

**Economic Development Advisory Council
October 26, 2016 Meeting minutes
Americana Room – Hampshire Hills**

Matt Ciardelli, Ciardelli Fuel Co - Chairman
Chris Costantino, Conservation Commission
David Hammer, Contemporary Chrysler, Jeep
Don Jalbert, Milford HS Applied Technology Center
Janet Langdell, Planning Board
Tracy Hutchins, Chamber of Commerce
Jason Plourde, Tighe and Bond

Lincoln Daley, Community Development Director (incoming)
Mark Bender, Town Administrator
Shirley Wilson, Administrative Assistant

Invited Guest:
Jennifer Maxwell

Matt Ciardelli called the meeting to order at 7:45AM.

Minutes:

C. Costantino made a motion to accept the minutes from 4/13/16, as presented and all voted in favor.

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

D. Jalbert said that each of the two sub-committees, Business Retention and Education Outreach, met once early on, but there has not really been much action.

T. Hutchins gave an update on the Chamber of Commerce's regional workshop series. Forty people turned out for the transportation presentation in Milford. Tim Roach of NRPC and NH DOT Commissioner Victoria Sheehan did a terrific presentation and everyone came away with a good understanding of what the DOT is facing. The second presentation was held at Souhegan High School where Matt Mowery of NH Business Magazine and Carmen Lorenz, director of DRED talked about the workforce. Thirty people attended, including several local employers. It's all about finding employees and that is what is driving education to create more of a pipeline from the Middle School on up. Several different options are being discussed but there is no real solution yet. The third, and next, presentation on 11/10/16 at Pine Hill School in Wilton will be about infrastructure. Karen Pollard, the Economic Development Director for the City of Rochester will talk about how they worked with the Albany Corporation to relocate to Rochester and with Great Bay College to train potential employees.

D. Jalbert said his observation is that there are many entities with their eyes on the prize of economic or workforce development; however, the network seems to have a disconnect. There are all kinds of initiatives and grants but where is the glue to hold it all together so that we're not duplicating efforts or missing something. T. Hutchins said one of the things that came out of the discussion is the skillset and mindset. This is something that Milford already gets but society focuses on the test scores and post-secondary education. We are already starting to see a shortage of trades and a mind shift needs to occur both within the schools and with the parents. J. Langdell noted that in the transportation industry, there are a number of organizations such as Transport NH that are looking at the big picture from a broader level. Is there any organization in the education area whose sole mission is to look at the whole picture or that brings everyone to the table to make these connections? D. Jalbert replied not effectively. He then gave an overview of the construction expo sponsored by The Women in Construction Association. Milford sent two busloads of students and they had a great time, but that doesn't translate into enrollment, decisions or careers. Statistics show that only one in three parents encourage kids to work in the trades. Again, we have the statistics but are still failing to get the message to the parents. Last year we had several companies who were looking for full-time summer staffing and he couldn't find any student who was willing to make that commitment. It is a generational or societal mindset. J. Langdell said maybe we won't have an impact at the mindset level but are there any other barriers after that? D. Jalbert said commuter campuses possibly hurt the technical college system because they do not have dorms. Students just take classes; they don't get to leave home.

D. Hammer explained how the automotive industry works with the high schools, community colleges and other trade associations to sponsor and promote programs and certifications. It is changing and we're having the discussion but there still is a stigma associated. Further discussion on education ensued.

J. Maxwell said she attended Souhegan High School and inquired if there was an internship program for high school students with the really large businesses in the area. Although completely not true, some of the stigma around the trades is that the people are not as smart or ambitious and they fell into it because there were no other options. Getting more face to face with people that are in the trades would be helpful. They could show how the trades are something you can grow into, not top off. D. Jalbert stated that Milford does have internship programs and good partnerships with Hitchiner and many other businesses. We try to paint that picture; this is not a dead end and we know that's true so we work really hard to get that message out, but it is not resonating. We don't know if we have the right channels open or where we are missing the mark, but we continue to struggle to fill classes and struggle to meet the demands of the community. M. Bender added that these trades often evolve into small business ownership and the opportunity to be your own boss. D. Hammer brought up several instances of success stories and added that parental interface and support plays a big role. J. Langdell brought up generational work ethics and asked if millennials even want to own their own business. What is their mindset, their motivation and what is their end result; maybe that's the wall. D. Jalbert said there is not one single answer as to who these kids are. There are many types of students; some have a path and know what they want to do, many are in the middle without support on the home front and are lost, and then there are some with very high aspirations. The schools alone are ill equipped to answer these questions. We have success stories coming out of the ATC, just not many. We have student who's working at Giorgio's now who was our first National Restaurant Association Certificate of Achievement Award winner. We should have the conversation regionally and the school boards could be the channel to deliver that message. Maybe it would resonate with the community leaders and trickle down.

T. Hutchins said there was a fairly good turnout at the Chamber / Recreation Department seasonal job fair last March. Maybe this year we will be more employers. The other thing that came out of the Workforce Development series, was that the Lakes Region put together an Internship Board. It is a clearing house website and I'd be willing to coordinate with our high schools and get a program like that set up. It would be a repository for jobs. J. Plourde reiterated that parental involvement and guidance is important and it is interesting how this generation is having to find their own way. A job website would be accessible by the parents, students and schools.

J. Maxwell said what my generation wants is experience. Whatever we're in is for the experience of doing it and there is a stigma against the experience of being in the trades. You might want to use language that will show the impact of that group. With a four year college, the students hear that they are going to have an amazing experience; the degree is the resume builder, but the real hook is paying our own rent or building relationships. This generation has so many options, it's hard to streamline the decision process or even know where to start. Schools can help by narrowing down our options and asking us what we want to experience.

M. Bender excused himself at 8:20.

J. Maxwell excused herself at 8:25.

RSA 79-E Community Revitalization Tax Incentive Program:

L. Daley explained the localized tax incentive relief program which focuses on the rehabilitation of existing qualifying structures in the downtown and urban areas. The town will have to authorize the Selectmen to create program at town vote. If the voters want to move forward with this program, the Selectmen will get buy in from the Planning Board and EDAC and submit application to the state. It is one small program that can provide tax relief, for a number of years, for the renovated value of structures without loss in current value. This would encourage owners to rehabilitate tired buildings that will, in the long run, improve the tax base. We have a wide range of properties the downtown Oval area and corridors along the gateways that could be eligible. D. Hammer said this is definitely tax positive because if buildings don't get rehabbed, their value would reduce if they disintegrate or become vacant. This program will allow the base level of tax revenue to continue. L. Daley added the program is fairly broad based with local latitude. J. Langdell inquired if there was benefit to look at the west side of town. D. Hammer referenced an old refurbished building in White River Junction, VT and said if you can create that kind of incentive, even on the west end, it will create a reason to bring people in.

M. Ciardelli asked if there was any feedback from the Selectmen. L. Daley replied not yet. T. Hutchins said the original legislation was crafted through the Main Street Center then merged into the CDFA but the CDFA no longer has their downtown resource center, so is there movement in terms of expanding it outside of downtowns? M. Ciardelli said we run the risk of exclusion outside that area. J. Langdell added that we still have the philosophical question; do we want to support the downtown or do we want to create the opportunity of more than one downtown. That was one of the concerns with rezoning the Brox property.

D. Jalbert asked if we know what the experiences from other communities has been. L. Daley said Stratham put this in place but he is not sure if anyone took advantage of the program. This program would be for property owners in the defined Oval area and discussion on the boundaries of the area followed. J. Langdell said we need to look beyond how the Oval zoning district is defined and maybe have a one mile walkability designation. L. Daley brought up the new dance studio on Cottage St and stated that whole area is prime for development so this is an opportunity to think outside the boundaries a bit. J. Langdell added that follows through with the planned charrette in the area from a few years ago. M. Ciardelli said it would be a disservice to not include the gateway to Wilton. J. Langdell asked for information on the experiences from other communities, especially those comparable in size to Milford. We've also encouraged several economic revitalization zones scattered around town. T. Hutchins noted that the MIT also has a revolving loan fund and struggles to find takers. A brief discussion on loan versus tax relief followed. M. Ciardelli said this is an interesting idea and seems to be a good program. He then offered to write communication from this group that EDAC is in support of the overall program, to be defined.

J. Langdell made a motion that Milford's Economic Development Advisory Council supports bringing the notion of RSA 79-E to the Board of Selectmen as a viable option for promoting development in Milford. D. Hammer seconded and all in favor. Motion carried; 8-0-0.

Community Development Update:

L. Daley said that there has been a massive influx of residential building which will continue over the next couple of years.

- Construction of older subdivisions is continuing
- Autumn Oaks/San-Ken - 54 new homes
- Hutchinson Point/Mont Vernon Rd - 24 55+ condominiums
- Red Oak Apartments/Nashua St – 72 new apartments

- Contemporary Chrysler moving to Hammond Rd
- West Milford Storage will construct units on Wilton Rd

- Interest in the Brox Property
- The Heron Pond Ball Fields are seeded
- Miscellaneous commercial infill development

M. Ciardelli inquired how the town was keeping up with development with the change in staffing. L. Daley said Community Development went through some restructuring last year and he explained the current staffing levels. It has been a challenging experience so far. We are looking to hire a part time electrical inspector but will be working within our current budget. Next year we will propose two more part time individuals because the demand is there. S. Wilson said the current staff is meeting that challenge with a professional and positive attitude; however, sometimes we are scheduling inspections 3, 4, 5 days out and that affects economic development. We periodically have a backlog of zoning cases which also affects economic development; however, the Community Development staff is trying to remain business friendly within our current constraints. J. Langdell said in addition to development, staff is handling the Osgood Pond dredging project, the South St Improvement Plan, the Oval Area Improvement Plan, Brox and Heron Pond Fields. L. Daley added that our office takes on a lot of responsibility and a lot of projects, so we are managing as best we can. J. Langdell said she is an advocate for more professional planning staff that can help facilitate, support and divide up the work. When the change was made to combine the planner with the director for cost savings, development at a low point, but the economy has changed over the last eighteen months. C. Costantino reiterated that the workload in the department sometimes gets overwhelming. D. Hammer said for any business, consistency in staff and project

history is very important. L. Daley said it is also important to be flexible, within the codes, with business owners to keep projects going and save time. It was suggested that a Building Official attend the next meeting.

Master Plan Update – Economic Development & Brox Property Chapters

D. Jalbert asked if we have a vision, going forward, for the infrastructure of this community and do we have staffing to support the services and growth? The drought this summer was an anomaly, but we are adding 100 units and as an example, where will the water come from? J. Langdell said part of review of the master plan is to look at services but these questions are also asked at the Planning Board level on a regular basis. L. Daley referenced the Brox Master Plan that incorporates a future fire station and said we do long range planning; however, staffing is controlled by the Selectmen and although we are managing, we have been reactive instead of proactive. M. Ciardelli said services are taking longer and if the cost of adding staff is outweighed by additional tax revenue that would be a benefit to the business community. Many individuals have come to him to inquire about the workload in the Community Development office and it is a shame that Mark Fougere wasn't able to make today's meeting to hear these discussions. J. Langdell said we can provide constructive feedback to the Board. D. Hammer said it comes back to what was written in the master plan back in 1999 where the percentage of the budget that is getting used by residential is getting bigger and the amount of services that percentage of the budget uses is exceeding the amount they contribute. At some point you have to invest to get more of the low use tax base to offset the high use tax base. J. Langdell said we can take the residential vs commercial tax burden argument to the Selectmen and if we want help our budget, our tax base, we need to grow the commercial. In order to grow the commercial, we will need to have a marketing initiative and to lighten the load in Community Development. Part of that solution might be a Town Planner, but we need to make the connection. D. Hammer said the master plan is twenty years old and he brought up some of his challenges in developing a site without infrastructure. Local people will put up with that, but it won't bring in new business. J. Langdell brought up those same issues with the Brox Property.

M. Ciardelli said workforce is a very important issue, but our group is not the party to drive that forward. EDAC can however, continue the discussion on support for the Community Development Office.

Other Business:

11/10/16 Chamber of Commerce Regional workshop

11/30/16 Next EDAC meeting

T. Hutchins said the Chamber is getting more involved with advocacy at the state level and any input or involvement would be appreciated. The Business and Industry Association (BIS) is considered our lobbyist and we will not be looking at politics but issue oriented topics and regional focus.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10AM.

MINUTES APPROVED ON MARCH 22, 2017