

Economic Development Advisory Committee

3.18.09 Meeting minutes

Americana Room – Hampshire Hills

Present:

Rich Ball, Cirtronics Corporation
Tracy Bardsley, Do-it
Brad Chappell, Chappell Tractor
Matt Ciardelli, Ciardelli Fuel Co
George Infanti, Milford Paint & Wallpaper
Heather Leach, Centrix Bank
Tom Sapienza, Hampshire Hills Sports Club
Sean Trombly, Trombly Gardens
Dale White, Leighton A White, Inc

Rosie Deloge, Milford School District representative
Janet Langdell, Planning Board representative
John McCormack, TIFD representative
Walter Murray, Water & Sewer Commission representative
Bill Parker, Director Community Development
Chris Costantino, Conservation Commission representative

Shirley Wilson, Recording secretary

T. Sapienza called the meeting to order at 7:40AM.

G. Infanti asked that he be listed as “present” for the 3/11/09 meeting, and then made a motion to accept the minutes as amended. S. Trombly seconded and all in favor.

B. Parker distributed copies of a sample recommendation and a reformatted summary and recommendations listing.

Priority rankings discussion:

T. Sapienza said that Bill compiled everyone’s priorities and the number one priority was overwhelmingly for Municipal Policies and Procedures. He then reviewed previous meeting discussion and summarized the findings and recommendations for Policies and Procedures.

S. Trombly said one of our goals can be to have a streamlined process, easily navigable and to maintain the community character that we want. T. Sapienza said that once again ties into our draft vision statement that we can use as a point of leverage; *As the hub of the Souhegan Valley, Milford shall continue to develop a diversified, growing, and sustained economy by supporting existing businesses and employers, recruiting compatible business, and providing a business-friendly environment through promotion, supportive government, commitment to infrastructure improvements and maintenance, and land use policy that reflects its rich community character.*

J. McCormack said most businesses have a set of key objectives that cascade down, manage specific targets and are reviewed quarterly or annually. How will these recommendations fit in within the Select Board’s management structure? Is there a structure and process in place so that the various departments and committees would have a subset of those objectives?

B. Parker said the Selectmen go through a process at the beginning of each new term where they establish and set broad goals for the year, but not necessarily objectives or actions that they will accomplish. However, they may work with Guy and Guy does require the department heads to come up with goals and provide quarterly reports both individually as department heads and by department. J. McCormack asked if that information was shared with other departments because that is part of the concern expressed around this table, that one department doesn’t know what the other is doing. Everybody is kind of in isolation. The challenge is to integrate and share the

objectives; to pass on subsets of larger objectives to departments. Unless there is a way to ensure engagement, how can our recommendations be effective; that is just basic management. J. Langdell asked if this then would be a recommendation from this group that the Town, by the Select Board, implement a strategic planning process in order to be successful. J. McCormack added management by objectives is shared and cascaded both ways. B. Parker said that the Select Board has gotten much better over the past five or six years, but they do get caught up with and pulled into the day to day issues rather than long range vision and strategic planning. Their agendas are more condensed and much more is left to Guy; however, while they have a broad goal of economic development there is no specific policy regarding for Guy and this board and the departments to make sure economic development happens and how to do it.

T. Sapienza said as an advisory committee, we need to sell our vision and convince all the groups. R. Deloge said until the Select Board agrees with our vision and makes the commitment, we will continue to talk about process and offered an example from the School Board. Until we implemented the curriculum development process cycle, things were very haphazard and individual building oriented. We outlined three year cycles and created a process on how to look at the curriculum, how to make revisions, how to budget and implement. This has been in place for eight years now and the School Board knows the importance of the process and that the particular cycle is an integral part of the budgeting process. There is a shared vision.

D. White said we are an economic development advisory committee. What we create for the Select Board has got to be straightforward, simple and clear. They need to hear hard cold facts from us on how to develop economically. We need to make changes now, so this vision has to be bought by the Selectmen who change out every three years and passed on to the people who will be working here for the next five, ten and twenty years. Economic development is maintaining the tax base. He then referenced a breakfast story from the Milford Diner regarding parking on the oval which led into a lengthy discussion about parking and BOS action.

H. Leach said part of the reason the School Board curriculum works is that it provides a systematic way to make sure the board doesn't lose sight of what they want to do and a systematic way of how to hold people accountable. One of our recommendations should be to request the Selectmen come up with a systematic way to address these issues and get people moving in the same direction and hold them accountable. R. Deloge said we could request that they create a structured systematic way to address certain priorities, for example Economic development. The objective would be to maintain and improve the tax base with one segment being maintain what we have and a second segment being how to add new. B. Parker agreed that we need to give the Selectmen a framework to react to.

T. Sapienza said he would like to see an attitude shift from an arbitrary, black and white to communicating and working together, for both the town and businesses. It is important for the town to understand businesses' current frustrations and for businesses to buy into the town's vision. J. Langdell added that the other piece is to also get the community to participate. It is a two way street and maybe one of our suggestions should be education via PEG and the website.

R. Ball agreed that keeping it simple is very important and said it seems that the structure of our report is already done; these recommendations highlight and outline the areas that need action. Our report needs to contain a comprehensive simple scope of what we think economic development is, how it affects the town and why it is important and include the vision statement. Our report can only suggest strategies because they differ from one person or board to another and we need to be careful because it is not our goal, objective or ability to develop the strategies that should be implemented. In our scope we can include a detailed list from which the Selectmen can then develop a strategy for action. T. Sapienza said that the Selectmen know their role and we can only advise them on how to tie into that vision. J. McCormack agreed saying that the overall mechanism needs some work and hopefully we can encourage a means for regular review that will ensure a process that treats these recommendations in a coordinated and organized way. It is still incumbent on us to point to some examples of implementation that will carry on for the longer term.

B. Chappell said we are at the critical point of how to present this. We have a lot of the issues and they have been prioritized. We have some areas of recommendation; however, it is important to highlight the problems and specifics from the initial roundtable through our discussions so that they are aware of how we got to this point.

We do need to suggest recommendations on simple and basic level. We can also create more details for a second presentation.

T. Sapienza said one of our recommendations is to establish an ongoing EDAC and one of the priorities of that group can be to review how things are proceeding.

J. Langdell said from her experience on the Planning Board, the Selectmen are looking for recommended strategies or action steps. They are insightful as to what is going on in town as far as the big picture and we should put the detail into the report. They may not act on all recommendations, but this will give them some place to start and that is the advisory level and consultation they are looking for. She then explained the strategic planning process for the Facilities Committee which came from the CIP committee, the Planning Board and the Facilities committee. We engaged the Select Board in an annual process, much like this group has been talking about. This is only the first year, but we got stakeholder groups together to review where we are at in terms of our facilities master planning for the CIP to help the Select Board do their overall goal setting and to drive where the CIP committee is going for the upcoming year. We are discussing a similar process whereby an ongoing economic development council takes on that role and works with the Select Board and the Planning Board to review our master plan around economic development. What is the climate, and are there things we need to change or revise annually?

G. Infanti spoke from a Selectmen's perspective saying that this committee has got some great recommendations, but the Select Board's agenda is full; including many minor things and they are volunteers. So we need to give recommendations based on specific reasons and give them a path with ways they can follow up. Outline a plan of action and suggestions on how to address and implement these recommendations. Their goals are set in March and then reviewed at the end of the year. Most years nothing changes because the goals are so broad.

M. Ciardelli agreed and said he was in favor of the sample recommendation sheet. It has the vision statement and all we need to do is add the goal, then draft it. Dale's goal "to support current businesses" for Municipal Policies and Procedures was good. B. Parker said it would be easier for him to draft the document. R. Deloge said that we are ready to create a draft that compiles the progress this group has made. We can format what we have and bring it back to the committee to review. B. Chappell suggested modifying the format to start with the goal, then recommendations, the reasons and then list resources. J. Langdell said that the layout is generally a) finding of facts, b) the goal, c) the recommendations, and d) the action steps. Discussion on the format followed. B. Parker offered to put a draft together for review by the committee. The committee can react to that draft and add notes, comments and revisions at that time.

H. Leach asked how to capture the relationship of the ongoing committee and the recommendations. B. Parker said he and Janet had discussed that early on and possibly a smaller group from this group could be appointed by the Select Board. J. Langdell said that the ongoing EDAC could fill the ombudsman role. Wouldn't this group be able to offer the best guidance with all our varied representation? H. Leach said going forward, a group of five would have a wider net and be in touch of what is out there to get businesses into the channel which is a separate issue from getting businesses through the pipeline. It would be good for the town to have a knowledgeable group comprised of Do-it, a representative of Souhegan Valley Chamber of Commerce, and various local businesses. The group could advertize and make it known that this is an important entity in our community for both existing businesses and new businesses.

B. Chappell said that early on we discussed carrots for economic development and nowhere is this actually addressed in the recommendations. D. White said it could go in land use, under incentives to market what we do have. B. Parker stated he would add that to the sheet. T. Bardsley referenced her email dated 3/13/09 and commented that was one of the vehicles for recruitment.

Both Brad and Rosie volunteered to help draft the documents. There was more discussion then consensus for B. Parker to do the complete draft. D. White suggested compressing all the recommendations and to keep it simple. T. Sapienza said five recommendations may be a good number, so we can focus on the important ones. He then asked if anything else was missing before Bill started. W. Murray said to put any notes in email and share with the group. D. White said in fairness to town employees they are inundated with paperwork; permitting,

documentation and reporting. This has to not add or create more work and to help things flow. R. Deloge asked for an outline or draft to review prior to the meeting. B. Parker said he will look at his schedule but due to time constraints he could get something out by March 30th and he will get Rosie a format.

R. Ball said maybe we have uncovered a different issue in that Milford doesn't have the right government structure to move forward. Maybe this is a point in time that we suggest having full time employees handle these issues and maybe we should be a city in stead of a town. Maybe that will make things run more smoothly. G. Infanti agreed saying that the Town Administrator has been given much more authority from the Select Board. Things are changing and that time may not be that far away. Town government is in the process of changing and volunteer time is changing so the big picture needs to be looked at. D. White added that the core issues are still there no matter what form of government we have.

B. Chappell inquired about the reporting structure of town departments and the autonomous groups; discussion followed. J. Langdell reiterated that every recommendation lately has included increasing communication with the BOS/municipal government, Water & Sewer Commissioners and School government. We struggle with getting the municipal and school sides talking more and we need to do better with that for the "town." G. Infanti said we are all one team, especially when you write your check for taxes. D. White said that even within the town, all the other departments don't mesh and the boards don't mesh. B. Chappell said our presentation and recommendations should be made to all those heads just mentioned. J. Langdell suggested a joint meeting and that it be video taped for the public. J. McCormack said it has been good that we have had representation from all three segments on this committee; BOS, School government and Water/Sewer Commission.

The next meeting date was set for Wednesday April 1st in the Americana Room at 7:30AM

T. Sapienza asked that everybody email their comments to Bill Parker for inclusion in the recommendation.

G. Infanti made a motion, M. Ciardelli seconded and all voted in favor to adjourn the meeting at 9:00.