

Town of Farmington  
Economic Development Committee Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, July 11, 2017

**Committee Members Present:**

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

**Committee Members Absent:**

Angela Hardin, Vice Chairman, excused  
Lisa Capone

**Others Present:**

Linda McElhinney  
Penny Morin

**1). Call to Order:**

Mr. Orvis called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

**2). Pledge of Allegiance:**

All present stood for the Pledge of allegiance.

**3). Public Comment:**

Mrs. Morin asked if the Town Administrator would be attending the meeting to discuss the plans for the joint boards meeting regarding economic development in Town.

Mr. Orvis said Mr. Capello is on vacation this week and would not be attending the meeting. He said the plans for the joint meeting would be discussed later in the meeting.

**4). Review of Minutes:**

June 13, 2017- No errors or omissions

Motion: (Titus, second King) to accept the minutes as written passed 7-0.

**5). Newsletter:**

Members received and reviewed the July edition of the monthly newsletter. Mrs. Titus said this edition of the Economic Development News will be printed in purple and that the Administrative Assistant had received only 4 submissions for publication. She asked the members to submit any items for the next newsletter as soon as possible as the Administrative Assistant will be going on vacation and will only have 4 days to put together the August newsletter when she returns. She encouraged them to submit anything that would help the businesses in the community.

Mr. Orvis said he noticed a new For Sale sign at the Sarah Greenfield Business Park and suggested a picture of the sign be included in next edition.

Mr. Laferte suggested a copy of the newsletter be put up on the bulletin board outside the Municipal Office Building.

Mrs. King suggested some information about the Adopt- A- Spot program be included in the next edition as there are more spots in town waiting to be adopted.

Mr. Laferte requested that a copy of the newsletter be included in the packets mailed to members

for review prior to the monthly meetings.

Mrs. Titus asked the members to consider submitting information about the organizations they belong to or related to their line of work that may be helpful to the business community in general to try to expand the newsletter from a 1 page format to a 2 page format.

Mr. Orvis suggested the newsletter could include events going on in town and the promotion of commercial properties for sale.

Motion: (Titus, second King) to approve the newsletter as presented passed 7-0.

#### **6). Goal Setting:**

Mr. Orvis said that Ms. Hardin had volunteered to head up the discussion about goal setting but was absent from the meeting.

Motion: (Titus, second Roy-Palmer) to table the discussion on goal setting until the next meeting passed 7-0.

#### **7). Master Plan:**

Mr. Orvis said the members received copies of the economic development chapter of the Master Plan for review and to discuss at this meeting. He asked if the members saw anything they would recommend should be changed and if they intended to request that the Planning Board review the chapter for potential changes.

Mrs. King said it may need to be tweaked a little but it looks as if many of the goals listed in the plan have not changed in the last 10 years.

Mrs. Titus noted that the plan is too wordy.

Mr. Orvis said there are a lot of comments on Face Book about the need to promote economic development but at the same time there are a lot of residents who want the Town to stay the same as it is now. They don't want to see more businesses, people and traffic in town he said.

Mrs. Titus said they shouldn't disrespect the people who want to keep it the same as it is now and if they come forward or put it in writing they should take their opinions back to the Selectmen and say these people want to keep the town the way it is.

Mrs. King asked about the procedure to revise the Master Plan and if it would involve having the Planning Board set up a committee to conduct the review/revision of the plan. She said that in the past the Town hired someone as an advisor and asked how the whole thing would work.

Mr. Orvis said the plan has been revised several different ways and the last time it was reviewed the Town had the ZAMPS Committee. In the 1980's the Planning Board did the work with a little help from the Strafford Regional Planning Commission he said.

Mrs. King asked if the Planning Board has to vote to take up revising the Master Plan.

Mr. Laferte said the last time the plan was revised the Town spent a "good chunk of money" to hire someone to do it. He said there has been some discussion that that may happen again this time too so he talked to a Selectman about setting aside some money to revise the plan. The board doesn't have much choice in the matter as the state requires the plan to be revisited and we may find we may have to hire someone to do it he said.

Mr. Orvis said it is difficult to get people to volunteer their time for several reasons and because of that you have to pay somebody to do it.

## **8). Old Business:**

A). Joint EDC/Planning Board Meeting- Mr. Laferte said he talked to Planning Board Chairman David Kestner about scheduling a joint meeting with the EDC and he said the board is available to meet the first Tuesday of each month as that is their workshop meeting. The third Tuesday is the Public Hearing meeting and would not work for a joint meeting of the boards. He said Mr. Kestner suggested he ask the EDC when they would like to meet so it can be included on the Planning Board agenda. He added that Aug. 1 workshop meeting is still available.

Mr. Orvis said this meeting would be similar to the EDC/Planning Board meeting held about 6 months ago. He suggested they schedule it after the joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen as it would be better to see which direction all of the boards want to go in first before meeting separately with the Planning Board.

He then asked Mr. Laferte if the Planning Board has started working on any proposed changes to the Zoning Ordinances for next year.

Mr. Laferte said the subject gets tossed around at almost every meeting but no decisions have made.

Mr. Orvis said it seems like some times the issue gets put off and then before you know it it's Nov. and the public hearings need to be held in December and January to get them on the warrant for Town Meeting in March. He said there may be more changes to the zoning that the Planning Board should look at than they have in the past.

B). Joint Selectmen/EDC/Planning Board Meeting- Mrs. Titus said the dates suggested by Selectmen for the joint meeting include July 17, 24, 31 or Aug. 7.

Mr. Orvis said he couldn't make the July 17<sup>th</sup> meeting because he will be attending the Medicare presentation hosted by the Friends of Farmington that night.

Consensus of the committee was to pick July 24<sup>th</sup> as their first choice for the joint meeting and July 31<sup>st</sup> as the second choice if members are unavailable on the 24th.

Mrs. Titus said the members will receive an e-mail confirmation of the date chosen for the meeting.

C). Business Contacts- Mrs. Titus said she contacted the Broken Lance regarding a ribbon cutting ceremony on Face Book but has yet to receive a response. After several attempts to contact the owner she will now wait for him to contact her if he is interested she said.

Mrs. Titus said she called 15 businesses on the Farmington Business Directory included on the Town website and found that some are no longer available or that have a different phone number from the one listed. She said she left messages or sent e-mails to the businesses requesting a write up from each of them describing their business for inclusion in the newsletter as the featured business of the month. She said she planned to collect the write ups in folder ahead of time so they will be available when needed for the newsletter. She added she planned to try to tie a business to a particular month based on their products or service provided such as featuring a Christmas tree farm in December.

Mrs. Titus said she was conducting “old-fashioned face to face meetings” with business owners but found there are some businesses with offices you can’t get to so she is also trying the Face Book/e-mail approach to reach them. She said she wants them to know the EDC puts out a monthly newsletter and that they are trying to help promote businesses in town.

D). Old Fire Station- Mr. Laferte said he keeps hearing rumors about the former fire station property and asked Mrs. Titus if the Selectmen have made an official decision as to the use of the property.

Mrs. Titus said the appraisal of the property was put out to bid and an appraisal to determine the value and best use of the property has been completed but no decision has been made yet as to what will happen with the property.

Mr. Orvis said he was informed that Norway Plains Associates has conducted the boundary survey for the parcels so that part has been done.

Mrs. Titus added there is no plan for anything there at the moment.

E). Odd Fellows Block- Mrs. King said she contacted the realtor handling the block where the Subway building is about making the windows look like the building is occupied as discussed at the previous meeting. The realtor said they are waiting on a possible new tenant in the building. Mrs. King said she also mentioned the possibility of finding someone to paint a mural on the side of the building and that she would call the realtor back in a few weeks to discuss the matter again. She suggested local artists and high school students could submit proposals for the mural and the townspeople could choose which painting they prefer.

Mr. Orvis said he liked the idea and suggested the side of the Cumberland Farms building is another place that could be a candidate for a mural to hide the ugly brick wall there.

Mrs. King will follow up with the building owners.

F). Natural Gas- Mr. Orvis said a resident asked him if he still intended to try to get a company to bring natural gas to town and recalled that he planned to call the company back in six months. He noted that 8 months have passed since the last phone call and that we have a new Governor so maybe things have changed with politics in the state. He said he will contact the gas company again and report the results at the next meeting.

## **9).New Business:**

A). Route 11 Study -Mr. Laferte informed the committee that the Strafford Regional Planning Commission will start a study of Route 11 in the Rochester, Farmington and New Durham area. He said he and the Town Administrator are representing Farmington and they attended a meeting of the commission the previous week. The study committee is just getting up to speed and they are looking at projects previously approved and plan to conduct traffic surveys, update the information and forecast future needs. He noted Rte. 11 is a gold mine and we need to make sure it is done the right way.

Mrs. Roy-Palmer asked if a written plan for the study is available and suggested it be provided to the committee for the newsletter.

B).Route 11 Construction- Mr. Orvis asked if the current road work is for the planned turning lane in the center of Rte. 11.

Mr. Laferte said the work is for the center turning lane.

Ms. McKenney said a turning lane is planned for center of the road down as far as the Farmington Family Care offices.

Mr. Laferte added that Farmington is not doing too badly when it comes to projects being completed by the state. The state is currently replacing the Main Street Bridge and doing work on Rte 11 while other towns are not receiving any work from the state. He added that drivers may be inconvenienced while the work is being done but it is something we will be very glad to have when it is finished.

Mr. Orvis said there is a Governor's 10 Year List (of projects) and questioned how they get away with calling it a 10 year list as some projects are on the list for 30 years before they are completed. He said the gas company rep. expressed concerns about the DOT plan on the list to construct 4 travel lanes on Rte. 11 from Rochester through Farmington and cited it as a reason they are leery of putting gas lines under the shoulder of the road as the state may widen the road. He said that 30 years ago the state paid for a huge traffic study of the road and found that Rte. 11 was at a failing level of service then and there is more traffic now than there was 30 years ago.

Mrs. King said there are some significant geographical issues that may hamper the development of Rte. 11 such as the proximity of the river on one side of the road and the ledge outcroppings along the other side of the road as well as the railroad bed that runs along portions of the Rte. 11 corridor. She added that just to get a driveway permit on a state road can be difficult.

B). New Antiques – Ms. Haig said she spoke with the new owner of the Brush Factory on Spring Street and had a discussion about the antique business for about 30 minutes. The owner said he does a lot of business with residents in the more wealthy parts of the state. She said she asked him if he intended to stay in town and suggested Farmington could become an antique center with the other antique shops in town which could help to maintain the town's "quaintness". She said it would make the town a destination instead of just a drive-by place.

Mr. Orvis noted that "Antique Alley" in Northwood has become somewhat run down and suggested it was due to its location on Route 4 and that we don't want that to happen on Rte. 11. He suggested the Planning Board look at a zoning change that would allow the buildings in the village center to be redeveloped instead having the owner build something new on Rte. 11.

Ms. Haig said the availability of parking at the former Fire Station lot would encourage people to walk around the downtown as would some new shops there. The increased foot traffic would also support the existing businesses she said.

Mr. Orvis said people like to park right in front of the store they are going into but we need to convince people if the park in the Fire Station lot and walk to a store that they are not walking any further than if they parked at Wal Mart, walked up to the store and then walked around inside for "3 miles".

#### **10). Any Other Business to come before the Committee:**

A).Next Agenda -Mrs. Titus suggested they set the agenda for the next meeting. The agenda will include the following: Pledge of Allegiance, Public Comment, Review of Minutes, Newsletter, Goal Setting, Master Plan, Planning Board Report, Old Business (Natural Gas), New Business,

Any Other Business to come before the Committee and Next Meeting.

B). New Town Planner- Mr. Orvis asked Mr. Laferte what the Planning Board thought about the new Town Planner Dan DeSantis.

Mr. Laferte said he hasn't had the chance to come up to speed with everything as he has only been to one Planning Board meeting.

Mrs. Titus said he is a very intelligent man and a hard worker.

Mr. Orvis said Mr. DeSantis did a really good job with planning the economic development in Somersworth. He said they spoke briefly on his first day and that he liked some of his ideas for zoning such as zoning that follows existing physical features and not set up arbitrary boundaries. This would allow a lot line to follow an existing stone wall instead of a lot line 10 feet back from the wall and not have to obtain a Variance to do so he said.

Mr. Laferte suggested the committee invite Mr. DeSantis to an EDC meeting and give the committee an overview of his progress so far.

Mr. Orvis suggested Mr. DeSantis be invited to the joint EDC/Planning Board meeting.

**11). Next Meeting:** August 8, 2017 at 6 p.m.

Mrs. King encouraged anyone with questions about Medicare to attend the Service Link presentation entitled "The A, B, C and D's of Medicare" in the Friends of Farmington Building, 480 Main Street on July 17 at 5:30 p.m.

**12). Adjournment:**

Motion: (Titus, second Roy-Palmer) to adjourn the meeting passed unanimously at 6:55 p.m.

Respectively submitted

Kathleen Magoon

Recording Secretary

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Randy Orvis, Chairman