

Economic Development Advisory Council

9.14.11 Meeting minutes

Americana Room – Hampshire Hills

Present:

Brad Chappell, Chappell Tractor
Matt Ciardelli, Ciardelli Fuel Co
Rosie Deloge, Milford SAU
Tracy Hutchins, Do-it
George Infanti, Milford Paint
Heather Leach, Centrix Bank
John McCormack, TIFD
Mike Putnam, BOS representative
Michelle Sampson, Wadleigh Memorial Library
Tom Sapienza, Hampshire Hills Sports Club
Penny Seaver, Smith, Seaver & Bean
John Siergiewicz, Hollis Line Machine
Sean Trombly & guest, Trombly Farms
Dale White, Leighton A White, Inc

Excused:

Chris Costantino, Conservation Commission
Janet Langdell, Planning Board
Sean Trombly, Trombly Gardens

Gary Chabot, NH Department of Economic Development

Bill Parker, Director Community Development
Shirley Wilson, Recording secretary

T. Sapienza called the meeting to order at 7:30AM. He then said it is with much regret that he must step down as chairperson. He has tremendously enjoyed working with every person on this committee but due to his current workload he will be taking a leave of absence from the committee, effective immediately. Thank you everyone for your support and for this opportunity. J. McCormack thanked Tom on behalf of the group; you were a most effective spokesperson to advance economic development in Milford. You have done a great job and the group and Milford have been well served by your efforts.

T. Sapienza made a motion to recommend Vice Chair, Matt Ciardelli to take over the chairman position as he is extremely capable and highly energetic. Change is good and offers a different perspective. J. McCormack seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

M. Ciardelli stepped up to chair the meeting and said he is willing to do this for a little while but this will be challenging during the winter months, so he will accept any assistance. G. Infanti stated that Matt will have the committee's full support.

D. White nominated Penny Seaver as vice-chair. G. Infanti seconded and all voted in favor. P. Seaver said she was honored and humbled but cannot respond right now. She will however, talk to Matt and Bill offline to see how best to handle moving forward.

B. Parker said that over the next few months, with the zoning changes and initiatives moving forward, the hope is for EDAC to appear and speak in favor of the upcoming changes and warrant articles in public rather than hold meetings.

Minutes:

G. Infanti made a motion to approve the minutes from the 5/11/11 meeting. M. Putnam seconded and all in favor.

Hotel Feasibility Study Results:

B. Parker said the hotel sub-committee received the final report in July. The basic conclusion is that they looked at the leisure demand, group demand and corporate demand and said that Milford could possibly support a 60-65 room hotel of the brand type such as a Comfort Inn, Hampton Inn or Fairfield Inn. Where Milford falls short is in the corporate room night to keep the hotel full during the week and that is the key to getting somebody to invest in

the project. Overall we were relatively encouraged by the report and are cautiously optimistic. Copies were sent to Andre Tromblay of Bank of New England, who is reviewing it and to Dave Roedel of Roedel Companies and Steve Duprey, but they had no response yet. Most of the communication with Pinnacle was through email, but they would be willing to meet with this group and we may have some funds still available. J. McCormack asked if Pinnacle suggested any 3 month or 6 month next action on their part. B. Parker replied no, they just submitted their report.

T. Hutchins said one of the questions that we asked developers was if they would consider looking at Milford for a hotel with this just preliminary study or would they or their financing need a full study to go forward. We are waiting on their responses. We as a committee need to see what we can do to incentivize developers to come in to town, if we want a hotel here. B. Parker said we should send this to our contributors and to as many people in the business community as we can, if the committee feels it's time. G. Chabot mentioned sending a copy to Michael Bergeron; he has many contacts. P. Seaver will get it to the Norwood Group, Grubb & Ellis and Prudential-Verani's commercial division. Tracy will follow up with a phone call to Steve Duprey. B. Parker will send to May Balsama and the property owners of the potential hotel sites. H. Leach suggested putting a link on the website and to tag it for searching. B. Parker explained that the website was currently under development, but we'll try to work that out.

Planning efforts

Community and Commerce District:

B. Parker said that the Planning Board has been looking at the whole West Milford area for a while and with some of the conditions of the P&S for Andover, staff has been working with the Planning Board to develop a new zoning overlay district. B. Parker then distributed the information that went out this summer for the Commerce and Community District which includes the TIF district, many industrial and commercial properties in West Milford, and the undeveloped areas adjacent to the Brox Property, the Hawes and Lorden land. It's quite a sizeable district and with strong Planning Board support we are proposing a set of regulations that will help to streamline the permitting within the district, master plan the area and encourage development by allowing much more mixed use, a higher density, to make it more of a community that is walkable, sustainable and environmentally friendly and to encouraging business. The Planning Board should start review of the first draft of the regulations next week. The Andover Group is very current with this and although they haven't had involvement with the drafting, they will have input. Their engineer has been to the review session and we just have to be careful to stay within the state law and constraints. Sarah has done a very good job moving this forward. It will have much more flexible site design standards. The intent is that a developer comes in with a master plan for a specific area, gets the master plan approved and a site plan comes into the office where a review team looks at it and if it meets the approved master plan criteria, the building permit will be issued. Planning Board involvement will be minimal. There will be a technical design review committee composed of town staff and one Planning Board member. Justifiably the Planning Board will want some say in what will be going on but the main intent is for the district to represent what the Planning Board wants.

J. McCormack asked if we were still on the Andover timetable and where the initiatives stand. B. Parker said we should schedule a meeting with Andover soon. We hope to have the regulations distributed for public hearings in November and December. The public outreach effort has been really good. Sarah Marchant did a PSA on the town's website and Planning Board members were at the transfer station and Oval one Saturday morning. Many people were supportive of this, even for the housing saying we need to address the needs of the community. Sarah and the Planning Board were also at the lunchtime concerts in July.

G. Infanti said that will make the difference this year; people working and selling this. We really need to let people know about this. B. Parker referenced the article and letter to the editor in the Cabinet last week.

J. McCormack referenced the past trip-ups, and inquired where the budget committee appointments stood and can they get pulled in early? M. Putnam said that the new members have been appointed and the Selectmen are talking about redoing the process where the BOS and the BAC are back in the same room.

R. Deloge asked if Bill could talk to Mike McInerney about putting power point slides up to get information to that segment of the population. T. Hutchins added that there will also be a booth at the Pumpkin Festival.

M. Ciardelli inquired about the housing parameters. J. McCormack said Andover wanted to open up the possibility of putting housing in with the industrial and commercial, with the premise being to utilize the land area on weekends and to just open up our thinking and to be more flexible. It's got to look good and make sense. B. Parker said that the intent is to accommodate other designs and choices rather than the box style apartments, such as attached patio homes. Multi-family is a reasonable and affordable housing choice if it's done correctly. Looking back ten or fifteen years ago, everybody's concerns were with school enrollments, but the demographics have changed where the houses are much smaller and the schools now have capacity. We will need housing for the aging population. Times have changed and a big part of that is getting the old philosophy of the community changed around to our current reality. J. McCormack said a lot of our young people are moving away and we have to come up with affordable housing for both the younger and older populations. Where are the young people going to live who will drive the ambulances to get us around? T. Hutchins said Sarah mentioned that a lifestyle center could be a possibility and explained that they are found in other areas of the country and are similar to a mall but look like a downtown. Is that what Andover is looking for? B. Parker replied that could be a possibility. Once the regulations are in place and they can get out and market it he foresees significantly different types of development in the district. We know there is sensitivity to not detracting from the Oval so that all has to be balanced and the key is to make sure the Oval maintains its character as the hub of Milford. H. Leach said mixed use for the West Elm St Corridor was surprisingly well received and we got back a lot of really positive feedback. B. Parker said Andover has told us in order to help get the commercial/industrial going out there, that infrastructure and the housing need to go in first. We have only had around twelve permits issued for new construction this year as opposed to seventy or eighty in past years. Most of it is infill and the reserve. P. Seaver said if 50 to 100 units were available in that district today, she could fill them with young families right now who can't afford any of the existing inventory in town and are going elsewhere. J. McCormack said that is a big part of education.

D. White said it would be good for us to reduce the timeframe for reviews, drainage, and engineering. It is out of control and has to get better. B. Parker said we have to be prepared for what is coming down the road for Stormwater. M. Ciardelli said it was very expensive to prepare their stormwater plans but that is a federal requirement. D. White referenced the project in West Milford and said there are drainage cost overruns that might put the project in jeopardy. Is there anything we can do? B. Parker said we have to continually look at the issues and figure them out. It is onerous for both the Town to enforce and for the developer to build.

West Elm Street Overlay District:

B. Parker distributed a draft of the proposed guidelines. H. Leach explained that this district is a separate area, but it goes in tandem with the Commerce and Community District. We are sensitive to the fact that we don't want this overlay district to jeopardize the Commerce and Community District, but to augment it. Frankly, the West Elm Street Overlay District is the gateway into the Commerce and Community District. We've done surveys with several different groups and taken all the results to come up with some recommendations. We're trying to make a lot of the details for retail identical to the Nashua Street Overlay District. There will be more guidelines in place for the industrial businesses and the superfund sites along Elm St that will most likely go large commercial or industrial just by the nature of what is in the ground there. These guidelines address streetscaping, restricted entry to properties via curb cuts, and multi-use properties. We are trying to do a set of regulations and a guidebook to make it as user-friendly as possible. B. Parker said this is yet another way to streamline the process. It should be quicker if the developer knows what the town wants to see ahead of time and it is not as costly if you can include these guidelines with new construction at the start of the design process. G. Infanti said it offers clarity and can reduce the number of Planning Board meetings. H. Leach said it will also make communication better. We've looked at the first draft and NRPC has it back for reformatting. We are scheduled to present to the Planning Board next Tuesday and for public hearings this fall. One thing to note is that the survey responses were remarkably consistent.

Economic Revitalization Zone (ERZ):

B. Parker said discussion on ERZs has come up before with the subcommittee and this group, but Hendrix approached the State and then Gary contacted the Town to move forward. B. Parker then distributed a map dated 8/31/11 that established the ERZ area which went before the BOS on Monday night (9/12/11) and was approved by a vote of 5-0. It established an area or district for companies to develop underutilized land or vacant land, to upgrade machinery or make improvements that would qualify them to apply for a credit from business profits or

business enterprise taxes. The Town's responsibility was to identify the zone that covers much of the TIF District, portions of the Commerce and Community District, and all the Commercial/Industrial area in West Milford. We will submit the paperwork and map to the state and hopefully they will approve it.

G. Chabot said he met with Guy, Bill and Sarah recently and from our initial look, the map was leap years ahead of some of the submittals we've gotten and it seemed to meet all our criteria. If everything is in order with the application, it can be turned around in one day. We will review everything and make sure all the addresses and map/lot numbers are listed so that when we get application from a company we can instantly tell where it is. The final step is a recommendation for the commissioner to sign it.

The process for a business to submit application is tied to a calendar year and that window of application is approximately from January 1st through March 1st. Applications are available for downloading on our website and we have step by step guidelines that explains the process. B. Parker said we would publish that information on our website. G. Chabot explained that a business would come in with application after they have made improvements to the building or equipment and raised the assessed value x% or equipment value that creates a financial or investment threshold and they add jobs. The higher the salaries, the higher the potential tax credit, so it incentivizes good paying jobs and the credit is up to \$200,000 per company, \$40,000 per year over a five year period. There is a ceiling at the State level of \$850,000 in any one year, so it may be pro-rated but last year we didn't even reach \$450,000. B. Parker noted that the program was recently extended; however, is set to expire in 2015. It is political with the State trying to balance the budget by cutting programs to reduce spending, so this may be something that EDAC may want to take a local role in and talk to our representatives. G. Chabot said the economy is soft right now, but there is a manufacturing sector that is growing and doing very well. B. Parker noted that the site plan for Airmar Corporation's new 52,000SF facility which has been on hold for about two years may be moving forward, so we need to make sure they know about this program. This may also be good incentive for Hendrix to stay in Milford with any future expansion.

B. Chappell said once this is in place, it might be good to send out communication to some of our existing businesses. T. Hutchins said we should make use of our website.

G. Chabot said the town of Hudson put signs up at the entrances to the industrial park on Executive Park Drive that state "You are now entering an Economic Revitalization Zone." They got the signs from the Department of Safety in Concord and are professionally done. G. Infanti said that would at least perk someone's interest. B. Parker said he would follow up on that.

Pending Development:

The primary development in town has been restaurants;
Memphis BBQ & Blues is going into the former Santos Dumont building on 101 in West Milford,
Los Tapatios, a Mexican restaurant, is going into the former TJ Dooleys and Shenanigans in Shaws Plaza
Sake House, a Japanese steakhouse, is going into the former Kowloon Wasabi location on Elm St.

B. Parker said hopefully Airmar will be coming back. P. Seaver noted that she had an inquiry from a national chain regarding 1 Nashua St, the former Boston Shoe Store but she doesn't have any information yet. B. Parker added that there has also been something in the works for the Bradler building but we don't have any details.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Subcommittee Reports:

Land Use

The committee is actively meeting; See Planning Efforts.

Website Development/Branding

T. Hutchins said branding has taken a break until some of what has been discussed today comes out. B. Parker said we are still working out some website development issues that when fixed, branding can latch onto. T. Hutchins said there is a lot in the works and when that is finalized, the branding and marketing will begin, especially for the west end of town.

J. McCormack said our capability to do these overlay presentations really makes it look like we really know what we are doing. Kudos to Sarah Marchant.

Policies and Procedures

J. McCormack said our next step is to meet with the new department heads but we should first meet with Guy to see if we are still on track.

Town Budget season:

B. Parker said he just wanted the committee to be aware that there may be items to weigh in on.

Capital Improvements Plan:

B. Parker said the big ticket will be the new ambulance facility. The Facilities Committee has identified a piece of land on Cottage St, the former Fuller Oil garage. We would also like to push forward the warrant articles that failed last year to establish the special purpose fund to go for the Brox property infrastructure.

Next meeting: The next regular EDAC meeting is scheduled for November 2, 2011.

The meeting was adjourned promptly at 9:00AM.