

Town of Farmington
Economic Development Committee Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, August 8, 2017

Committee Members Present:

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

Committee Members Absent:

Lisa Capone

1). Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance:

Chairman Orvis called the meeting to order at 6 p.m. All present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

2). Public Comment: None

3). Review of Minutes:

July 11, 2017- No errors or omissions

Motion: (Titus, second King) to approve the minutes as written passed 7-0-1 (Hardin abstained).

4). Newsletter:

The members reviewed the August edition of the Economic Development News.

Motion: (Roy-Palmer, second King) to approve the newsletter as presented

Discussion: Ms. Hardin said she reviewed the edition before the meeting and didn't find any errors or omissions. Members commented that they liked the photo of the For Sale sign at the Sarah Greenfield Business Park and that this edition has a "little bit of everything".

Vote: The motion passed unanimously.

5). Goal Setting:

Ms. Hardin began by asking the members to share their thoughts about what they see as short and long term goals for the committee. She defined short term as those projects that could accomplished in one year or less and long term as any goals that would require more than one year to achieve.

Ms. Roy-Palmer asked if the goals should tie-into their policies as stated in the committee bylaws.

Ms. Hardin said the Farmington Economic Development Committee (FEDC) Bylaws, Policies section, says the FEDC will recognize the Route 11 corridor as a location for commercial and industrial activity as well as working to strengthen and enhance the downtown area. She then read aloud the remaining policies which include encouraging a diversity of economic

opportunities consistent with the community character, to avoid the negative effects of cyclical economic trends and to increase property valuation by encouraging high quality commercial, industrial and residential development.

Ms. Hardin said she would like to see the town engage with a UNH program for a downtown revitalization project as a short term goal and the extension of the water and sewer lines out along Route 11 and the review of the zoning ordinances to make sure they are as business friendly as possible without giving up the sense of community we now have as long term goals. Mrs. Titus suggested one short term goal should be to update the EDC folders and asked for suggestions as to what information should be added or updated. She said the committee goals should be to support the existing local businesses, the development of new business to increase jobs and to help with the property taxes and to provide information and seminars on funding for start-up businesses.

Mr. Orvis said he heard a rumor that the liquor store in Farmington will be closed once the new liquor store being built in the Ridge mall in Rochester is completed. He said he was informed that any town in the state that wants a state liquor store can have one. He suggested they make sure the town keeps the existing liquor store as it is a popular store due to its location on Route 11 that brings money to town. Many of the liquor store patrons also shop at the Rite Aid at that location he said.

Ms. Hardin said she spoke with the manager of the Farmington liquor store and he said the Commission plans to close the liquor stores in the Lilac Mall in Rochester and the Farmington store and replace them with the new store at the Ridge mall in Rochester. She said there is a possibility the Rite Aid may then expand into the open space left by the Farmington liquor store but their management is concerned about a decrease in foot traffic if the liquor store is removed from that location.

Mr. Orvis said his goals include bringing natural gas to town, revitalization of the downtown including the addition of a mural on the outside walls of the stores and to make the upstairs of the buildings look like they are occupied.

Ms. Hardin said she plans to schedule a small business after-hours workshop this fall to be held at the Friends of Farmington building on Main Street. The gathering would include commercial lending information/contacts and Ms. Roy-Palmer, EDC member and Executive Director of WEDCO, an economic development corp. to discuss some non-traditional funding sources she said.

Mrs. King said she recently talked to the Small Business Development Corp. about setting the criteria for the business incubator spaces planned for the Friends of Farmington building so a fall workshop would be good timing for the group.

Mr. Laferte said the first thing needed downtown is better sidewalks and curbing on both sides of Main Street which will be sizable expenditure the town will have to make. He said the town may also want to consider installing nicer street lights on the sidewalks but noted the redevelopment projects will probably require the services and additional cost for an engineer.

Ms. Hardin said Town Planner Dan DeSantis spoke about these types of projects at the joint

meeting of the Selectmen, Planning Board and EDC members and is looking into the estimated cost and what may be available to the town for funding. She said Mr. DeSantis said the town could still use much of the information included in the Master Plan and the PLAN NH Charette to help alleviate some of the design costs.

Ms. Roy-Palmer asked if the reconstruction of the Main Street Bridge will include new deck lighting as it is the “gateway” to downtown. She said that during the construction period would be a good opportunity to design and install better lighting.

Ms. Haig said she contacted Lone Oak ice cream after they visited the Goodwin Library and asked if they would consider setting up a satellite location in Farmington. She said they rejected the idea of a second location in Farmington and were not interested in participating in Hay Day. She said the members may have to work within the town to promote economic development as it seems there are few outside businesses willing to take a chance on coming here at this time. She added she would love to see the sidewalks rehabilitated, noted the amount of traffic that passes through town and said she envisioned a bistro or ice cream shop where those people would stop to eat and then spend money in town.

Ms. McKenney agreed and recalled that there use to be an Italian restaurant downtown that people from everywhere would search out and visit regularly.

Mr. Laferte said there are sewer and water projects scheduled for the TIF District that would be completed within the next 1-7 years. He suggested the projects won’t be completed until they are needed.

Ms. Hardin asked if they are hesitant to begin work on the sewer project because there isn’t the business there to draw the need but then also asked if there is no service there what would draw the businesses to that area.

Mr. Orvis said the soils in the TIF District are good enough for septic systems but if sewer service were available a business owner could purchase a smaller lot. He said town regulations require a certain lot size for commercial/industrial development and that may be discouraging the development of the sewer lines there because they can’t get the density of businesses needed to justify the expense.

Mr. Laferte said this isn’t necessarily the case as an applicant could go before the ZBA and request a waiver of the lot size requirement.

Mr. Orvis said the ZBA can’t change zoning but they may be able to grant a Variance if a hardship situation exists.

Mrs. King said any good commercial developer would know these things and check it out as part of their business. She said they would more likely to read zoning regulations and think of ways to get around it than to read it and just give up on it.

Mr. Orvis said the town currently has provisions for smaller lot sizes in the downtown area if you have water and sewer but doesn’t have those provisions in the Route 11 zone. He said the town is also missing out on residential and accessory structure tax base due to the way the zoning is worded and it needs to be changed to allow someone to put their garage on an adjoining vacant lot without having to put a house on it first. He said that a short to medium term goal would be to

ask the Planning Board to get on board with making these changes and get the proposals ready for public hearings in December/January and Town Meeting in March. Otherwise it will take another whole year to make any changes to the regulations he said.

Ms. Hardin said the members seem to agree on a number of the goals mentioned and asked if the committee was ready to start prioritizing the goals or if they want more time to think about it.

Mr. Laferte suggested the members could meet with the Planning Board at one of their workshop meetings which take place on the first Tuesday of every month to discuss any problems or recommendations.

Ms. Roy-Palmer reminded the committee that another meeting is scheduled with the Town Planner, Selectmen, Planning Board and the EDC to discuss the Planner's findings concerning the issues raised at the first joint boards meeting. She recalled that the Planner said he would need about a month to research and gather the requested information and would notify the Town Administrator when he is ready to present his findings to the 3 committees.

Mr. Orvis said he noticed that all of the Town boards have a public comment portion on their agendas except for the Planning Board.

Mr. Laferte disagreed and said the last thing on the agenda is the public comment. The Chairman gives the public an opportunity to speak as the very last thing and there is usually no one there he said. He added there are also opportunities during the meeting if someone wishes to speak.

Mr. Orvis suggested the public comment be put at the beginning of the meeting as the other boards do.

Mr. Laferte disagreed and said it should be at the end of the meeting so the attendees can talk about what happened during the meeting.

Mrs. King asked about someone wishing to speak to the Planning Board about something that is not on the agenda that meeting.

Ms. McKenney said the problem with that is some people may not want to or are not able to stay until the end of the meeting.

Ms. Roy-Palmer said the Planning Board has to determine their agenda.

Ms. Hardin asked if someone should follow up with the Planner or the Town Administrator to find out when the next joint meeting will be held.

Mrs. Titus said she felt confident that they are doing their jobs and that someone would notify them when the Planner is ready to request that another joint board meeting be scheduled.

Mrs. King suggested someone ask the Planning Board if they are looking at any zoning changes for Town Meeting next March.

Mr. Laferte said he intends to try to keep the EDC updated with a report at each meeting about what happened at the last Planning Board meeting. He said if the EDC would like something from the Planning Board he would relay their questions/requests to the board as their representative.

Mr. Orvis said if the Planner and Town Administrator are not ready to meet with the boards before October, the EDC should request a meeting with the Planning Board at their meeting on the first Tuesday in October to discuss the potential zoning changes.

Mr. Laferte said the Planning Board Chairman David Kestner agreed to meet with the EDC any time with some notice to get it included on the meeting agenda.

Consensus of the committee was to put the goal of engaging with a UNH economic development program aside until the Planner completes his research and to work on the following short term goals:

- 1). To look into featuring businesses at TD Bank as a way to support local business (Ms. Hardin),
- 2). To look for other locations in town to feature local businesses (Municipal Building lobby?)
- 3). Put the EDC monthly newsletter on the bulletin board in front of the Municipal Office Building,
- 4). Update the information in the EDC folders (Mrs. Titus),
- 5). Print copies of the newsletter for distribution around town (Mrs. Titus),
- 6). To request the Welfare Director/ EDC Administrative Assistant's e-mail address be modified to include "EDC" or "economic development" in the address,
- 7). Contact the state Liquor Commission and Rite Aid concerning future plans for the Farmington liquor store and pharmacy (Mr. Orvis)
- 8). To request the EDC meeting information on the Town website be corrected
- 9). Investigate ways to try to include more artisans and craftspeople downtown.

Mrs. King told the committee she obtained permission to have a mural painted on the side of the Subway building downtown. She said the owner requested to be shown the design to be painted and suggested there should be some sort of legal paperwork to be signed before the artistry begins. The committee needs to figure out how to move forward with the project such as advertising, picking a theme/design for the mural and who will do the art work she said. She said the local owner of the Cumberland Farms store refused the proposal but said she planned to take the request "up the chain of command" to the corporate level to try to get approval for the beautification project.

Consensus of the committee was to plan to have the mural(s) painted in the spring and to contact the high school to see if there is any interest in being involved with the project. Members will continue the planning discussion at the next meeting.

6). Master Plan: Tabled

Consensus of the members was to table further discussion of updating the Master Plan until after the Planner presents the results of his research at the next joint boards meeting.

7). Planning Board Report- July 18, 2017 Public Hearing:

New Applications Guide- Mr. Laferte said the Planning Board gave final approval to the Planning Applications Guide that was developed by the board and the Planning Dept. He explained that the hand out will give people information about planning and zoning applications, frequently asked questions, what to expect after the application is submitted and contact information for the Planning/Codes Dept.

Ms. Hardin asked if the guide is available on the Town website.

Mr. Laferte said he did not know if it has been posted to the website.

Ms. Roy-Palmer suggested that a copy of the guide be included in each of the EDC folders.

Minor Site Plan Review for Henderson Hydroseeders- Mr. Laferte reported that a new company recently began operations in the building at the rear of lot behind Honey Dew Donuts. The application was approved to allow the manufacturing of hydroseeding equipment which is then sold locally and worldwide. The husband and wife owners of the business may be looking to hire more employees next year he said.

Minor Site Plan Review for Friends of Farmington- Mr. Laferte said the non-profit group received approval to utilize the second floor of the former Mason's Building for up to 4 start-up businesses and the third floor for recreation and community use.

Minor Site Plan Review for ACM Specialized Materials- Mr. Laferte said the board continued the June hearing regarding the application to allow the operation of a metals and automotive recycling facility (the Metal Farm) at the former Davidson Rubber facility on Paulsen Road. He said the discussion included the violations of the original Site Plan Conditions of Approval and the existing site conditions resulting in the approval of the application which now includes 11 Conditions of Approval. He said the applicant then said he intends to go before the Zoning Board of Adjustment seeking a Variance to hold auctions at the site.

Ms. Hardin asked what type of auctions would be held there.

Mr. Laferte said the applicant plans to auction vehicles, antiques and various other "stuff".

Mrs. King said he also offered to hold an auction to benefit the Friends of Farmington.

Committee members thanked Mr. Laferte for his efforts in keeping them up to date with the Planning Board activities.

Mr. Laferte noted the growth of the committee and the progress being made compared to when the committee was first formed and encouraged them to meet with the Planning Board and keep everyone going in the same direction.

8). Natural Gas-Tabled:

Mr. Orvis said he was unable to contact the company due to some health issues. He said he will contact the company representative and report back to the committee at next month's meeting.

9). Old Business:

ATV Trails- Mr. Orvis said he has tried to stir up some interest in off-road recreational vehicles and has received mostly positive comments but can't seem to get anyone to step up to the plate to do anything about it. He said he posted an article on Face Book about allowing towns and cities to have local control over who uses the local rail trails rather than being restricted by federal law. Up until about 2 years ago the rail trails were being used by ATV's and then someone read the law and discovered that motorized wheeled vehicles can't use the rail trails. He said some campgrounds rely on the ATV riders for their "bread and butter" as they camp there for easy access to the rail trails. He said that from Rochester south there is a lot of use the rail trails but the trails north of Rochester are not getting much use except for snow mobiles during the winter. Mr. Orvis said he planned to attend a Selectmen's meeting to see if there is any interest in the Farmington board joining in with Claremont/Haverhill in a letter to our Congressional delegation

asking them to support a change to the federal law that would allow local control over who uses the trails in their communities.

Mrs. Titus asked if someone would be available to speak to the committee about recreational vehicle trail use.

Mr. Orvis said he would contact Program Specialist Chris Gamache of NH Dept. of Revenue Administration, Bureau of Trails to see if he would attend an EDC meeting to speak on the issue. Mrs. Titus suggested they wait to hear from Mr. Gamache before attending a Board of Selectmen meeting so there would be more information to provide to the board.

Farmington Business Directory- Mrs. Titus said she has been working on updating the Business Directory and has also contacted about 20 businesses to see if they would be interested in being featured as a Business of the Month in the EDC monthly newsletter. She said she has received a few responses so far and it is taking her longer to complete the project that expected due to some changes to their contact information.

10). New Business:

Mr. Orvis noted that people say a particular type of business should be located in Farmington and asked how to get a business to come to town.

Mrs. Titus said several businesses were sent letters inviting them to come to town.

Mr. Orvis said he would like to see an old fashioned hardware store in Farmington but did not know how to convince one to come here.

Ms. Hardin said they must be convinced they will have customers and a good chance of succeeding here.

11). Any Other Business to come before the Committee:

Meeting Agenda- the agenda for the Sept. meeting will include Pledge of Allegiance, Public Comment, Review of Minutes, Newsletter, Update Goals, ATV Trails, Planning Board, Natural Gas, Old Business, New Business, Any Other Business, Next Meeting Date and Adjournment.

Presentation Request- Ms. Roy-Palmer said she would like to schedule a presentation to the committee regarding the exploremoosemountains.org website and "The Moose" Facebook page which feature destinations and special events/activities in the 7 towns in the Moose Mountains region. She said the group will have a booth at the Hay Day celebration and she will bring some rack cards for the committee to review at the next meeting.

12). Next Meeting: Tuesday, Sept. 12, 2017 at 6 p.m.

13). Adjournment:

Motion: (Titus, second Laferte) to adjourn the meeting passed unanimously at 7:15 p.m.

Respectively submitted

Kathleen Magoon, Recording Secretary

Randy Orvis, Chairman

