

Minutes 07/15/2009

Bedford Economic Development Commission

Draft Summary Minutes

July 15th, 2009

Bedford Meeting Room

10 Meetinghouse Road

A regular meeting of the Bedford Economic Development Commission (BEDC) was held on Wednesday, July 15th, 2009 at 8:00 am at the Bedford Meeting Room, 10 Meetinghouse Road.

Members Present: Jack Sullivan (acting Chairman)

Henry Bechard

Pam Brown

Councilor Bill Dermody

Joseph Reilly

Rick Sawyer, Planning Director

Members Absent: Mark Prestipino

Alice DeSousa

Michael Sandhu

Terry Wolf, Bedford School Board

Russell Marcoux, Town Manager

Call to Order

Acting Chairman, Jack Sullivan convened the meeting at 8:00AM.
Mr. Sullivan is filling in for Russ Marcoux who is on vacation.

Approval of the Minutes – June 17th, 2009

- **MOTION** by Mr. Bechard to approve the minutes.
- **SECONDED** by Councilor Dermody
- **MOTION CARRIED** Unanimously (6-0-0)

Agenda:

1) Meet with RKG for Master Plan Update (Michael Casino)

§ Include Discussion on Economic Development Chapter

Mr. Casino started by referencing the Economic Conditions chapter draft of the Master Plan. The handout is a summary of the major conclusions that his team reached. He described the format of the handout. Mr. Casino asked the commission for direction as to how they would like it presented. The commission stated that they would prefer an overview of general conclusions followed by a question and answer session to follow.

Mr. Casino asked the committee to refer to the second page which is the summary of key findings “Historical Employment”. Mr. Casino said that the Town of Bedford saw a dramatic jump in raw employment numbers between 1990-2007. This was particularly the case in the 1990’s. The service sector provides approximately 90% of Bedford’s jobs while production (construction, manufacturing etc.) provides about 10%. The growth rate in the 2000’s, while not to the extent of the 1990’s, still exceeded the county, state, and the City of Manchester.

Mr. Casino then referenced slide 4 which described what types of jobs Bedford provided. The largest sectors in Bedford include Healthcare (17%), Retail (14%), and Professional/Technical Services (12%). The largest gains were in the service industries, particularly in the retail sector. The most declining industry was Finance and Insurance which took a 12.6% loss in jobs during that time period.

Mr. Casino then described the raw number of firms that were added during that time period (slide 5). Mr. Casino said that Bedford consists primarily of small firms who employ 5-10 employees which is counter to many residents’ perception. Small businesses are the “Backbone” of Bedford Economic Development.

Mr. Casino then showed a chart comparing Bedford’s gains to Hillsborough County and the State of New Hampshire. Bedford outperformed the state and county in service industries such as Administration & WMS, Retail, Management, and Healthcare. However, Bedford was behind in Scientific/Technical Services, Real Estate, Construction, and Manufacturing industries. Mr. Casino recommended outreach to industries which are contracting in order to resolve these issues.

Mr. Casino then discussed economic projections for 2006-2016 according to NHES. He cautioned the Commission that the projections were made prior to last year’s economic downturn and therefore projections may not be as helpful now. According to NHES, the numbers will remain as projected but Mr. Casino said he was skeptical. Mr. Casino added that New England Economic Partnership’s (NEEP) numbers may be more realistic. NEEP’s projections, which are for 5 years into the future, suggest more modest growth. NEEP’s numbers are not all “gloom and doom” and projects stable growth. NEEP projects losses in the short term, but also a full recovery of all virtually all sectors by 2012.

Mr. Reilly asked what subsectors encompassed the finance/insurance sectors in order to determine why there was such a large loss in the sector (12%). Mr. Casino responded by saying the sector included mortgage companies, banks, insurance groups ect. The mortgage companies were probably the major culprit for the decline.

Mr. Casino then went on to describe the non-residential development trends in Bedford. Since 1998 Bedford has developed 1.12 million square feet, amounting to an increase in assessed value of \$84.7 million. The 20 year average for Bedford is about 100,000 square feet of new construction annually. 1988-1998 consisted of office space development as opposed to commercial development of the 2000’s. The “build-out” year is approximately 10-15 years out. This may be altered depending on the construction of the airport access road and how quickly we recover from the current economic downturn. The available land that is left for development is about half of what it was in 1998.

It was asked if the 200 acres of vacant land included state-owned land. Mr. Casino said that it did not; it just includes privately owned land. The land includes mostly land that is not developed too easily. Mr. Sawyer said that the 200 acres that is left includes

land that has more restrictions on it such as wetlands and slopes.

Mr. Casino then gave an overall picture of how economic development has gone over the past decade. He said that Economic Development has been very positive in relation to Bedford's peers. Bedford has been rather competitive at the state and county level. With regard to the economic downturn, New Hampshire seems to be better positioned than other states to ride it out and overcome it. Bedford should expect future losses in the future, particularly in the Retail and Finance sectors. However, this could provide an opportunity for future Economic Development. Innovative mixed-use, residential-business partnerships may be a direction Bedford wants to go. For example: Healthcare with elderly housing.

Mr. Casino then described the Strategic Opportunity Area's section of the report. Such opportunities include:

- *Build-out of nonresidential zoning districts* - What are the best uses for the Performance Zone? Airport Access road presents the most opportunities. The Multi-modal transportation systems are another possibility.

- *Londonderry Business Park* – This is the future competition for Bedford. However, it may also be a benefit by providing increased energy for Bedford's Economic Development desires. Collaboration with Londonderry and Manchester is also a possibility for marketing the entire greater Manchester area.

- *Highway and Rail Systems* - Should examine their capacity in order to make sure it is sufficient. Route 101 corridor should be looked at because the traffic is too crowded and has too little capacity. The rail system would encourage movement particularly among residential zones.

- *Sewer and Water Systems* – Bedford should make sure capacity is increased.

- *Workforce Housing* – Does Bedford wish to do more in the Performance Zone for mixed-use? Or should Bedford keep it non-residential?

- *Expanded Regional Cooperation* – Working more closely with Manchester and the possibility of a regional Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Reilly asked how Bedford compares with our competitors. Mr. Casino said that Bedford is about equal to Merrimack, and exceeding Goffstown. Mr. Casino has not specifically looked at that subject though and just gave his personal perception.

Mr. Casino gave a brief overview of the Master Plan's recommendations for Economic Development as seen on page 24 and 25 of

the handout. Mr. Sawyer said that at the last retail forum, business owners were split as to whether the town should expand or protect what was currently occupying Route 101. The debate is ongoing regarding what to do with Route 101. Overexpansion could result in greater traffic problems. However, the location is great for Economic Development. Mr. Dermody said that Bedford should wait to see what the State's plan was in order to have it Bedford's plans coincide.

Mr. Reilly said he was impressed with the Master Plan committee particularly with regard to their long-term strategic thinking. He said that what Economic Development comes down to is three options:

1. Full-Time Economic Development Staff in Town of Bedford
2. Partnering with Local Towns/Municipalities
3. Buying Services from Consultants

Mr. Reilly said that each option has benefits and drawbacks and should be looked at with scrutiny. Mr. Reilly expressed his support for recommendations #1 and #2 in the handout.

Mr. Sawyer said that Master Plan of the Macy's mall area should be done along with a sub-design and recommend what should be the best use for that area of the Performance Zone. Relooking at Performance Zone uses should also be a priority since it is more than 15 years old now.

Mr. Dermody agreed with Mr. Sawyer. Mr. Dermody said that there should also be better collaboration between the planning board and the town's Economic Development function so that Mr. Sawyer's idea can occur. Often there is an adversarial role among Planning/ED and this should be reversed. Dermody also said that mixed-use along Route 3 may be possible to get the best use of the area.

Mr. Casino will be presenting findings to the Master Plan Steering Committee tomorrow afternoon. The Master Plan website is linked to the front page of the town's website. Mr. Sawyer said that the Master Plan Steering Committee takes any suggestions made by the BEDC seriously. Mr. Dermody asked Mr. Sawyer to state to the Steering Committee that BEDC wishes to establish a relationship with the Master Plan Steering Committee and that the BEDC agrees with the findings written in the report.

2) Review of Website Report and Discussion (TW)

§ WEB site committee recommendation to Council 7/22

Mr. Dermody presented Website report to BEDC for Ms. Wolf who was absent. Mr. Dermody began by thanking Ms. Wolf for all of her hard work in the websites development and the Request for Proposal (RFP) that was just released. Several vendors were interviewed for the contract and one was chosen but the name of the company was not released publically because the council has

not approved it yet. The vendor meets all of the BEDC requirements that they desired. The website will be linked to the Town of Bedford website. The website development process is on schedule and it should be up by the November timeframe.

Mr. Reilly asked what the scope of work was for the RFP. Mr. Dermody answered that the RFP was for the redevelopment of an existing town website as well as an addition of an economic development component.

Mr. Sawyer said that the RFP for the website essentially had two parts: