

Economic Development Advisory Council

4.4.12 Meeting minutes

Americana Room – Hampshire Hills

Present:

Matt Ciardelli, Ciardelli Fuel Co
Chris Costantino, Conservation Commission
Mark Fougere, Board of Selectmen
Tracy Hutchins, DO-IT
George Infanti, Milford Paint
Janet Langdell, Planning Board
Sean Trombly, Trombly Gardens
Dale White, Leighton A White, Inc.

Excused:

John McCormack, TIFD

Bill Parker, Director Community Development
Shirley Wilson, Recording secretary

M. Ciardelli called the meeting to order at 7:30AM and welcomed Mark as the new BOS representative.

Minutes:

J. Langdell made one correction to the minutes on pg. 4 stating that the last line should read “fund” instead of fun book. D. White made a motion to approve the amended minutes from 1/11/12. G. Infanti seconded and all in favor.

Community Development Director Updates, town vote results, pending development:

B. Parker said the town voting went very well in Milford, especially regarding some of the land use changes proposed. The Community and Commerce District passed; so if we get access off 101, and if the economy turns around, and when developers find Milford ready, that area should open up. The West Elm Street Gateway District passed, as did all the zoning changes proposed by the Planning Board. Additionally, the two warrant articles associated with the TIF District passed; to set up the funding for infrastructure improvements with the proceeds from the sale of the police station and the ability for the BOS to put money into that fund. They are good tools to have in place to spur development out there, whether it is Andover or not. The TIF Board meets next Thursday and we will get an update from Andover Development who has until 4/15/12 to exercise their options on the former Police Station site.

There has been discussion with several developers, in the office, primarily regarding residential development for mostly multifamily housing units. Last night the Planning Board heard discussion from Mark Prolman and the Dakota Group for fifty units of one and two bedroom apartments to go into the Pine Valley Mill and two 36 unit buildings to go in across the street on the vacant parcel 6/14. They plan on going to the ZBA for a variance later this month. M. Ciardelli asked if they had projections on the demand over there. B. Parker said they feel there is demand and it would consist of three phases, but the first would be the mill. The Planning Board had a lot of input and the initial concept very much conforms to the WEGD. J. Langdell said the price points would be \$650 for a one bedroom and under \$1,000 for a two bedroom unit. Their marketing analysis points to a need in Milford for those types of houses. Whitman Place in Tyngsboro, MA is a good example of one of their developments and for more information, google Dakota Partners out of Waltham, MA. They have developments underway and completed in many Boston communities with a focus on nice looking, affordable housing. They are looking to move quickly because they are working with the NH Financing Authority. They are also proposing to put the mill on the National Historic Registry. C. Costantino asked if this project would replace the proposed houses approved last year. B. Parker said yes that project became too expensive. They’ve already met with the Fire Department and Wilton Water. A discussion on utilities in that area ensued.

D. White inquired if the newly passed zoning changes would be developer friendly. B. Parker replied yes, there were mainly minor revisions and clarifications to the Ordinance. The Commerce & Community District is complicated but very development friendly and the whole intent is to expedite permitting. It is form based zoning that goes back to more traditional style development. J. Langdell added that 80% of the amendments were

tweaks. B. Parker said a minor amendment now adds the ability to put small apartments in commercial buildings in certain districts.

M. Ciardelli asked about the two projects on the oval. B. Parker said the Café should open in May and looks beautiful. We continue to work with the owner of 1Nashua St who has plans for a possible second story. It is an ongoing project.

Goals and initiatives for 2012

T. Hutchins gave an update on the rebranded Milford Improvement Team and said we've been trying to figure out how to move forward over the past few months. We will retain some of our main events like the pumpkin festival but we are looking at becoming a membership based organization. Over the past twenty years we've been dedicated to downtown but that has sort of turned into a one way street where we get more complaints than support from the downtown merchants. We have a new website where we could do marketing services that would be a benefit to members and we will be rolling that out soon. Our new website encourages realtors to list their properties at no charge and we do have Community events posted by the various groups in town such as the Rotary, Lions, and the library. We're hoping our website could be a one-stop place that anyone can go to, to find out what is going on in town. We are also looking for applicants for the revolving loan fund. There is \$25,000 that we can relend and distributed. The requirements are to be any business that is located on a gateway street. We're very excited about that. We're looking at signage at the gateways and we have a committee working on that project. We would like to incorporate granite but it will need to be break-away. We've been tossing around the idea of community based development projects and have had discussion about the Labonte Building, especially when work seemed to stall. It has been done in Bristol, VT and Hardwick, VT; kind of similar to a CSA for a farm where you have a project in town that needs to be rehabbed and you get investors or schedule work done in trade. It is fairly flexible. The real skillset that the MIT can bring to the Town and this Board is marketing. We could provide on-going marketing, communications and public relations

B. Parker brought up the signage and asked if you had gotten into the logo yet. T. Hutchins replied that they touched upon it a little and as of right now the sign will probably only have the town's name on it until the logo and branding is determined.

J. Langdell inquired how the MIT would interface with the Monadnock Community Development Corporation. T. Hutchins said they are a valuable resource, but we as a group haven't gotten so far yet as to how to do so. J. Langdell asked if there are other resources that we haven't tapped into for things we foster as a group. Also, it is important for the Planning Board to be aware of these changes as to not have incorrect expectations. T. Hutchins said they would like to come to the Planning Board and present the new organization at the same time as the signage is presented. J. Langdell brought up item #5, Community Outreach, in the EDAC fostering document which is all about the website and branding. While our website is certainly better than it was two years ago, do we have a message to bring to the Town of Milford regarding economic development? She then referenced Dover and Londonderry. M. Ciardelli said it seems like we have many moving pieces with the website, branding and Do-it's reorganization. How do we get to a place where we can change that group's mission? Discussion about the charge ensued.

B. Parker said the economic development message is what is important; Milford is open for development or whatever phrase is used and that is what will get worked into MIT's website and the town's economic development page on the website, which we have to get working on. J. Langdell said we may want to engage the BOS and parts of Town Hall to have a say in the sign. T. Hutchins added the people paying for the sign should have the say. J. Langdell stated that we are all trying to collaboratively and cooperatively work together on the bigger picture, but Milford doesn't have a brand or message. Look at the sign in Peterborough; it says exactly what Peterborough wants you to think about their town. B. Parker said it has to start with their work and then go to the Selectmen and then it can continue to move on. He referenced the proposed gateway sign from several years ago that didn't go anywhere because too many people got involved. D. White referenced Wilton's Main Street sign and said Milford is the granite town and that should be part of the breakaway sign. T. Hutchins said reconstituting the branding and marketing is a good idea to work towards cohesiveness. The issue with branding is that it will take a while to do a good branding campaign and there was some push back when we first presented the idea. J. Langdell said the current logo is a municipal logo, but the school doesn't use it. T. Hutchins said it is

the colors, the message and the ad campaign all of which is good and necessary, but her concern is that we develop it and go through the process only to not find funding to get the message out. J. Langdell inquired about raising funds. G. Infanti said if there was a plan, we could probably get money between the civic organizations and private trusts to make it happen without any town money. D. White said if you tie it to economic development, any good business owner will see the benefit of advertising for Milford. G. Infanti the recent voting sent a very clear message that Milford is ready to make a move. It is time and the Town has finally said that we're supportive of doing something for development. J. Langdell said if we had a plan, most of the Planning Board and all of EDAC would come to the BOS meeting to show support and make a statement. B. Parker said with branding back on, EDAC could be the lead group and then bring MIT and all the others in for support.

M. Ciardelli asked if MIT would support the EDAC efforts. T. Hutchins said she will continue to chair the group, so they would be involved. J. Langdell said we would be creating a joint venture with MIT as the quasi-marketing arm for the Town of Milford. MIT and the Town are both stakeholders so it could be a co-process. T. Hutchins said to be effective, we need stakeholders from all the various groups in town; Rotary, the fraternal organizations, the school. M. Ciardelli added that each of those groups have a representative at this committee. J. Langdell said they need to be part of the process but may or may not be at the table. T. Hutchins said we might be able to start marketing the message even before the branding gets going. We are not using the website to its full potential yet and we could start to list some of the properties with their contacts as other towns do. J. Langdell asked if she was referring to the MIT or the Town's website. B. Parker said there will be a clear link between the two. J. Langdell said if we're not in a position to create a real economic development website like Rochester or Dover, we have to have a smooth transition about where that list will be. B. Parker said his goal is to create that section and it can all be worked out. J. Langdell said that is a key piece and then campaign starts again to engage Guy or whomever to make sure the resources are available to accomplish that to make it a workable website that meets our design specs. M. Fougere said having an active website is vital but we need to be careful that MIT and the Town are not going in two different directions. There should be a seamless transition and link between the two. We definitely need an economic message on one of the websites that links to the other. J. Langdell said that presupposes that MIT, an external organization will buy into 100% of what we want them to do; again it's their website. How do we operationalize this and how do we pull all the diverse groups in to report the same clear message. B. Parker said it is a huge task we will just have to sit down and figure this all out. T. Hutchins said the initial committee consisted of Michelle Sampson, Bill, Rosie and Tom. B. Parker said he will send around a synopsis of the committees to all the members and seek participants. J. Langdell asked if this was the highest priority.

T. Hutchins said over the past few years we've done a good job with streamlining processes, we have a new website, and we're moving in a good direction but we haven't really developed or proposed a Business Development Policy at the town level. The Selectmen did make a commitment to EDAC, but what can we tangibly do to bring business in? M. Ciardelli said we are making progress with the recent town vote, the Commerce & Community District, and our discussion regarding getting links to available resources. J. Langdell said that is more about educating the business owner and Tracy is absolutely right, we don't have codified business development policy in this town to share with a potential developer coming into Town. M. Ciardelli said maybe we should utilize the other subgroups and pool our resources for the branding and marketing. T. Hutchins said this may be the next step; to research and put together a proposal for tangible incentives that we can put in place and take to the BOS. A policy from top down with the priorities, whether they be bringing x number of jobs to town or to develop a specific piece of land that we can take out and market. B. Parker said it is important to have the Selectmen make that final decision.

D. White said we have to look at the plusses and minuses and what we can actually do. J. Langdell added that it wasn't just about taxes but other types of incentives. D. White referenced a recent article in the Union Leader article regarding Rochester having provided some type of incentive.

B. Parker said we could see if Policies & Procedures would want to roll into an economic development policy committee because we have reps from water/sewer and TIFD who could pull in all the other parties. M. Ciardelli said their only plans were to follow up with folks who had done business in town such as contractors to see what their experience had been. B. Parker said they can still do the customer service survey.

D. White said the other item discussed was to duplicate the original roundtable to follow up on those original discussions and suggestions. This would be a good group, as business people, to bounce a policy change off. J. Langdell said it would also be a good group to give input for the Milford message/branding team. Once both groups get going they will get to a point where more stakeholders will need to get involved and a roundtable could update everyone as well as solicit information. We need to get the process started so we have a message to bring to the roundtable. D. White added that we would also need to work on some type of policy to bring forward. G. Infanti said with new faces, we may get a couple more volunteers and get fresh input. M. Ciardelli suggested pulling the entire EDAC together to bring up the items discussed today and possibly changing the configurations and names of the sub committees to start work for the roundtable. After a lengthy discussion, it was decided that a fall roundtable would be more realistic and still early enough to include for the 2013 ballot.

M. Fougere asked what does branding mean. B. Parker said the idea is to make Milford an identifiable location for people and businesses. T. Hutchins we thinking more in terms of cohesiveness in our message and marketing materials; a slogan, signage, brochures; things that are cohesive between the Town, the School, and the MIT. T. Hutchins referenced a power point from another town that hired a marketing consultant and explained that there is a methodology.

D. White said one of the messages we got from the original roundtable was that Milford wasn't as business friendly as we thought. While we did not get many specifics we did get a feel for some of the frustrations. EDAC has been trying to change that image and there have been tremendous changes made over the past two years. M. Fougere referenced the recent group discussion in Henniker and said that type of outreach is great but one on one can be beneficial also. M. Ciardelli said that was also part of the customer service survey for the Policies & Procedures group to go out and meet with individual businesses to get their input or bring in developers for a worksession. J. Langdell noted that the original round table in 2009 came out of a Planning Board initiative to get something going on economic development for the master plan that spawned into this larger group.

B. Parker said that the Policies & Procedures group should continue with the on-going follow up and help develop the policy to bring forward. D. White said that will carry a lot of weight with developers, if we listen to what their comments and experiences were. M. Ciardelli said Bill will get a list of 10-15 contractors/developers together and we can go with two to three people to do off-site interviews. B. Parker said we'll work out all the details.

D. White said Heather seems to have a knack for putting things together so maybe we can come up with some caveats that we could provide for future developers and Mark would also be an asset. B. Parker offered to put some verbiage together. J. Langdell said putting together a written business development policy is a natural next step that could eventually spin into some of the other things we've talked about here. G. Infanti said we could look at downtown development and PSNH's green incentives. J. Langdell said it would serve two purposes for the land use group to take this on; first because this was the path we were going down to enrich the resource linkages locally. She then referenced Dover's information booklet and said that most of the vis a vis economic development was not town generated initiatives

B. Parker said we could have three groups that will all play into each other as we report back and discussion ensued on the following:

1. Marketing
2. Policy
3. Business Resources

J. Langdell there has been discussion about creating a business development policy and asked which of the three current subcommittees would be responsible for writing the initial draft and the initial deliverable? B. Parker replied the Policies & Procedures group and ended a lengthy discussion by saying that we could do away with policies and procedures and rename one group to work on all policies. J. Langdell said that the Policies & Procedures group had some items they wanted to move forward. B. Parker said why couldn't they still do that. J. Langdell said we should look at the manpower and how to divide our limited volunteer resources. M. Ciardelli said policy is such a big chunk of the work and would it be possible to pull or incorporate Heather's land use group together with the policies & procedures group as they go hand in hand. G. Infanti said maybe this could be

a combined effort. T. Hutchins said business resources will be an integral part of the overall development policy. We need to be able to go to developers to market Milford and say that we're open for business, that Milford wants new business/new development and these are the resources that we can offer. We need an overall plan and business resources should be a sub-committee of policies & procedures. Branding is going to be separate and then marketing will be whatever policy ends up being.

B. Parker gave an overview of Policies & Procedures sub-committee work for Mark. M. Fougere inquired what the intended end result would be. D. White said we were looking at the departments' policies and procedures to see how the town was interacting with the marketplace, with the developers, and with the citizens, as well as interdepartmentally. J. Langdell said the other part, which is stated in our charge, is getting the Town Administrator onboard with the Selectmen to go top down with direction and policy to be pro-business development and pro-economic development. B. Parker said getting the BOS and Guy to tell the town departments that they need to be business friendly, is a key piece. He revised the groups as follows:

1. Policy
 - a. Business resources
 - b. On-going monitoring of procedures and policies
2. Branding/Website/Marketing

M. Ciardelli said he and Bill will send out an email to all the members to pull things together for the next meeting.

Other Business:

Next meeting: The next regular EDAC meeting will be determined at a later date.

G. Infanti made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:50AM. M. Fougere seconded and all in favor.

MINUTES OF THIS MEETING WERE APPROVED ON NOVEMBER 14, 2012.