

Minutes 05/20/2009

Bedford Economic Development Commission

Draft Summary Minutes

May 20, 2009

Bedford Meeting Room

10 Meetinghouse Road

A regular meeting of the Bedford Economic Development Commission was held on Wednesday, May 20, 2009 at 8:00 AM at the Bedford Meeting Room, 10 Meetinghouse Road.

Members Present: Russell Marcoux, Town Manager (Chairman)

Henry Bechard

Pam Brown

Councilor Bill Dermody

Mark Prestipino

Joseph Reilly

Michael Sandhu

Rick Sawyer, Planning Director

Jack Sullivan (8:20 AM)

Terry Wolf, Bedford School Board

Chairman Marcoux opened the meeting at 8:03 AM and conducted the meeting.

Chairman Marcoux welcomed and introduced Matt Henry, a UNH graduate student studying public administration to the Commission. Mr. Henry has been selected to serve a 400 hour fellowship with the Town with a focus on supporting the BEDC.

Approval of Minutes – April 15, 2009

MOTION by Mr. Prestipino to approve the minutes.

SECONDED by Councilor Dermody.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY with Mrs. Wolf and Mr. Reilly abstaining.

Item #1 – Review of Web Site Report and Discussions.

Mrs. Wolf reviewed websites from Claremont, Derry, Londonderry, Hooksett and Manchester pointing out elements that we should be considering.

Mr. Reilly asked if we would be making changes to the town's site or just proposing a site for economic development.

Chairman Marcoux stated that improvements would be made to the town site as well as establishing an economic development presence.

Councilor Dermody asked if there was a target date for the economic development page to be up.

Mrs. Wolf indicated that she had some basic information that was ready to go up now pending the Commission approval, but that a totally new site would take more time and would need to be funded.

Mr. Sawyer indicated that if we had a cost estimate for the web site changes we could talk to the Council about it during our update meeting.

Mr. Sandhu asked if we had any idea on what the other communities had spent on their sites.

Mrs. Wolf said it varied with Manchester spending the most. She indicated that she would present a list of options for the Town to consider.

Chairman Marcoux indicated that the web site would also contain the agendas, minutes and announcements.

Item #2 – Review of Business Leaders Forum

Chairman Marcoux stated that 42 people attended the forum and the response of those who were in attendance has been incredible. He reviewed a list of business contacts which indicated those who attended and which companies that we would need to make contact with.

Mr. Prestipino stated that the turnout was great and that many of those in attendance were also at the business roundtable. He also stated that he heard support for an economic development position within the town.

Mr. Reilly noted those in attendance were very familiar with the town and that they indicated that nothing is materially broken but there is support for a sustained long term economic development effort.

Mrs. Wolf indicated that it would have been good to have had more small business owners in attendance.

Mr. Sullivan was happy to hear about establishing an ambassador program and that there is support for a coordinator. He noted that there is a call for streamlining the development process.

Mr. Prestipino noted that we are reaching build-out and the remaining lots are constrained and that we will be experiencing a lot more redevelopment. Based on these limitations we need to maximize the dollars that are available.

Mrs. Brown stated that she heard support for alternatives to a dedicated person such as partnerships. There is support for an economic development focus and there are many who are willing to help. With our low volume of available land, there is a greater importance on retaining existing businesses. There is a need for marketing the benefits of development and that having an unpredictable process is bad.

Mr. Sandhu stated that he heard the biggest threat would be to do nothing and that the process is costly especially for the smaller developer. He heard the desire for a joint mission statement from the planning board and that the planning director should have more power.

Councilor Dermody indicated that it was good to hear from Mr. Stonner regarding the previous effort and that we should follow up with him to make sure that we make the same mistakes and to better understand why they discontinued their effort.

Mr. Sawyer indicated that he was concerned that many people find the development process to be adversarial. He also stated that he saw strong support for a Bedford Chamber of Commerce.

Chairman Marcoux stated that he has been asked to sit on a study committee with the Chamber regarding the issue of support to satellite communities.

Councilor Dermody stated that we need to know what the benefits of having our own chamber would be.

Mr. Reilly stated that he was the former president of the Chamber and he led a program to identify what their focus should be and it was decided to be more Manchester centric.

Mr. Prestipino stated that we need to market that we are open for business.

Mrs. Wolf stated that we need to market the benefits of businesses coming to Bedford.

Mrs. Brown noted that it was interesting to hear that we are a net importer of jobs and stated that it not a well known fact.

Mr. Sullivan stated that Mr. Marcoux and he had met with Jack Dowd the head of the Derry Economic Development Corporation who stated they would be eliminating their paid position and that they were seeking additional funds from the Town. Derry has struggled with being productive and with financing. The advice that Mr. Dowd has is to develop a good plan of action and be sure to get the word out.

Mr. Sullivan also stated that he was a member of the former Bedford Economic Development Committee and he felt it disbanded as a result of being a sunset committee with the Town Manager taking over the primary role at the end. It was a positive program which received good feedback at the time for reaching out to the business community.

Chairman Marcoux noted that our current Town Council has been very supportive and involved in the economic development program.

Councilor Dermody asked how Derry compared to Bedford in terms of development potential.

Chairman Marcoux stated that they were comparable with their Routes 28 and 102 and the business district but different in the way we support our programs with limited fighting.

Mr. Sullivan noted the example of a proposed Wal-Mart in Derry that ended up not moving forward in part due to the fighting within the community.

Mr. Sandhu stated that it is important to show support for projects at the planning board.

Chairman Marcoux noted that Merrimack has a program of getting business groups and the planning board together.

Mrs. Wolf noted a potential slogan for Bedford as, "You can get there from here".

Chairman Marcoux asked the Commissioners to pick 4 or 5 names for the Bedford Business Contacts list that did not attend the forum and for them to visit within the next few weeks with a report back to him by July 6, 2009.

Mrs. Wolf indicated that she would be preparing a leave behind sheet, a list of questions and a registration card for the members.

Mrs. Brown noted that it would be good to be able to indicate when the next forum would be.

Chairman Marcoux confirmed that we would pursue four forums with two Commissioners taking the lead on each as follows:

- 1) Retail, June 24th – Mr. Sandhu & Mr. Bechard
- 2) Development & Construction, July 22nd – Mr. Sandhu & Mr. Sullivan
- 3) Professional, August 26th – Mr. Prestipino & Mr. Reilly
- 4) General residents, September 23rd – Mrs. Wolf, Mrs. Brown & Mr. Prestipino

Mr. Sawyer updated the Commission on the results of the recent Master Plan public input forum and noted that the attendance could have been better, but those who were there provided excellent input and were very active throughout the program. He continued with a quick summary of a few of the Master Plan Survey results and noted that there would be a full presentation by the

UNH Survey Center on May 21, 2009 at 4:00 PM.

Chairman Marcoux noted that the water line extension had not been funded as part of the stimulus funding for Route 101 at Nashua Road and that other options were being pursued.

Councilor Dermody stated that the Council is pursuing the creation of a Infrastructure Committee to develop a priority list of project and how they might be funded as it has become more clear that in order to be competitive and to be able to sell property there must be good infrastructure in place.

Mr. Sullivan noted that RKG would be providing a detailed analysis of land opportunities as part of their report to the Master Plan which will be very helpful.

Item #4 – Program Development and Road Map - Update.

Chairman Marcoux noted that all that needed to be done at this point is to make the appropriate date changes.

Item #5 – Business Survey Discussion.

Chairman Marcoux noted that this item will be discussed at a future meeting.

Item #3 – Review and Discussion on Commissioner Comments.

Mr. Prestipino noted that he feels a pro-active position is best for being able to deliver results and that the position would also be charged with business development and sustainability of our existing tax base.

Mrs. Brown passed out a sheet of “must have’s”:

- Effective and well designed web site, messaging “why Bedford” to all constituents and providing needed info to developers, businesses, residents, visitors.
- Clear definition of what kinds of development we want in Bedford, unified messaging, and process consistent with the messaging.
- Streamlined planning and approval process that minimizes costs and time for all involved and delivers “what Bedford wants” for its present and future...
- Diversification of the commercial, industrial, and residential mix to protect against economic ups and downs and provide needed services, work force and desired residential mix.
- Clear understanding by residents and town decision-makers of the economic impact of commercial, as well as residential development and the implications of “doing nothing”: rigorous analysis of revenues and costs.
- Sustainable solutions.
- Cost sharing by those who gain.

Mrs. Wolf noted that we have gained traction and there is support however we may not be able to justify a full time position. We need to develop a list of options for consideration.

Mr. Reilly stated that we should never focus only on the inbound development.

Chairman Marcoux stated that he sees four options:

- Do nothing
- Create a position
- Partner with another community
- Hire a consultant.

Chairman Marcoux reviewed the action items that had been discussed:

- 1) Business visitations – results submitted by July 6th
- 2) List of questions, leave behind sheet, etc. for visitations – Mrs. Wolf
- 3) There will be four forums on the 4th Wednesday of the month, June, July, August & September
- 4) The BEDC will be meeting with the Town Council on June 24, 2009
- 5) The next meeting of the BEDC will be June 17, 2009
- 6) A web site meeting will be held – Mr. Marcoux, Councilor Dermody & Mrs. Wolf.

MOTION by Mr. Sullivan to adjourn.

SECONDED by Councilor Dermody

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

ADJOURNMENT at 10:03 AM

The next meeting of the Commission is scheduled for June 17, 2009 at 8:00 AM.

Submitted by: Rick Sawyer

Audio tapes of this meeting are available for listening during regular office hours at the Town Office Building, 24 North Amherst Road, Bedford, NH.