

## **Economic Development Advisory Council**

### **1.14.15 Meeting minutes**

#### **Americana Room – Hampshire Hills**

*MINUTES ACCEPTED 3.11.2015*

#### **Present:**

Matt Ciardelli, Ciardelli Fuel Co - Chairman  
Chris Costantino, Milford Conservation Commission  
Lyle Fulkerson, HPM Insurance  
Wendy Hunt, MIT  
Don Jalbert, Milford HS Applied Technology Center  
Janet Langdell, Planning Board  
Heather Leach, First Colebrook Bank  
Penny Seaver, Bean Seaver & Smith  
Dale White, Leighton A White, Inc.

#### **Excused:**

David Hammer, Contemporary Chrysler  
Sean Trombly, Trombly Gardens

#### **Perspective members:**

Marcelle Oneail, Papa Joe's  
Jason Plourde, Tighe and Bond

Bill Parker, Director Community Development  
Mark Bender, Town Administrator  
Gary Chabot, NH DRED  
Shirley Wilson, Recording secretary

---

Matt Ciardelli called the meeting to order at 7:30AM. He introduced the council and welcomed perspective new member, Jason Plourde and Town Administrator, Mark Bender.

#### **Minutes:**

D. Jalbert requested that the date of the scrabble tournament be changed to 3/15/15 and the spelling of his name be corrected to Jalbert. D. White made a motion to accept the minutes from 9/24/14, as edited. C. Costantino seconded and all in favor.

#### **Proposed 2015 Warrant Articles**

B. Parker explained that the version distributed is still being edited at the Town Hall, but the intent will not change and said that EDAC's support will go a long way. M. Bender reiterated that this groups support would be appreciated.

#### **Library expansion**

B. Parker referenced the library's presentation at the last meeting and said he thought it was very good and he personally supports the project. L. Fulkerson agreed that the presentation was good and said he didn't realize there was any resistance to the project. The plan makes sense and seemed very well thought out. M. Bender noted that the Selectmen are not supporting this warrant article at this time, mainly because of the amount of the project in a tough year, especially with the infrastructure projects facing us. The library is important and he also was surprised that there were so many issues with the facility. The conceptual plan is a good plan and while there may be some concern bringing it so close to the street, it is an interesting project. Michele Sampson will make a presentation to the Selectmen next week and there will also be another library open house and public forum at the end of January. We'll see what the voters have to say. M. Oneail said that presentation changed her view. D. White said, as a taxpayer, he doesn't like to not support something that is good for the community and while he believes the town does need this, is this the right year when we have a 16% increase if all goes through. He referenced the joint meeting last year and said one of the things that came out of the meeting was that infrastructure was paramount. At a 16% tax increase, where and how can we continue to sustain everything. Where do we stop? The presentation spoke to the economic impact of the library, and he gets that, but you can't get to the library if we don't have roads. M. Bender said that was where the Selectmen were; is this the right year and is this the right building face we want in town. We have to make sure that when we do the library, we do it

right and have the right design. The tax impact for \$100,000 value is \$32.70 and includes demolition, building construction, site preparation and parking. W. Hunt stated that the parking alone will positively affect economic development. She understands the tax base and the balancing act, but if you look at this from the cost per day, it is a very busy place and is well used. In addition, the parking would definitely enhance the downtown area. B. Parker noted that we've been working hard to obtain easements for the South St project and the owner of Bravos was more comfortable knowing there could be more parking behind him because he's losing two spaces on the street. This is an important project for several reasons.

C. Costantino said this project has been part of the CIP for fifteen years and is included for 2015. The CIP process is to plan for long range and for that tax burden. C. Costantino noted that she is a trustee of the library, for full disclosure, and said there is a PSA on the library's website and it is very enlightening. The rendering also includes ghost people to give it more perspective. We are also so very fortunate to have Joel as the facility manager; he's done patch after patch and has saved the town thousands of dollars while keeping the facility going. I would argue that the library is infrastructure for this Town. Parking was listed as the #2 need for the facility. Growth is important and the library is a service to help facilitate that growth. I know it costs a lot of money, but keep in mind that costs will only be higher next year. This makes sense, and that's what Milford is all about.

L. Fulkerson said we've talked many times about the Oval being the economic hub of the community, so then the library becomes the cornerstone and is key in pulling people into the oval. J. Langdell inquired about non-resident passes and said that Wilton residents and Lyndeborough residents continually come to our library. They stop at a café or a shop; it is a big draw for the region. C. Costantino replied that the library issues 1,000-2,000 non-resident passes at \$75.00 annually. The cost is based on an average of what it costs the average Milford taxpayer and folks willingly pay. The library also belongs to a local consortium that adds use from other communities without passes. B. Parker said one has to weigh the mission of this group, economic development with personal support. J. Langdell said even being on the CIP doesn't mean that all the members support the project, it just means that it fits somewhere within the community's needs and the voters should decide.

D. White said this group uses a level, common sense approach and does a good job of looking at all the facts. L. Fulkerson said Dale's original comment was from a taxpayer. The charge of this group is economic development, so we should decide which articles will improve the economics within the community, separate and apart from how we feel as individuals. Does the library have a direct economic impact on the community. D. Jalbert said the school is trying to raise awareness about the illiteracy issue. Literacy can have an impact on economic development whether it be reading, writing or technical literacy and we can't lose sight that the library is a resource for our community. The following suggestions were made for the recommendation and Voters Guide; add a disclosure statement indicating that the recommendations are for economic development, write out Economic Development Advisory Council, put a reference or link to the video or presentation, and use a QR code linking directly to the presentation on the website. There was consensus for support for the library expansion warrant article and to add the reasoning as discussed.

### **West Elm St water line**

J. Langdell stated that this is just good long range planning and at some point there will need to be a hook up with Wilton. D. White said that an intermunicipal connection would benefit both towns and there may be some future willingness from Wilton. There is a lack of water in that area and from an economic development standpoint, businesses along that section of road need water. The state is scheduled to do the road work in 2016 and we need to put the water in before then or we'll have to wait five years. Also, this is the real cost from the low bid number. B. Parker added that the vacant lot next to Irving has huge traffic counts and would still make a good hotel site. There is potential for redevelopment all through there. H. Leach said we always talk about gateways to Milford; this is probably the ugliest way to get into Milford and the redevelopment potential is enormous. D. White added that the water users will be paying for this and because we're adding five hydrants, the town will be contributing those fees year after year.

### **MIT/Pumpkin Festival**

H. Leach said this number is for the pumpkin festival, not the operating budget. The money is for the festival and the festival supports MIT and Wendy's salary for the rest of the year. If not passed this will then be put onto the town employees which parlays into economic development. This helps our image of community and prosperity. She referenced the landscaping for the police station gardens and ambulance facility signage. It is significant to

coordinate all that and if the pumpkin festival doesn't happen, a lot else doesn't happen. W. Hunt said that the pumpkin festival is one of the greatest marketing tools for the Town of Milford. We are a prime area for day visitors. According to UNH tourism and agricultural figures, day visitors spend an average of \$87 per day. That is a huge economic development tool. We are only asking only for town mandated services, on behalf of the town. She gave a brief history of why this went to a warrant article from a defaulted budget years ago. This is a free community event that draws people who aren't from Milford. We don't want to change the dynamics or the image of it. We are also not asking for an increase although the services were billed out at \$23,946. It is an important asset to the town; we coordinated over 3,000 volunteer hours and that didn't even include all the other independent groups that use this as a major fundraising event. D. White said that calculates out to \$4 per household for the average house and at town meeting, we spend ten minutes on an operational budget of \$13M, yet we spend half an hour discussing \$20,000 for MIT. J. Langdell noted that this warrant article is not for MIT, it is mainly for emergency services and the money really should be in the budget. There is such a draw from even outside the region. Let's also be realistic about the amount and discussion ensued. L. Fulkerson brought up fallout from last year's pumpkin festival in Keene and said we should maximize an overage for anticipated safety issues whether real or not.

### **Parade**

J. Langdell stated that Milford has the largest Labor Day parade in the state. M. Bender clarified that #18 pertains to the musical expenses for the Labor Day Parade and #21 relates to supplies and flags for all three parades. The DAR no longer flags for the graves.

### **Jones Rd Crossing**

M. Bender stated that this is simply for authorization to negotiate with B&M Railroad, DOT and other agencies to potentially open Jones Rd again and yes, there actually would be economic impact for the Market Basket plaza and the DMV. J. Langdell said this is so open that there might be concern with the design and could be seen as a go ahead. M. Bender explained that this is the first step to open the negotiation process and there is absolutely no funding for any work. B. Parker added that a traffic study would be needed and a brief discussion on the history followed.

### **Bus services**

J. Langdell gave an overview of Souhegan Valley Rides and the Blue Bus and explained that federal funding is being cut by 20%. We will figure out a way to make it up, but as always, Milford's funding is critical for Souhegan Valley Rides. Given that we have no public transportation in this area, we serve folks and seniors who need to get to appointments in the area and to Nashua; primarily non-emergency medical transportation, social services, and DHHS appointments. Milford traditionally uses 50-70% of the services and without this money we'd be looking at a winding down of the service. I hear from children of the riders who say this is a tremendous help because they don't have to take time off work to take their parents to their appointments, so there is an economic impact here. B. Parker said this is a very important step to prove that we need public transportation out this way. One of the early results from the BR&E survey is that public transportation is essential to this area and this service is a key building block to prove its necessary. J. Langdell added that the two huge needs we can't serve right now only because we don't have enough funding are; rides to work in Manchester and Nashua and rides to post-secondary education in Nashua or Lowell. We purchase service from Nashua Transit and fares haven't been increased due to the fare box, but we are looking at possible fare gradations.

### **Jennison Road Bridge**

M. Bender explained that this is an 80/20 cost sharing project that we are hoping to start late spring. We've spent money on some temporary fixes so the road and bridge is passible. This work will extend the life of the bridge significantly.

### **Bridge Replacement Capital Reserve**

We're trying to build a significant reserve for general bridge repairs. We've got a long list of future repairs and we will take them one at a time. J. Langdell noted that we should take advantage of any federal funding. D. White added that we cannot let our infrastructure go. M. Bender said the last bridge we built was in 1992 and the last re-build was in 1997, so we can't do this much longer without spending significant dollars. D. White said we should keep an open mind for solutions. M. Bender then explained the proposed repairs to the Savage Rd bridge. J. Langdell inquired if there was a bridge maintenance plan. M. Bender replied that we've done a good job of

analyzing our bridge needs and the next step will be to prioritize the repairs. B. Parker stated that municipal infrastructure is EDAC's second highest goal.

M. Ciardelli said there was consensus for support of warrant articles 16-21; he will do the write up.

### **EDAC Goals/Work Plan for 2015**

1. Economic development website: B Parker said it is both his personal goal and an office goal to create an independent economic development website that will be linked to the Town's website. We got the go ahead from Mark yesterday to move forward with the project and will submit the model to this group for input. J. Langdell said we've talked about this for years.
2. Communication between departments: M. Ciardelli said this has been discussed on many occasions and it is key.
3. Ambassador group: D. White brought up previous discussions and said it is very important to go out and meet with businesses. L. Fulkerson said we might get some good talking points from the BR&E survey and maybe some of the volunteers from that group could be in the Ambassador program. Milford has to be proactive and campaign. Maybe we could invite Andre to speak at the next EDAC meeting about his background in economic development and to solicit some feedback for jump starting an ambassador program. M. Bender said that type of program would be ideal. We could have representatives from other groups in town like the Chamber of Commerce and from existing businesses. We have a great story to tell in Milford. We can attract businesses, we've got space available and we can do it. L. Fulkerson added that a key finding from the BR&E report will be testimonials. We will get some real tangible talking points from existing businesses and why they want to stay. That then becomes the communication going out. J. Langdell said that brings up the branding discussion again and as we bring all these pieces together, we need to have a consistent message to send out through an ambassador program, through a new website and through our other means of communication to entice new businesses. M. Ciardelli asked that the Community Development office forward some of the inquiries to EDAC because that is our charge. B. Parker said absolutely, we do get calls regularly and he will put perspective businesses in touch with EDAC representatives, in addition to meeting with staff. H. Leach said New Hampshire is one big "small town" and it's surprising how the word gets out. L. Fulkerson said taking that one step further, the mere fact that members of the EDAC Council are willing to go visit people will get out that the town is being proactive and is open for business. It will create a buzz and separate Milford out from other communities. D. White stated that he contacted the new Ocean State Job Lots representative as a development inquiry but then got to visiting and I thanked him for coming to Milford and said if you have any issues, from economic development standpoint, please call me. They are only fitting up one side of the building, but will be very instrumental in getting someone else here. Those are the little things that we all can do. B. Parker explained that Ocean State Job Lots contacted our office and we met with them right away. Staff actually met with them several times and we quickly turned around the building permit. They were very happy with our process.

### **Update on the UNH Business Retention and Expansion Program:**

M. Ciardelli said the BR&E project has been well perceived by the businesses we've visited. We've gotten good results from the first round. B. Parker said the volunteers went to 40-50 businesses in the first round and there will be a second round, hopefully with more success.

W. Hunt mentioned last year's vacant building tour that showcased industrial space, office space and storefronts in Amherst and Milford. She would love to have an EDAC member on the panel and would love to get more leads from Community Development. P. Seaver said get calls in her business all the time and after showing the properties, she directs them to Community Development for further assistance. Milford is a small business community and we've done a great job attracting businesses by showing that it's easy to do business here, we want you here and when it's time to grow, we don't want you to move out. She referenced several of the new businesses; Union Coffee Co, Souhegan Crossfit, and The Happy Butchers. J. Langdell asked if there was any direct impact from the vacant building tour. P. Seaver said a 3D printer manufacturing company rented 20 South St as a direct result of the tour; they are a small business and the space fit perfectly. They currently expanding like crazy and are not a drain on services. The tour provided exposure of available spaces and was good a good long term planning tool for businesses. Many local people from other communities also came out to see what we had. B. Parker added that building and planning staff from both Amherst and Milford were available at the tour to discuss the process and direct the inquiries. The next vacant buildings tour is scheduled for 3/28/15.

H. Leach said several folks contacted her about loan qualifications resulting from the tour. There were no serious inquiries but that was last year and the response reflected what was going on in the marketplace. Over the last three or four months though, we've seen a slight but consistent change in the loan applicants. We have more requests for lines of credit due to purchasing more materials due to more orders, not to get through slower times. We are in a very different place from where we were a year ago and need to be ready for more business. M. Bender said this year we could do the vacant tour twice, the timing is good. Year-end stats show that motor vehicle revenue for the town is up 8.2% and Q4 alone was up 10.4%; that's a sizeable number. D. White said we are bidding four residential developments right now and we haven't seen that in years. Another piece of that though is getting the Boards to help facilitate that development.

**Community Development updates:**

We're still anticipating a CVS and a multi-family on Capron Rd. There is some interest in the Brox property. We've had discussion with Mark Prolman about a possible cottage housing development across from Pine Valley Mill. The Emerson Rd intersection work will start in the spring. We're close to finalizing the last easement for the South St improvements and last week we applied for a Land, Water, Conservation Fund grant for a 50/50 match to continue the dredging at Osgood Pond

**Other Business:**

1/15/15-BR&E meeting in the banquet hall 8:00AM.

1/31/15-Deliberative session.

3/15/15-Scrabble tournament to promote literacy at the school.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05AM