

Economic Development Advisory Council

11.18.15 Meeting minutes

Americana Room – Hampshire Hills

Minutes approved on 4/13/2016

Present:

Matt Ciardelli, Ciardelli Fuel Co - Chairman
Chad Brannon, Fieldstone Land Consultants, PLLC
Lyle Fulkerson, HPM Insurance
Mark Fougere, BOS
David Hammer, Contemporary Chrysler, Jeep
Wendy Hunt, MIT
Don Jalbert, Milford HS Applied Technology Center
Janet Langdell, Planning Board
Heather Leach, Granite Bank
Marcelle Oneail, Papa Joe's
Jason Plourde, Tighe and Bond
Penny Seaver, Bean Seaver & Smith
Dale White, Leighton A White, Inc.

Excused:

Chris Costantino, Conservation Commission
Tracy Hutchins, Chamber of Commerce
Sean Trombly, Trombly Gardens

Bill Parker, Community Development Director (outgoing)
Lincoln Daley, Community Development Director (incoming)
Mark Bender, Town Administrator
Shirley Wilson, Recording secretary

Matt Ciardelli called the meeting to order at 7:30AM.

Minutes:

D. White made a motion to approve the minutes from 8/5/15, as presented. W. Hunt seconded and all in favor.

Business Retention & Expansion Program: State of the Souhegan Valley Economic Summit:

M. Ciardelli gave an overview of the summit and noted that he and Andre will meet with the Board of Selectmen on Monday 11/23/15 to review the findings and suggested prioritizations. There are action items for both towns; Amherst and Milford. Milford has a leg up because of this group as we have been a viable presence in the Community since 2008. This group might be able to address the skills gap through the connection between the community college system, the local schools and businesses, but it will all be contingent upon the Selectmen. W. Hunt added that the Chamber will concentrate on the Souhegan Valley as a whole.

J. Plourde said one of the focus groups at the summit discussed how to keep the younger people in the area and the main thing was training or lack of it. We have many opportunities to team up high school students with the local colleges in Nashua, Manchester and Concord to keep them nearby and stimulate the economy.

J. Langdell suggested doing an assessment of what's in place now and what the need is which can be used as a baseline. D. Jalbert said we have connections with the community college system, now. Several classes offer credits to high school students. We also have viable technical education right here in town. The question is how do we make those connections and how do we better promote, communicate and identify what we currently have. Why aren't these programs better known to the community at large? How do we do a better job of getting more interest and involvement from the younger people who are making decisions to not go down these paths? We are competing with the traditional four year college which is not for everyone.

J. Langdell said there may be accessory pieces such as public transportation. We frequently hear about the need to get to the community colleges. D. White brought up local business job fairs for high school students. M. Ciardelli said that came up at the summit and said that the Chamber already does that twice a year.

P. Seaver brought up the intern program from Mascenic High School and said it has been beneficial for both the students and their own auto repair business. C. Brannon said the Milford high school has an intern program that places students in businesses and that connection between local businesses and the students is valuable. L. Daley

added that he interned many times and there is a true benefit to have that kind of network in place between local businesses and students in the community school systems. D. Hammer said there is already a good existing connection between the schools and automotive businesses with several manufacturers sponsored programs, automotive dealer resources and job sharing for high school and college students; however, the biggest hurdle is the parents. A four year education is not necessarily right for everyone and we need to get the message out to the parents that there are viable options such as an associate degree from a Community college or trades schools. There should be a job fair that targets the parents and educates them about the options. J. Langdell said the automobile program is established in the area and that should be part of our assessment, but what else is out there and what are those connections?

H. Leach explained that each department at the Technology Center has an advisory council and they are always looking for people in that respective industry to participate in the committees. She chairs the business advisory committee and would love to have members of EDAC on the committee. There is also an internship committee that needs help placing interns and recruiting internship hosts. The school does host a fair in February at the open house with people from the industry who are there to talk with both the students and their parents about career opportunities. We already have some mechanisms in place, but we need help connecting people to it. M. Ciardelli said communication is an important factor and this has been a good conversation; would this be something EDAC wants to take on as it is a good opportunity to help our businesses and the community. M. Bender said all businesses have a need for qualified employees and many are willing to train. EDAC could be a conduit to bridge that gap. We should really meet with the business owners or managers to determine what their needs are and also help place people in productive roles.

D. White inquired if we, as local businesses, can do a better job of presenting ourselves to the marketplace. B. Parker said this all goes to putting together an assessment of what companies have available and what their needs are. H. Leach added that we could also connect with returning college students to help find employment locally.

J. Langdell asked what programs Souhegan had? D. Jalbert replied that very few students come to us from Souhegan. He then referenced “Pathways to Prosperity”, a paper by a Harvard professor who explained that looking out to 2022, 1/3 of the jobs will require no more than a high school diploma or some type of certificate, 1/3 of the jobs will require an associate’s degree, and 1/3 of the jobs will require a bachelor’s degree. Even at that, the wage difference between someone with an associate’s degree or a skillset will be comparable to that of someone with a bachelor’s degree in liberal arts. One of the challenges with community colleges is that there is no housing so someone can take classes, but they don’t have that connection that a lot of high school graduates are looking for and the students don’t necessarily matriculate to that type of program. The manufacturing and auto industries may have good programs, but we hear that the workforce is aging from all the trades. We also have thirteen other programs that we are trying to find opportunities for students. There are many issues and we would welcome any assistance from EDAC to partner with us to help get the message out. Some suggestions included breaking into subgroups to help facilitate or host a local job fair, bringing a trades event to the high school like a college fair and a summer job fair. It was noted that the Chamber is now hosting an employment section on their website.

M. Ciardelli said he will communicate to the Selectmen on Monday night that this is something EDAC is willing to take on. B. Parker ended a brief discussion on the logistics and said the group could be divided into a Business Outreach Committee and an Education Outreach Committee.

J. Langdell said we should be looking to build a sustainable plan that can be implemented over a period of time. M. Ciardelli this could be communicated annually through the Chamber. J. Plourde added that this is an opportunity to follow up with businesses who participated in the BR&E survey as well as others to show them that we are doing something.

Community Development updates:

- Ciardelli Fuel has an office expansion under construction.
- East Milford Storage received a variance for additional storage units.
- Alene Candles construction is underway for the warehouse and office expansion.
- Dollar Tree is relocating across the street into the Ocean State Job Lots building.
- Cirtronics is renovating for a new tenant.

- Good Mojo relocated to Elm St.
- Daytron is expanding into the entire building.
- The old Milford Lumber building is being renovated into offices.
- We're looking at about 30 building permits for single family homes this year.
- Autumn Oaks was approved by the Planning Board.
- CVS plans are moving forward at the corner of Nashua and Clinton Streets.
- The in town Cumberland Farms will be renovating the entire building.
- There are plans in the works for Hammond Road.

Other Business:

D. White reminisced about the Procedures & Policies subcommittee and said some good changes resulted from the meetings with town departments. He then complimented Tim Herlihy, the building inspector on a recent inspection. He also brought up the proposed infrastructure expansion warrant article and said this committee should support something that important. It will be key to the future of Milford as long as it is implemented and done correctly. M. Ciardelli said infrastructure could become a future EDAC project.

J. Langdell said she will resend an email for a survey on public transportation to fill out and include comments.

M. Bender said he agreed with the need for improved public transportation and then reviewed a few of the potential warrant articles.

M. Bender thanked Bill Parker for his service to the Town and wished him good luck in retirement; it has been a pleasure to work with him.

L. Daley said we hope to re-bid for the South St project in late December or January for a spring construction schedule.

D. Jalbert distributed brochures for the second scrabble tournament to be held on March 20th and gave an overview of last year's event.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45AM.