

## **Economic Development Advisory Committee**

### **1.21.09 Meeting notes**

#### **BOS Meeting room**

##### **Present:**

Rich Ball, Cirtronics Corp.  
Tracy Bardsley, Milford DO-IT  
Brad Chappell, Chappell Tractor  
Matt Ciardelli, Ciardelli Fuel Co  
Rick Holder, Hampshire Hills Sports Club  
George Infanti, Milford Paint & Wallpaper  
Heather Leach, Centrix Bank  
Tom Sapienza, Hampshire Hills Sports Club  
Tim O'Connell, Butternut Farm  
Sean Trombly, Trombly Gardens  
Dale White, Leighton A White, Inc

##### **Guests:**

Al Hicks, MIDC

Bill Parker, Director Community Development  
Tim Finan, BOS representative  
Mike Putnam, BOS representative  
Janet Langdell, Planning Board representative  
John McCormack, TIFD representative  
Walter Murray, Jr., Water & Sewer Commissioner representative

Shirley Wilson, Recording secretary

---

J. Langdell opened the meeting at 7:40AM and thanked Hampshire Hills for hosting the meeting. The committee members then introduced themselves.

##### **Elect Chairperson:**

After brief discussion, G. Infanti nominated Tom Sapienza as chairman. Mike Putnam seconded and all in favor.

T. Sapienza then called the meeting to order

##### **Chairman comments:**

T. Sapienza said he was not familiar with some of the properties discussed at the last meeting and suggested a possible tour of sites such as Powers St. We could not only see the sites, but also what the neighborhood around them looks like. R. Ball said terrain issues are important to consider. J. McCormack brought up the Brox property and discussion followed. B. Parker said staff will put together a package with aerials and GIS maps beforehand and set up a time to go out during the spring.

##### **Review of meeting notes from January 14<sup>th</sup> 2009:**

R. Ball stated that he was unable to attend the last meeting and offered the following comments:

- In addition to the projects listed on page two, the old "green bridge" will someday have to be taken care of and if money becomes available it could be considered. Although it is a state responsibility, opening up 101 to the west is really an important issue and maybe this group could help in that we would have information on the adjacent properties, and of course widening South St.
- Were there specifics mentioned in regards to the telecommunications being weak? His company has multiple T1 lines and there has been great improvement in the cell tower situation. T. Sapienza replied that Heather Leach of Centrix Bank and some of their clients have had issues, although he wasn't sure if they were hardwire or rf.
- The Monadnock Economic Development Corporation was referenced on page four and it seems that movement from Nashua and Manchester is also really important. Just about any business is going to move equipment or people and we really need to address those corridors.
- Page five mentions infrastructure, but not gas lines. There is a good possibility that the future will be gas more so than in the past and to what extent will gas lines be made available to new residential, industrial and commercial uses.

G. Infanti made a motion to accept the minutes as presented, J. Langdell seconded and all in favor.

There was discussion regarding the website. B. Parker said that the EADC minutes will be posted on the Community Development page.

**Background/history/plans for MIDC and TIFD**

A. Hicks presented the background for the Milford Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC). The group was chartered by the Town in 1991 and is a 503C3 independently governed corporation with nine board members/officers and is not limited to industrial development. The original funding of \$4,000 to \$5,000 came from the Town, but that was stopped about five years ago.

They had one disappointing effort; obtaining a Community Development Block grant for a specific company that eventually failed.

Prior to the MIDC inception, 50 acres of the Brox land was purchased by the school district which subsequently opened up the remaining 270 acres. MIDC got involved with publicizing the issue and took it to a warrant article for vote to purchase the property.

The Town purchased the property for \$1.4M and engaged a realtor to market the property. A warrant article was put forward to develop the TIF District and then in 2006 the BOS appointed the TIFD Advisory Board after that warrant article passed.

The Brox property is divided into two pieces; 125 acres are industrial and 145 acres are residential. MIDC funded a study by Clough Harbor Associates (CHA) that designated the developable areas on the industrial piece and what the best use would be. CHA also did a study for the infrastructure costs to put in a connecting road running from Perry Rd to the Heron Pond School and for utilities. B. Parker presented the CHA plan and explained our “shovel ready” project. A. Hicks said the study broke the plan into three phases. Phase I took the road, water and sewer from Old Wilton Rd to north of the bypass. Phase II took the road and utilities under the bypass to the south side. Phase III is south of there to the school. Phase I is the most expensive and not the best piece or easiest to develop because there are a lot of wetlands.

J. McCormack presented the Tax Increment Financing District (TIFD) background using five themes and explained that the TIFD Board built on what the MIDC had done and hopefully this committee will build on what the TIF has done over the last couple of years.

Marketing: There was not a lot of activity going on with the original company, so just over a year ago we hired Grubb and Ellis. They have been very enthusiastic and will come in to do a presentation for this group.

Benchmarks: How did we compare to other communities in and this is where we got into the partnership program with Northeastern University. That information is available. More New Hampshire communities now involved and part of this database; Bow, Laconia, Londonderry, Merrimack, Milford, Nashua, Pelham, Raymond, Rochester and Windham. We should be getting an update soon.

Resources: Learn from the successes of others’ development efforts. This is where the MEDC comes in and hopefully we can get Jack Dugan in to talk to this group because they’ve done some great things in Keene with their industrial park and renewing the downtown.

Communication: Pulling a lot of this information together on the website, getting a better definition of the wetlands and working with Hendrix when they were contemplating expansion. We did, through the warrant article process, have success with zoning and now there is more flexibility with the use of that property.

Infrastructure: The warrant article, to issue a bond if a viable project came along, was voted down and this is still an issue for us that we potentially face.

A lot of these tools clearly go beyond Brox property, per se and that is why we started looking at extending the TIF district and asking what other property is available such as on Rte 13.

B. Parker noted that one issue both the TIF and MIDC faced was getting the infrastructure into the Brox property and how to get the town to support that. That seems to be one of the biggest stumbling blocks for commercial development. The TIF process allows for companies to come in and the new property taxes go to fund the infrastructure, then once the water, sewer and roads are paid for, the tax money will go into the general fund. There is sort of a delay of the money going to the general fund. The 2007 warrant article that failed overwhelmingly was to give the Selectmen the authority to issue bonds without having to go to the Town in case somebody came in and needed quick action. It did allow for infrastructure to be built without having to wait for annual town meeting approval. That, as well as community support for spending money on industrial development, is a real stumbling block. That is one reason this committee is here; to try to build up that support and that policy that the Selectmen will go along with the Planning Board and hopefully the community will too.

**Discussion:**

T. Sapienza said that Milford voters can have a reputation of being shortsighted in some ways and as seen in this situation, has to be overcome. It will be interesting to hear what Grubb & Ellis has to say on the impact that has on the marketplace and the process of educating the voters on the right mix of business and residential to keep the tax base lower. J. McCormack said that subject was discussed and the information on the impact of commercial versus residential from various communities around New Hampshire is available in the TIF minutes. Over time, having more industrial/commercial will somewhat relieve the residential tax burden. While some of that information is available, it is not immediately obvious in terms of making a case to the taxpayers. We have to look at the future. It is a challenge to show economic benefit and he referenced two towns in Ohio, Shaker Heights and Beechwood.

J. Langdell said one of the implementation steps, in whatever plan or strategy we come up with to bring back to the Board of Selectmen, will need to market the ideas as a coherent consistent group to the public to get everyone on board.

D. White said that the Town of Milford owns the Brox property, but towns are not in the business of property ownership or being landlords. In this economic climate we can't just go out and market or sell this property so we have to step outside the box even further and go beyond New Hampshire towns. Take North Carolina for example and find out how they "presented the carrot." What have other areas of the country done to entice businesses? We need to give an incentive, not just talk about it. It may be infrastructure that will help bring development, but we've got to do something and it may take tax relief of some kind. I don't like giving money away, but right now the loss of taxes for that property is huge.

B. Chappell said he did a fair amount of research and googled other towns and a lot of the towns started with their websites. It was clear that they were serious about economic development. Some had welcome videos or messages. Some had available land and links to bond and financing information right on the home page. They were marketing their towns; their home page was inviting and welcoming. There was a concerted effort to welcome businesses and advertised streamlining approvals. Our website is a portrayal of who Milford is and ours is stiff. The elements are there, just not easy to find. We could make it more user friendly. Other towns certainly offered carrots and grabbed one's attention with things like free Wi-Fi in the downtown area. So we don't duplicate efforts, but compliment what is going on, we can provide short term recommendations and work towards some of the longer term goals like Brox. That has to start from the top down and hopefully we're not wasting our time, if the town people are not on board with our ideas.

T. Bardsley added that DO-IT is part of the National Mainstreet Association and they have a fair amount of information available on their website. Other towns are offering new marketing tax credits and tax relief is something that doesn't usually happen in New Hampshire. Milford DO-IT is working on a business recruitment package aimed at the Oval, so she has numbers on demographics, and consumer spending that we can use.

J. Langdell asked if we were looking for Manchester and Nashua to come this way or are we looking to bring business in from outside the state or New England. Winthrop, Maine is similar to Milford and as an example they brought some type of healthcare company into a vacant processing facility that provided 200 jobs to that area. In a global perspective, it is a communication issue and we need to ramp that up in any kind of marketing package. B. Chappell said it is obvious that Maine is hungry for development and then asked how hungry are we as a town? We could do a better job of portraying who Milford is and utilize the website more.

B. Parker said he is not knowledgeable about what towns are able to do or not do by state law, but has been under the impression that New Hampshire just doesn't allow much in the way of incentives. Could the State do more?

R. Ball explained that he was a dabbler with the Business and Industry Association (BIA) and on an advisory board for a couple of bills, so he could certainly provide some background and expose this committee to a lot more information; however, we should have someone come in for the real details. He has belonged to the Economic Development Advisory Committee for the BIA for a few years and basically they go around to all members and ask what could they do this year; they are a lobbying organization. The only way to get something done in the state is to incent somebody to write a bill or to back or oppose a bill. PSNH came in and did a presentation for that committee. They produce an annual booklet that provides a lot of information on the status of New Hampshire; the good and the bad. It covers tax issues, safety issues, and all the benefits. Things could be better, but in general it says that New Hampshire is doing better than New England and is faring better than the rest of the country in terms of offering things to people. A copy can be obtained online at: <http://www.prospernh.com/index.html>.

R. Ball then brought up several bills saying there is all sorts of activity at the State level.

- A bill was passed to make tax credits available for research. \$1M was set aside this year to bring in new ideas and companies, because almost all of the other states at least on the east coast offer programs with tax advantages.

- Workforce housing is big. SB217 created a funding mechanism for Planning Boards to allow them to pay for outside help to create a long term plan to make sure all of the issues were taken into account. Twenty towns have applied for some of that money; unfortunately it has been pulled back
- There is a bill to allow towns and cities to create their own income, sales or value added tax.
- A few years ago the BIA tried to get a strategic plan for the state going, to determine the really important issues. At present the BIA decided to be part of the review of that, but doesn't want to spearhead it.

It has been said that a lot of work has been done on the Brox property; however, Brox may be just a part of the picture. There may possibly be a more important issue such as how to get somebody to come to Milford. We also have to consider what is important to the people who live in town. It goes back to workforce housing, infrastructure issues, marketing and publicity. There has to be some level of plan aimed at creating a better Milford.

M. Ciardelli said many good points have been raised, but as we sit here we have to ask ourselves, what are we trying to accomplish. Maybe at the next meeting we should take all the notions raised and prioritize them. What do we focus our time on? What is tangible? What can we accomplish?

T. Sapienza agreed and referenced the list on page seven of the minutes saying that we need to identify the areas we want to look at, prioritize them and turn them into action items. We can then schedule outside experts to come in. We have a lot to cover in a very short period of time and we need a roadmap.

### **Discussion on the process:**

J. Langdell asked if everyone around the table thought we have a vision of what we want for Milford. Do we know the big picture of where we want Milford to be in five (5), ten (10), and fifteen (15) years out? How do we get there? What do we think we will need for housing? We have a lot of implementation pieces to get to that larger item, in addition to Brox.

T. Sapienza said should we look at each of the issues such as telecommunications first in order to create that vision. There is a fact finding and education process that we all have to go through. We all have our own expertise or areas that we are familiar with. We should try to get a list of things we want to investigate and from that, pull together the what the vision is. What comes first?

J. McCormack said the 1999 Master Plan provides a well written vision and we should start there. A lot of these are longer term issues and what are some quick hit things we can do to make it more attractive certainly in terms of the communication process. It is a good question to challenge Don Zizzi, Jim DeStefano and Jack Dugan with and that way we can channel some of our questions that will result in some action steps that hopefully will have impact. We can get input from Jim DeStefano as far as who we can market to and what else is happening in this area. Jack Dugan can address what is practical for incentives from the state and the successes other programs have had.

B. Parker suggested starting with the original 1999 Master Plan vision statement and then adjust it as necessary by the end of the committee's work together to make the recommendation. J. Langdell said that vision statement is ten years old, so it predates what the current Chapter 1 is of the Master plan for the overall vision for the town and that needs to be factored in.

M. Putnam asked what businesses do we attract and what incentives do we want to offer? What can we, the Board of Selectmen do right off the bat; zoning, tax, etc? Let's come up with some categories and start working on them; figure out what we have do and then figure out if we can do it and if not, maybe we can pioneer through the legislature.

B. Chappell said we should find out what we can do and what we cannot do.

D. White reiterated that we have to do something and we should set an agenda for next week. What is Milford and where do we want to go with this? Whatever we come up with, we also then need to get the Selectmen on board, top down. Then we need to create a website that's going to get everybody else outside of Milford on board. Those two things are then going to drive everything else. D. White said in this economic climate, people may be a little more realistic with their pocket books hurting. The town is a business and it has to be funded. We fund it by development and now is the perfect time. B. Parker said just two or three years ago the people were anti development, but things change quickly.

T. Bardsley said education will be a large component of this because no matter what we do, it will have some impact on the quality of life in Milford and that is what the residents will look at. There may be increased traffic or additional impact on the schools which will all be components and we will have to sell our vision.

M. Ciardelli said take the original 1999 Master Plan into consideration, look at it today, ten years later and put five or ten things in place that we can do to achieve that.

## **Economic Development Advisory Committee, 1.21.09 Meeting minutes**

---

J. Langdell said the proactive piece is what tools can we put in place to get us ready for development in five years. Developers will know what we think we want for Milford. Hopefully we will have incentives in place by then.

T. Sapienza said next week we will define an economic vision in terms of what we want and what we can ideally do and from that come up with a list that we prioritize what we want to investigate.

### **Set next meeting date and agenda:**

Monday January 26<sup>th</sup> at 7:30AM Hampshire Hills Americana room

### **Next agenda topics:**

Vision process

List of action items to prioritize

Speakers: Jim DeStefano and Jack Dugan

The meeting was adjourned at 8:53AM.

### **Summary of questions:**

#### Recurring

What do we want for Milford?

What businesses do we want to attract?

#### New:

What have other areas of the country done to entice businesses?

How hungry for business are we as a town?

What do we focus our time on?

What is tangible?

What can we accomplish?

Do we know the big picture of where we want Milford to be in five (5), ten (10), and fifteen (15) years out?

How do we get there?

What do we think we will need for housing?

What incentives do we want to offer?

What can the Board of Selectmen do right off the bat?

### **Actions items:**

- Website development
- BOS directive to town departments
- Staff to provide package with aerials and maps of identified properties
- Provide updated information from Northeastern University partnership
- Invite Don Zizzi, Northeastern University to a future meeting