

Economic Development Advisory Committee

3.04.09 Meeting minutes

Americana Room – Hampshire Hills

Present:

Tracy Bardsley, Do-it
Brad Chappell, Chappell Tractor
Matt Ciardelli, Ciardelli Fuel Co
Heather Leach, Centrix Bank
Tim O'Connell, Butternut Farms
Tom Sapienza, Hampshire Hills Sports Club
Sean Trombly, Trombly Gardens
Dale White, Leighton A White, Inc

Janet Langdell, Planning Board representative
Mike Putnam, Board of Selectmen representative
Bill Parker, Director Community Development
John McCormack, TIFD representative
Shirley Wilson, Recording secretary

Guests from Milford School District:

Rosie Deloge, Director of Technical Studies
Johanna Johnson, Director of Social Services
Jeff Curry, Job Coach at the Sage School
Rich Paiva, Career Development Specialist

B Parker called the meeting to order at 7:35AM. B. Parker introduced the school representatives and said that education and economic development is one of our big topics right now and we are trying to figure out how to tie economic development into what the schools are doing and vice versa.

Presentations:

R. Deloge

R. Deloge distributed copies of statewide statistics to provide two points of reference so that this committee can understand the intent of the Milford Technology Center, one of twenty-three throughout the state of New Hampshire that were started well over twenty years ago. The concept was that funding would be provided to one high school to build a technology center with the idea that surrounding schools could send students and take advantage of the resources. They were all called vocational centers and the thinking was that we have to provide an opportunity for students to be able to leave high school and get a job. The focus of the work that we are currently trying to do is to make sure we are exposing them to a broader perspective of employment; what is out there and what they may be able to do. R. Deloge said that she, Johanna, Jeff, and Rich represent the gamut of students in the school district and the possibilities that we have come up with so far in terms of helping students connect with the real world.

- By 2012, 88% of New Hampshire's fastest growing jobs will require some post secondary education or advanced training, including a projected 12,600 jobs relating to computer technology, quoted from <http://bixtools4schools.org>.
- The fastest growing occupations in New Hampshire were listed from the New Hampshire Employment Securities latest publication.

B. Chappell referenced comments from the November Roundtable meeting saying that after graduation a lot of young people leave this area and that is one of the challenges of this economic development committee, to keep our students and residents here. One of the problems may be that we are not targeting the right occupations for this area in our schools; looking down the statistics, how many in this room actually employ any one of these types of occupations? R. Deloge said that may very well be the case. When the center was built a set of programs decided upon and things have changed. We know that the healthcare industry is high on the list, LNA's, CAN's, registered nurses, and so forth are in very high demand; and while it would be wonderful to start a health occupation program at Milford High School, that's probably going to be somewhere in the vicinity of a \$200,000 to \$400,000 investment just to get it started. So what we've tried to do is to take a look at our biotechnology program, which provides a core content area for healthcare purposes, and redesign it slightly. Part of the expectation of the technology center is that we have business and industry folks serving on program advisory committees for each of our programs to keep them current. While we might not provide early learning for the

exact jobs in this community, through career development activities, internships and job sharing, we still offer the possibility of connecting with what is going on here. It is a question to keep asking.

J. McCormack asked if there was a more specific breakdown of the occupations listed. R. Paiva explained that the statistics were a general quick once-over glance of how things are going and where they project employment to be. Only the top 25 occupations were shown which could easily be expanded to the top hundred. All jobs are somewhat lumped together but the numbers are similar whether we consider a large manufacturer or a small firm providing client services, in regards to data communications and network systems. Another case in point would be financial analysts; how many are gainfully employed right now, but looking forward with a more stable economy, that is looking to be one of the fastest growing jobs. He went over these same issues with a group of sophomores yesterday trying to get them to understand market information and said it is about the themes, not the specific top twenty-five. T. O'Connell said it was interesting that 12 out of 25 would require a pretty strong background in life sciences, 4 out of 25 seemed to hit the technology areas and 6 out of 25 were in education and social services. Certainly there is some direction there and it runs along the same lines as what is being reported outside of New Hampshire. The service industry is not the highest paying jobs but a lot of them now require some sort of post secondary education. R. Paiva noted that you can't always go by the percentages. Looking forward at the landscape for both the economy and the labor force, only about 7% of all employment is based on just a high school diploma. Perspective employees will need to have some sort of advanced training or post secondary type of education; a one year training program, an apprentice program, a two or four year degree or more will make up the other 93%. Projections say that about 60% of all entry level jobs will require a one year certificate or two year degree and only 40% will require a four or more year degree which is a switch from previous thought. There are a lot of technical type careers whether it's IT or healthcare technical that require a one or two year type program. Despite common belief, there is no longer a direct and exact correlation between the number of years of schooling and the amount of wages. Electricians, engineering technicians, and plumbers are some of the fastest growing jobs, certainly in the top fifty or seventy-five occupations, even though they are not shown on these statistics. With the current economy, everything is stagnant right now.

R. Deloge distributed the 2009-2010 Program of Studies and highlighted the extended learning opportunities. The new state standards require guidelines for opportunities to learn and earn credit other than in the classroom. We are very fortunate in Milford in that we do have the applied technology center and have lots of labs. So we have identified, developed and formalized several extended learning opportunities as referenced on page 6; Independent study, Work study/Cooperative education, Community service learning, Independent internship, and Online/Virtual education. Career development from the middle school through to the high school and the Sage School is referenced on pages 7 and 8. We are all on the same software and offer the same courses. We start with larger categories or clusters and then help students figure out where might go from there, a form of long term planning.

B. Parker asked how the advisory groups worked and if there was opportunity as this economic development group formalizes its recommendations. How strong is the town - school relationship and how do we build on that so there is more communication? R. Deloge said they have internship advisory committees and a regional advisory committee. The newest member of the regional committee, Wilton-Lyndeborough's high school principal commented that this was the first time he was actually invited to be on this type of committee and the first time he has seen business people at the meeting. Our program advisory committees can meet on a regular basis or on an as-needed basis. Every one of the program teachers has a group of folks that they can call upon to come in and do things in the classroom or to review program competencies. Anybody who is interested is welcome to participate on the program advisory committees; the door is always open.

Johanna Johnson

J. Johnson said she addresses the needs of students with disabilities throughout the school district and we have noticed a trend that there are two populations of students exiting schools. One group is the students that either drop out or are in delinquency and are not employable, so we knew we had to address the cycle and help make them successful members of our community. They are not bad kids, but do not have much support at home and have not learned to adjust appropriately so they need a higher level of assistance and guidance. The other group representing about 1% of the general population is students who are severely disabled with limited physical and

academic abilities and because adult services are very limited would end up sitting at home without connections in the community and opportunities would be limited.

This is our pilot year for the Transitional Employment Program and we started with the seniors of both populations. We want to use Milford to expand those connections and relationships within the community and place those kids in jobs here in Milford. We do a job skills inventory with each student to determine their strengths, their needs and their abilities across the board and then try to decide what the best type of job would be. We look in our community first and try to market a job for the particular student. We will do a job analysis on site and break down the component steps, maybe even video taping the position. The expectations for the student will be taught with a higher level of assistance both on and off the job; how to dress, how to communicate effectively, and how to perform a particular job. We would provide a job coach that would go to that site and teach the student to do that job and in essence we are guaranteeing that the position will be completed effectively right from the get-go. We will use this as a training opportunity and meet with employers monthly. This may not be the student's lifelong job, but it gives that first opportunity to establish appropriate relationships for a number of children that otherwise quite frankly would not be effective community members or appropriate neighbors. We try to incorporate technology to increase the proficiency of the student so that it is a no risk situation for the employer. We use Skoolabrate which is a virtual world where students learn social skills and both technology pieces are funded through a grant we received. There is also an independent study at the high school where students are building the Oval online. We are having success with placing our students even in these difficult economic times.

B. Parker inquired about the placements made so far. J. Johnson replied they have students in internships at Lake Sunapee Bank, a hair salon, Tractor Supply and Happy Paws and students working at Dunkin Donuts, Market Basket, a doctor's office, Papa Gino's, Yankee Chef and the Postal Center. Thirty-one (31) students have been targeted for the program, but not all are placed.

J. McCormack asked if there was a breakdown between behavioral or physical disabilities. J. Johnson said she only has one student with significant physical needs, but many of the others are on the autism spectrum or have really low academic skills. We try to work with the parents, but we are trying to break cycles for a lot of these children and their parents. Some parents don't realize that the school does not provide adult services. J. McCormack asked if there was willingness from the local employers. J. Johnson said they have had more success with the internships than with the paid positions. Our goal is to see some of these unemployable students employed, so if you have any job opportunities, please let us know.

M. Ciardelli said one of our jobs on this committee is to look at Milford as a whole and one of the topics is marketing. How do our programs compare to surrounding communities like Amherst, Mont Vernon, Peterborough and Wilton? J. Johnson said Amherst received a grant this year for a job coach and we actually funded our job coach but received a grant for the technology piece. Hollis does not have a job coach.

R. Deloge said in terms of career technical education, Milford is part of Region 16 which includes, Alvirne and Nashua North and South so our students have the opportunity to attend programs there that we don't offer such as cosmetology. Souhegan, Hollis and Brookline tend to send most of their career students to Milford. Wilton-Lyndeborough usually sends their career students to Milford, but some do attend the automotive program based out of Con-Val. An eight year enrollment chart shows that the numbers look like everybody at the high school is in a career and technical program because we have a large compilation of students, but that is because these courses are offered to all students. We do a very good job in terms of state performance indicators that the Department of Education uses to evaluate all the career and technical centers. We've always been in the top group for what we have been able to do. We participated in a national database study with 2003 students and after four years we could pull a report on how many of our graduates actually completed a four year degree; about 25% of the graduating class. We then took a look at that group of graduates and found that 60% of those college graduates participated in a career or technical program. While that number is not earth shattering, it is an indicator that taking part in a non traditional learning experience may foster better results for the students.

J. McCormack asked if there was data to follow the graduates. R. Deloge said that would be costly, but maybe we could get feedback from those individual students. The National Clearinghouse Student survey that we are using

does not currently have any follow up in place. R. Paiva added that, collectively on the work-based and extended learning opportunities that are in the course catalog for the first time, we are a little bit ahead of the curve in the southern part of the state compared to other school districts. The other thing not listed is that we actually have an internship class at the high school as well as the independent internship program. We average 12 to 14 students a year. It is student driven and they have to be a senior in good academic standing. We will go out and get those students internships in the community and we've had several students out in Milford and the greater Souhegan Valley area as well. Only Pinkerton Academy does more.

R. Deloge said as a result of a recent meeting with the chair of the Math Department from Hollis Brookline, Milford is now listed in their 2009-2010 course catalog for Accounting II and III, which they don't offer in addition to all our other career programs. That is a huge step for us.

T. Bardsley asked if transportation was provided. R. Deloge said yes, the state subsidizes both the tuition and transportation. We have about 60 out of district students participating this year and in the past it has hovered around 50 to 55 students.

T. O'Connell said that many businesses, whether it be a dental office or Hitchiner Manufacturing, train their entry level employees, so when they are hiring they look for basic life skills. Are you getting any input from the local businesses on how you are doing and are you meeting that need? R. Paiva distributed a rough draft brochure for the Career Focus Internship Program and along with J. Curry gave some examples.

- Last year we had a senior who had been through our pre-engineering program do an internship at Monarch Instruments. He spent 65 hours on site and his mentor was very impressed with not only the basic core skills but the skills coming out of the engineering program. At times he thought the student was college level.
- This year we had two students coming out of our bio-tech program that were set up with independent internships; sort of an extension of their classroom, if you will. They had gotten so far ahead that we scheduled them for three days a week in class and two days a week on site where they could practice their core skills, which provided a much better learning experience. One student worked for a company in Bedford who did clinical studies for FDA regulation and another student at Hanger Prosthetics in Nashua. The company in Bedford has been very impressed with the student's core skills, knowledge and drive and when he sat down with the soon to be mentor at Hanger Prosthetics to discuss the technical competencies, the mentor was impressed that all the students in the bio-tech program go through those competencies and commented that he didn't get half of those in college. So we're doing some good things with the students at least from the stories out in the community that he hears, both for job shadows and internships. There are many success stories.
- A young girl was placed for an internship at a local bank and the manager said that if this works out there might be a part time position available. Once you get in at entry level, there are so many avenues that open up.

D. White said that part of our charge is to report back to the Board of Selectmen with recommendations to help maintain and stimulate the present economy. One of the jobs mentioned was funded by a grant and usually a grant is a one-time allocation and then the position becomes funded by the tax base. Obviously if this is working and makes sense, it's a great thing for the future. It sounds like the programs at the high school and the Sage School are ahead of other schools, so being a business, why can't we monetarily do good by that and solicit or draw more students from other schools. Marketing that program would help stimulate the economy and help our tax burden. R. Deloge said that the income generated for the 50 or so students from other sending districts averages about \$150,000 per year. D. White asked if that paid for the costs. R. Deloge said the tuition goes into the general fund. J. Johnson added that the funding for the job coach was a reallocation of money in the budget and this position will remain because our students are seen as unemployable and although one might not see a gain, there will be less young adults that are not unemployed. R. Paiva reiterated that our classes are very much integrated into the Hollis-Brookline course catalog; Accounting I being in Hollis and then Accounting II being offered right afterwards but in Milford. That is a marketing piece that never existed before. R. Deloge said she will be meeting with Mascenic High School later today because they want to start sending students to Milford for programs like Culinary because they are not offered at Con-Val.

R. Paiva said coming full circle, that it is a real dilemma to keep kids locally, but it hits many different parts of the country as well. Kids want a greener pasture and only see Wal-Mart and the Oval, but there is so much more. He

is trying to get more students out to do job shadows and the more students locally the better, but often times they are placed with the first opportunity. So he is throwing this invitation out to everyone here today that he would like to get feedback or willingness to sponsor a student for job shadowing for a day or to sponsor student internships. We are looking to expand those opportunities so that students can hone their core and technical skills. It also opens their eyes in that we have so many businesses locally. Who knew we had an FDA regulatory forum only twenty minutes away or Cirtronics and Hitchiner right here. J. Johnson added that one of the biggest things that makes a difference for the students is that we develop relationships and provide opportunity. Last year we had 28 students involved with the job shadow program.

D. White brought up a personal situation explaining that his son can't work at his business because of the age requirements for hazardous equipment. The regulations and the Department of Labor can be frustrating and de-stimulating. R. Paiva explained that a lot of the work that he and Jeff do is trying to work with and within the system. We simply can't just call the employer to set up an internship and have the student go. There is so much red tape and we even have to take out an insurance policy for the district in order to cover the students doing any work based opportunities outside of the school walls. We have to go through Department of Labor and OSHA screenings and there are many restrictions to get companies pre-approved before the students can go out. Jeff and I try to make things as smooth as possible for the prospective companies and businesses and even handle the paperwork because they are already taking time out to work with the student. The good news is that the more you work with the system the more you learn how to get around the red tape. We do the best we can for the students and sometimes actually get waivers for students who are 16 and 17 in so called hazardous occupations, especially if we have a student who has been through, currently going through or will be scheduled for a class in one of the ATC programs. Discussion followed.

M. Putnam said we should be talking to the people who can make these changes at the State level. R. Paiva added that the school advocates for both the students and the businesses as well because these are such great opportunities for everybody and there shouldn't be any undue burdens placed.

J. McCormack referenced the career and technical opportunities available to Milford students on page 45. How many Milford students go outside to other locations? R. Deloge replied four or five students go to either the Cosmetology program at Nashua or the Vet tech program at Alvirne. S. Trombly said that he attended a program in Alvirne. There was discussion about the transportation requirements to and from programs at other locations.

S. Trombly inquired if Milford has considered an entrepreneurial program to teach the students about starting their own business instead of working for someone else. R. Deloge said they try to incorporate those competencies in each of the other programs, but there isn't a separate class.

D. White asked if the school would consider a class to teach the basic skills. R. Deloge said on page 37 you will find that we are implementing for the next school year a personal finance course focusing on the eleventh and twelfth graders to cover all those topics and at some point in time it may even become a requirement.

T. Bardsley said that back when she was in high school there was tracking; college bound or vocational. R. Deloge explained the concept in New Hampshire saying that career and technical centers are part of a comprehensive high school. The idea is that anybody in high school can take a class in the career and technical programs so they can get a better idea of what to expect when they go to college. Discussion on the programs followed.

M. Putnam inquired about adult education programs. R. Deloge said that they have been offering a few evening classes; however, some run and some don't get enough involvement to run and a retraining program would be a whole other school within the school. While we have done that in the past and it was successful, there hasn't been strong enough interest for more than enrichment programs right now.

J. Langdell inquired about the towns in Region 16 and asked what if a student wanted to go out of the region for a program. R. Deloge said Region 16 is comprised of Amherst, Mont Vernon, Milford, Wilton, Lyndeborough, Hollis, Brookline, Merrimack, Hudson, Litchfield, and Nashua and our students don't usually go outside of the region, it's just too far.

B. Parker asked if there was support from the School Board and the Budget Committee to keep equipment and programs up to date. R. Deloge said that the needs of the technical center are now more on the radar screen than in the past and discussion on the school's budget followed. T. O'Connell referenced a recent article in the Telegraph about Nashua's school budget and then compared Nashua to Milford. R. Deloge said that Nashua chose to set aside all or a percentage of the tuition income they received for students attending their technology center in a separate account for equipment. Milford has not done that, but it is certainly something to think about.

R. Paiva said he and the engineering teacher recently put together a day-long "career day" where several engineers came in to talk about everything from aerospace, civil, environmental, mechanical to electrical. One of the participating engineers who also sits on the ATC engineering advisory board recounted his attempt to donate used equipment from his business to the school. Although it was obsolete to the company, we at the school would get a lot of use out of it; however, transporting the equipment to the school proved to be problematic. B. Chappell suggested using the existing tuition from the 50+ students as the benchmark and create a program to market the school and anything over the baseline could be set aside for equipment. J. Johnson said that the technical and special education programs generate most of the revenue, but all revenue goes into the general fund. R. Paiva brought up marketing and discussion followed.

D. White asked what this committee can do as part of our recommendation to the Board of Selectmen. R. Deloge said it would be good to discuss the concept of possibly setting aside a small percentage of the tuition income that the Applied Technology Center brings in; that would be helpful.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15AM.

Next meeting:

Wednesday March 11th, 2009 in the Americana Room at Hampshire Hills

Actions items:

- B. Parker to remind all committee members that we will be prioritizing at next week's meeting
- Schedule an update for the BOS
- B. Parker to get the comparative analysis from Northeastern University program
- TIF minutes of the LandQuest proposal
- Invite a representative from FairPoint to speak
- Invite Conservation to present land plans
- Website development
- BOS directive to town departments
- Staff to provide package with aerials and maps of identified properties
- Schedule site visits
- Provide updated information from Northeastern University partnership
- Invite Don Zizzi, Northeastern University to a future meeting