that but there isn't a district close enough to us that could absorb all of our students. She said they looked at Kingswood but they couldn't absorb all of our students because they are regional and they had just rebuilt and there were no other local schools that could absorb Farmington.

Mrs. Harris said she was curious if that could be re-looked at to see if our resources could be better utilized in another community like building an addition to a Rochester school and also looking at school ratings ours are one of the lowest in the state and potentially in the country. She said resources could potentially be better utilized in another area or in some areas where students in different neighborhoods are sent to different schools as well because funding is a constant challenge.

Mr. Woodman said this weekend people brought up that there aren't enough kids in a classroom and asked why they couldn't close down one of the schools.

Mrs. Morin said there wasn't one school that had enough room to take in the kids from the closed school.

Mr. Henry said the classes are not as large as they could be but there is certainly not enough

room to close a school. He said most of the really small classes you hear about are at the high school and it comes down to a question of not offering classes they consider to be normal high school classes but if there has to be 15 kids in a class then you're going to get 4 core subjects and that's about it.

Mr. Lauze said it deters people from moving to town and any town where your school system is not strong businesses are not coming to.

Mr. Henry said there is an economy of scale with larger schools and there has been an effort to keep the number of courses available to students as high as reasonably possible.

Mr. Lauze said the Henry Wilson School is the oldest school and if they were to close it down and make the classes bigger they would lose a few teachers so they would gain some salary there but they would have to maintain the building anyway and they wouldn't be saving as much as people think they would by closing the school.

Mr. Cardinal said his daughter is a freshman and she has two classes one with 32 kids in it and one with 20 so he didn't think the class sizes are small.

Mr. Henry said there are classes that are the opposite where there are a handful of students.

Mrs. Morin said to not offer those classes such as Spanish 2 or Physics to our students does a disservice too.

Mr. Henry said the schools are not full of empty classrooms and Henry Wilson is the biggest school and Valley View is the smallest and there is no room anywhere to fit them (students from a closed school). He said Middleton represented about 20% of the student body when they were here so we lost about 20% of the students and that is not enough to close 1 building.

7). Any Other Business Before the Committee:

Mrs. Morin said the members' "marching orders" for their next meeting would include to review the list of businesses they have already reached out to for people that they know and want to reach out to get them to join the committee or give them thoughts and ideas on where their vision is and to look at the economic development plan.

Mrs. Heon gave the committee a list of the businesses currently on the Town website that are outdated and asked the committee how they wanted to handle updating the list. She said they may want to go through the list and cross off any business they know has gone out of business and add any new businesses they know of and then they work to get the website updated.

Mr. Cardinal asked if the state has a list of the registered businesses.

Mrs. Heon said they don't and she searches for businesses all the time on the Secretary of State's website but there is no way to search by town for a list and you have to know the name of the business or the registered agent's name to look at it. We're hoping to develop a list here in the office because the regulations say everybody has to do a business use certificate but they don't always do that and they might not know that they have to do that. I don't know how this list was generated 10 years ago or if the committee just came up with whom they know but they need a better way to keep it updated she said.

She said there is something on the Town website that allows businesses to send them their information if they want to be on this list but it hasn't been maintained and is very outdated. She said if the Town website and EDC web page look like it's being maintained then we look like we have something going on. Right now we look like we don't she said.

Mrs. Heon said if they have anyone interested in becoming a member they can have them call her and asked the committee to work on the business list so they can put together a better list at next month's meeting. She also asked to talk to Mr. Lauze and get him as the subject of their first newsletter and who is good at doing graphic art.

Mrs. Harris said she does that stuff and asked to have the information gathered and sent to her.

Mrs. Heon said Mr. Pimental said he would like to showcase this on a regional or state level as the utilization of the RSA 79-E. She said her vision of it would be the education on what the 79-E is all about, how Mr. Lauze utilized it, use before and after pictures and the businesses that are operating out of there now. She said this committee also used to do ribbon cuttings for new businesses and it would be great to do that again.

Mr. Lauze said the focus on the businesses is important because he didn't revitalize the building and reach out with a list and before they renovated those spaces he had people contacting him. He said 2 of the 3 businesses on the first floor are life-long residents who wanted to bring their businesses to Farmington and make Farmington better so it wasn't him bringing the businesses to town it was these were people who wanted to come to town, wanted to invest in the town and he happened to have the space.

Mrs. Heon said there are going to be 2 new commercial spaces opening up where the hardware store used to be so showcasing that shows you can be successful in downtown Farmington.

Mr. Cardinal asked her for her thoughts on how the newsletter would be distributed.

Mrs. Heon said she didn't know and asked if he had any good ideas.

Mr. Cardinal said the story idea is great but it would be putting the cart before the horse to write it and have a newsletter and now what do we do with it. He said he would like to know where they can distribute it, who their audience is and who they are writing to.

Mr. Lauze said the owner of one of the larger concrete companies in the state bought a building in downtown Rochester and there were stories in Foster's newspaper and on WMUR and it may be possible to do that here.

Mr. Cardinal suggested the Town could issue a press release and asked if the Town does press releases other than when there is some sort of crisis going on.

Mrs. Heon said they can do that and noted that we only make it onto WMUR when there is a problem.

Mr. Cardinal said if they let WMUR control the story they're going to because they are trying to sell their news and we need to sell our news and be the ones who control that story. He said he thought the story idea was great but it should be a video and not a newsletter because it's visual and then asked how we would get that out there.

He said he does graphic design, website design, videos and photos and asked who is going to see this and how do they get it out there. He said often people will have a great idea but there's just no great way to get the story out there and when a Town press release comes into a newsroom it's someone's job to read it. If anyone cares is another thing but at least it would be trying to find the avenues to get these things out and that could be multiple things, put the newsletter on the Town website, send out a press release and do videos he said.

Mr. Crawford asked if they could be active in the distribution of this information and something they do in his job is called best demonstrated practices where they share what they do within their team. He said if they are using this as an example to create a newsletter or video they have this list and they could share this is what they are using to reform this committee, these are some of the practices we think could potentially help you and be active in reaching out to those businesses to get the newsletter off the ground and showcase that they're trying new ideas and maybe they have ideas to share as well.

Mr. Woodman said when Mr. Lauze started painting his building he said kudos to him because a business isn't going into a "crap building" and they need to focus on the buildings that look like crap and on these property owners because no one is going to start a business in a dump.

Mr. Henry said since he moved to town the downtown looks better and there are still a few buildings to go but it has improved down there. He said one of their jobs should be making any potential buyers know how easy it will be to attract businesses to them. As for helping the property owners that haven't done anything with their property maybe market that property to somebody that will he said.

Mr. Lauze said if the property owner isn't business friendly it's not going to work. He said every lease he has written is estimated and the purpose of that is this is the bare minimum of what he needs to make and he wants them to be successful so this is what he is going to charge them and as they grow they will get to the target number he would like to have so the property owner has to be business forward too.

Mr. Henry said with some of the property owners if they haven't done something by now they're probably not going to so let's help them sell it to somebody else that is prepared to do that.

Mr. Lauze said the Fire Inspector and the Code Enforcement Officer are also pushing to make sure that whoever buys or owns those properties brings them up to code and if you are not willing to put the money in to do that then you're going to have to sell it. Having them crack down a little bit on the buildings is important too he said.

Mrs. Morin said you don't want an empty building especially in this economy. She said at the next meeting they will talk more about the newsletter, doing a press release and maybe a video.

Mrs. Heon said that she and Mr. Pimental first need to talk to Mr. Lauze and then come up with a plan and then they would all work together on it.

Mr. Cardinal said people need to get on board with the idea of "PR" (public relations) and the idea of us changing our image. He said the town needs to value it, invest in it and it's not something where we just write a press release and send it to WMUR and think that's going to work there needs to be professionals involved in the whole process he said.

Mr. Woodman asked if someone has an "in" with the Foster's Daily Democrat.

Mrs. Heon said Rochester does a really good job of showcasing the stuff they have going on so they probably have somebody whose job is to get those things out.

Mr. Henry said it may take 5 or 6 press releases from Farmington for somebody to say there's stuff going on up there.

Mr. Lauze asked if it takes a vote to become a member of the EDC.

Mrs. Heon said he would have to submit an application, be appointed by the Board of Selectmen at one of their Monday board meetings and then he would have to get sworn in.

Mrs. Morin said she would like to include reorganization of the committee on the agenda for their next meeting and she didn't think she could be Chairman because she is the Selectmen's rep to the EDC.

Mr. Henry said he didn't think he could be Chair as he is the Planning Board rep.

Mr. Lauze said if he is sitting on this board at the next meeting he would vote for Mr. Woodman for Chairman.

Mr. Woodman said they could talk about that then.

8). Next Meeting: Tuesday, November 15, 2022 at 6 p.m.

9). Adjournment:

Motion: (Henry, second Woodman) to adjourn the meeting passed 5-0 at 8:34 p.m.

Kathleen Magoon
Recording Secretary


Penny Morin, Acting Chairman