

Economic Development Advisory Council

3.11.15 Meeting minutes

Americana Room – Hampshire Hills

Present:

Matt Ciardelli, Ciardelli Fuel Co - Chairman
Chad Branon, Fieldstone Land Consultants
Chris Costantino, Milford Conservation Commission
David Hammer, Contemporary Chrysler, Jeep
Wendy Hunt, MIT
Don Jalbert, Milford HS Applied Technology Center
Janet Langdell, Planning Board
Marcelle Oneail, Papa Joe's
Jason Plourde, Tighe and Bond
Penny Seaver, Bean Seaver & Smith
Sean Trombly, Trombly Gardens

Bill Parker, Director Community Development
Mark Bender, Town Administrator
Shirley Wilson, Recording secretary

Excused:

Lyle Fulkerson, HPM Insurance
Dale White, Leighton A White, Inc.
Heather Leach, Granite Bank

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

Minutes:

C. Costantino made a motion to accept the minutes from 1/14/15, as drafted. P. Seaver seconded and all in favor.

Recap/Discussion on Town Vote Results

B. Parker listed the results and stated that 2191 votes were cast; 22% of total voters. All the zoning changes passed including the article allowing more temporary signage for businesses which will hopefully have a good impact on economic development. Most of the EDAC supported items were passed; the West Elm Street water extension, all the bridge related articles and social services including the Blue bus. The library project, Brox resources and both Town and School budgets were voted down.

M. Bender explained that the default budget is \$122,000 less than the proposed budget and considering the winter we've had, we will not be saving any money with the DPW overages. He also explained the Budget Advisory Committee terminology changes.

C. Costantino said she was very disappointed with the outcome of the library expansion, but we now have a year to outreach to every civic group we can find. It is painful to pay for, but it is a good plan and our intent is to build something that will last. Education will be a big piece and we plan on being visible at all the upcoming festivals. We may now reach out to some of the businesses in town for some sort of commitment and start to consider fundraising options. M. Oneail said visual awareness is important and brought up the fundraising gauges that people can see as they drive by. C. Costantino we're a department of the town and no other department is out there fundraising for their budget, so there may be some reluctance to go down that road. J. Langdell stated that you should be collectively commended for the level of professionalism and the depth of outreach that you did do and 44% is a great outcome for the first time out. Has there been any thought to highlighting functional uses of the library that may convince other people that this is a community gathering place. Also, the Recreation department does solicit donations and does its own fundraising. B. Parker added that it was interesting to see how social media came into play and a brief discussion ensued on how votes were cast. D. Jalbert said as close as the vote was on the library, the important thing for the coming year will be message, message, message. The dollar figure won't change but the marketing can and we can talk up what the library has as community resource.

D. Jalbert noted that the default budget for the school is similar to the town's and should not impact jobs.

P. Seaver said this was a voluminous ballot, but she heard comments stating the voter's guide was a real help.

EDAC Goals/Work Plan for 2015

B. Parker gave an overview of the prior active committees; Policies and Procedures, Branding and Marketing, and Land Use and agreed that we do need a new tangible task, though.

Goals discussed:

Economic development website:

B. Parker said slogans are important; MIT uses Make it Milford and Community Development uses Forward Milford. Branding is a big deal, but maybe there is a simple way to do this in Milford and maybe we could get some input from the Selectmen. J. Langdell suggested putting a written proposal together with the pros and cons as well as costs and areas of focus. The marketing piece also goes hand in hand with the Ambassador Program and the economic development website. We have to present the same message. P. Seaver added that we need something tangible that we can take to the next level; something that promotes “Why Milford” and referenced Dover’s branding.

W. Hunt mentioned the upcoming WordPress training and also searching for Milford on the web. She only found one site with any information on what to do in Milford, so she compiled a lot of information to add to the new website. That’s the first thing people look for in a new area; where are the restaurants, the hiking or bike trails, the shopping. My job is already very similar to being an informal ambassador and explained the current marketing promotion, Make it Milford/March Madness Bingo.

J. Langdell said we should really define “Why Milford; why to live here, why to work here, why bring your business to Milford, why expand your business right here. Those are the key questions that go into the marketing of Milford. B. Parker said he foresees working very closely with MIT and while the office will be working on the structure, EDAC can assist with the content. J. Langdell said this could be a good platform to define that consistent message and to interface with the town and school websites. D. Jalbert said he attended a recent Granite Town Media meeting and stated that Mike McNerny is charged with keeping Milford’s town website up to date. One of his questions was about consistency between the two sites and what the user will find. B. Parker said he envisioned interchangeable links to the town’s website and MIT; the same as the Library and other departments but maintained by the Community Development office. It would be consistent but separate, mainly because of the functionality of the current website.

D. Hammer said he hires a company to do his website, but has a student to help out and post in the interim who is very quick, efficient and has some great ideas. B. Parker said he will reach out to the EDAC group as the process unfolds, but it is important to start thinking about the message so we can incorporate it into the website along with everything else. D. Hammer said as a relative newcomer to the area, Milford is a very unique community. There is a sense of activity, a sense of purpose, a sense of history and that is what you should somehow find a way to identify. Provide all the segments such as history, area activities, recreation, existing businesses and industry, traffic counts, and population growth for other businesses. Show the vibrancy and identify the components of the storyboard and also include regional attractions. It all combines to make Milford a good place to live. We should ask Hitchiner why they chose to stay in Milford and incorporate their economic reasons on the website. J. Langdell added that there is more depth than what people see from Nashua and Elm Streets.

M. Bender said we have a clean sheet to work with. Maybe we could have different groups focus on the different segments of Milford to get some energetic content for the website. W. Hunt commented that she was surprised at the number of businesses that don’t have a presence on the web, don’t use social media or even have an email address. MIT’s role could be to provide content such as places to eat and things to do for the website. B. Parker said this group could take up what we want to portray about Milford. J. Langdell said Milford history has been the hub of the Souhegan Valley and this group has focused on that it from the beginning.

M. Ciardelli asked the group to send any ideas for the content or for Milford’s message to him by email.

Business outreach:

D. Hammer said the survey is a great start, but we could also provide regular outreach to the local businesses, maybe annually to create a mechanism to develop a relationship with the businesses. Economics change regularly and consistent contact through a personal phone call or visit would encourage more participation and provide better information. Each member could set out to develop a relationship with a specific number of businesses and report back to this group with meaningful feedback. It would also be a way to communicate information out to the businesses and in turn out to the community. If we have the same individuals who went out on interviews

for the BR&E survey call their businesses again to deliver the results, we'd have two points of contact with two individuals that maybe never knew each other before and that will build a solid foundation. That will foster a more solid sense of community, bring strength to the community and open communication to resolve issues.

M. Bender said he liked that idea and will identify ten large businesses, call them and then go out to see them. What if Hitchiner had gone the other way and moved everything up to Littleton; that would have been devastating. Bill and I have been meaning to get there. M. Ciardelli noted that he has a lunch meeting there next Monday and Mark would be welcome to go. M. Bender added that business retention is only one half; attracting new business is just as important. B. Parker said we could funnel the businesses and contacts from the BR&E study to this group to follow up on and we should see the results in about two months. He will also talk to Andre to see about getting an updated business listing out to the group.

P. Seaver said we could introduce ourselves, as patrons on behalf of EDAC to thank them for choosing Milford and keep the communication open so they would feel comfortable contacting us.

J. Langdell said there should be some delineation of expectations and guidelines for consistency and also that we have something fresh to say. M. Ciardelli agreed that the message needs to be consistent and two to three times a year would be sufficient. D. Jalbert added that it will also be necessary to coordinate as to not duplicate efforts. J. Langdell then referenced Nashua's Tree Streets Neighborhood Plan and said something like that might be incorporated into what we're working on here as a marketing tool.

D. Hammer brought up Enterprise Car Rental who will be a major sponsor of 100 Holes of Golf and said that it is part of their culture to support the community and they also encourage their employees to go out and volunteer. J. Langdell referenced Walgreen's engagement and visibility in the community. W. Hunt W. Hunt said Derrick of Union Street Coffee is very engaged and brought up one of his ideas for bike racks. She also brought up the Airmar grand opening that had no local involvement and a brief discussion followed.

Community Development updates:

- Ocean State Job Lot's grand opening is scheduled for 3/28/15.
- CVS is still in the works, but we've not heard from anyone lately.
- St. Joseph's is well under construction. Both this project and OSJ gave our office very good reviews and comments about working in Milford.
- Astronics Corporation, currently located in the Resin System building in Amherst, is looking for 30,000SF of space.
- Alene Candles has turned in a conceptual plan to the Planning board for a 60,000 SF warehouse and office expansion and to extend Scarborough Ln.
- Hitchiner is relocating their Littleton facility back to Milford and reached out to Red Oak apartments regarding their plans to build 125 units, which is an interesting connection.
- There is still serious interest in the Brox property.
- Ametek moved to Meadowbrook Dr and that will be adding fifty plus jobs.

Membership

B. Parker referenced the membership document dated 3/5/15 and said currently there are two official members of this group, Matt and Wendy that will need to re-up at the end of the month. Six members' terms expired last year and will need go through the reappointment process on the consent calendar and the six new members will have to go to the BOS meeting to be interviewed and appointed. We will take care of staggering the terms. P. Seaver suggested that other members of the group could go to the meeting on 3/23/15 to show support for the new members and bring more visibility for EDAC.

Other Business:

3/18/15- Chamber of Commerce job fair at the Town Hall

3/28/15-Vacant spaces tour

Next meeting will be scheduled after the survey results.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:54AM.