

## Bedford Economic Development Commission

November 18, 2009  
Bedford Meeting Room  
10 Meetinghouse Road

A regular meeting of the Bedford Economic Development Commission (BEDC) was held on Wednesday, November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2009 at 8:00 am at the Bedford BCTV Meeting Room, 10 Meetinghouse Road.

**Members Present:** Henry Bechard  
Councilor Bill Dermody  
Russell Marcoux, Town Manager  
Mark Prestipino  
Joseph Reilly  
Michael Sandhu  
Rick Sawyer, Planning Director  
Jack Sullivan  
Terry Wolf, Bedford School Board  
Matt Henry, Intern  
Pam Brown

**Members Excused:** Alice DeSouza

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### Call to Order

- Chairman, Russ Marcoux convened the meeting at 8:00AM.

### Approval of the Minutes – October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2009

- **MOTION** by Henry Bechard
- **SECONDED** by Mark Prestipino
- **MOTION CARRIED** Unanimously (9-0-0)

### AGENDA

- 1) **Review of WEB Site Development Schedule. (TW)**
  - **A Review of Town's new Website**
  - **Update of Economic Development Webpage (ADS)**

Ms. Wolf began by explaining that the Website went live about a week ago. She showed the public the new Website, starting with the masthead. She showed the dropdown boxes and flash which are attractive features of the new website. The new Website also has a

calendar complete with minutes and agendas for the public to access. Terry said that the best feature of this site is how easy it is for town employees to update information. The site also has an expiration date that automatically expires so town employees do not have to closely monitor the website's content. Old materials on Websites tend to look very unprofessional. We still need to work toward ensuring that all material looks consistent among the different departments. Ms. Wolf asked the public to contact her if anyone had any experience with websites or graphic design to assist with that.

Chairman Marcoux explained how the Website search feature worked. The public can now just type in a term into the Website and search results that contain that term will appear in the results. This will make it very easy to find documents on the Web. One of the other features available is the "Subscribe to News" feature that allows the public to sign up for e-mail updates. The public can now sign up and get agendas, newsletters, minutes etc. if they so choose. This feature is expected to expand in the future. Another attractive feature is the "contact us" feature that allows the public to e-mail comments to the town and it comes directly to Ms. Boufford who can then send it to the correct department. Forms and applications is another great feature that will enable the public to access important documents right on the Web. However, right now it is not working to its full capabilities but is a work in progress. Our goal is to have all forms/applications on the Web so they can fill out the form and send it to us electronically. We just need to put all documents in the same form (.doc vs. .pdf) so it is easier for our residents. Lastly, we have three years of minutes on our website, and we are now achieving prior year minutes on line. Chairman Marcoux thanked all those who were involved in the process, especially Ms. Wolf who took the lead on this project.

Mr. Sandhu asked if there was any feedback from townspeople regarding the Website. Chairman Marcoux responded by saying that the feedback has been almost all positive. Somebody commented that we need to have the town minutes go farther back, which is a good point, and we are working with Virtual Town Hall to make that happen. Mr. Sandhu said that he expected some contention because change is tough for some people; however, he said that he thinks the Website looks great.

Ms. Wolf said that Ms. DeSouza was supposed to speak about the Economic Development Page, however she was not there. Ms. Wolf said that there was an economic development tab on the Town's site. It is going to take time to implement Ms. DeSouza's plan, but the individual Economic Development page will be a part of the next phase of the process.

## 2) Updates

- **Airport Master Plan Review Committee (BD)**
- **SNHPC Regional Plan Review Committee (BD-HB)**
- **Joint Meeting with Master Plan Steering Comm. (BD-MP)**
- **Metro Center-NH Infrastructure Summit, Nov. 12**

Mr. Dermody said that he had nothing to report regarding the Airport Master Plan Review Committee.

Chairman Marcoux asked Mr. Dermody to brief the committee regarding the work that is being done with the GACIT Commission. Mr. Dermody said that members of the DOT and Executive Councilor Wieczorek told the Town of Bedford that the Route 101 project was taken off of the ten year plan. Several individuals from the BEDC got together and wrote a letter to the GACIT Commission in support of putting the project back on the plan. They also convinced the School Board and the Town Council to support their position. The letter was sent to elected and appointed officials as well as towns that would be impacted by the project. Mr. Dermody emphasized that it really is a regional issue even though it potentially has the greatest impact on Bedford and Economic Development. The Business owners along Route 101 have constantly mentioned the need for the improvements. Chairman Marcoux thanked those who were involved for their hard work in this matter. The message has been sent loud and clear.

Mr. Bechard said that a SNHPC Regional Plan Review Committee meeting was held Monday but he was unable to attend. Mr. Dermody, who was also at the meeting, said that the meeting was devoted to a SWOT session. The next meeting should be a SWOT analysis session. Each town is asked to bring their own SWOT to the next meeting. Because we have already performed a SWOT, we are ahead of other towns. Mr. Sawyer said that the target industries chapter that was drafted had been completed. BEDC members should have received the document. Mr. Sawyer recommended that the BEDC read the chapter.

Mr. Prestipino asked if the BEDC should share our draft with the Master Plan Steering Committee. The Commission agreed they should.

Chairman Marcoux described the Infrastructure Summit that took place last week. Bedford was represented by members of the BEDC as well as the Master plan Steering Committee. Chairman Marcoux asked Ms. Brown for her impressions of the Summit.

Ms. Brown said that the summit had a rather hefty agenda and great attendance. It focused on the economic/infrastructure future, multi-modal transportation, financing, and benchmarking the region. One thing that came out of the summit was the need to recognize the economic state that we are in. Mr. Dick Anagnost, in particular, said that local governments cannot expect developers to finance their infrastructure needs in the future before there is any return on their projects because banks are not going to be able to finance such projects. There needs to be some realism in the future. The State is attempting to integrate agencies for more "one stop shopping". Similar restructuring should occur at the local level as we have discussed to streamline the planning process. There is also a lot of excitement about the airport. Bedford is not the only municipality that is having their projects taken off of the GACIT Commission ten year plan, there are others that are having similar issues. Due to financial concerns many of these projects are less of a priority now. Ms. Brown said that she came back with a couple of new ideas

with regard to funding economic development. A dedicated revenue source, enterprise funds, fund raising, and other creative funding models should be explored.

Chairman Marcoux asked Mr. Sawyer to describe some of the activity that has been seen recently. Mr. Sawyer said that there has been a lot of activity in the past 4-6 weeks. Most of which has been along the Route 3 corridor. The activity appears to be a positive sign, but Bedford is also losing the Wayfarer Inn and Conference Center which will be a “dark spot” for the corridor for a while. Mr. Sawyer said that by late spring some of the projects Bedford is working on now should go public. One term that is going around now is: What is the “new normal” for development? Mr. Sawyer said that it seems like Bedford is struggling to find its “new normal”. We may not be able to get everything we want in the future.

Mr. Henry said that he was excited about the rail projects that were discussed at the summit, and it will really expand the greater Manchester region. It ties right in with the recent regionalization efforts that the BEDC has been discussing throughout their work. Mr. Henry said that Mr. Anagnost’s piece was most useful when he essentially told municipalities to wake up. Municipalities need to buy into economic development infrastructure more if they are to prosper. The future is going to be different than what we are used to.

Mr. Sandhu asked Mr. Sawyer if he could describe some of the recent projects that are going on and their progress such as the 114 and Kilton Rd. projects. Mr. Sawyer responded by saying that the large mixed use residential/commercial projects are scheduled to break ground this spring. Those were the projects that Mr. Anagnost was talking about where he is being forced to bond infrastructure costs upfront. The Lexus project is scheduled to be presented to the Planning Board in January for construction in the spring. There is a fair amount of activity in addition to these, which are in good shape for the spring. Chairman Marcoux then described some road projects that are going on which are positive.

Mr. Dermody asked for Mr. Reilly’s comments regarding what the banking industries perspective was as it relates to Ms. Brown’s comments. Is money really going to be scarce forever? Mr. Reilly said that he does not have such a pessimistic view as some do. Throughout the recession there has been available credit for projects, so he does not see such a crunch. Some of Centrix bank’s larger competitors are out looking for new credit opportunities as well, which is a good sign. Mr. Dermody said that he is encouraged by Mr. Reilly’s comments. Mr. Dermody said that an economic development entity should work to unite a business with a bank to make credit available.

Chairman Marcoux said that the Manchester Chamber of Commerce has been increasingly expanding into Bedford. They have had a breakfast program at Gloria Jeans and Granite State Cabinetry. They have also had a lunch program at Cancun restaurant, and there is another one at CR Sparks next week from 5:00pm-7:00pm. Chairman Marcoux encouraged all from the BEDC to attend. The GMCC will be relocating to Hanover Street to have a first floor office in Manchester.

Mr. Bechard said that Chairman Marcoux sent out an e-mail asking fellow Towns if they would entertain the idea of a joint economic development function. We are meeting with a community on November 23<sup>rd</sup>. If that goes well we will also speak with other communities.

### **3) Program Development: Report to the Council (PB)**

- **Discussion & Work on Draft Report to Council (PB, HB, TW)**
- **Discussion on Economic Development function plan (JR+HB)**
- **Plan for Presentation to Council on Dec. 16 (All)**

Ms. Brown began by saying that it is most important to ensure the overall BEDC message is articulated in the draft that we are working on. So she asked that that it be what the BEDC focus on when looking through the draft. We need to make sure we are in agreement about the main ideas of the draft.

Ms. Brown said that she collapsed the section about the Commission and its charge, and it seemed to flow better. The process describes what the Commission has been doing the past year. Ms. Brown asked for comments.

The economic profile was written with information that was gathered from the Master Plan Steering Committee document. It was our effort not to repeat what was in the Steering Committee draft too much. Mr. Dermody asked if the BEDC agreed with the build out statement in the draft. Some said that they disagree. Mr. Prestipino said that he also disagrees like Mr. Dermody. He suggested that the BEDC makes the point that the majority of the 200 acres is constrained in some manner. Mr. Bechard said that there is also a possibility for an economic updraft that will make the 10-15 year number more like 7-10 years for build out. Mr. Prestipino said that “natural” development will no longer occur without a helping hand.

Ms. Brown said that if we assume the “natural pace” of the past 15 years were not to continue, what should we consider a “natural pace”? Mr. Dermody said that the “natural pace” comment assumes that if no outside influence were to occur, this would not happen. However, it could happen with a helping hand. Ms. Brown thanked Mr. Dermody for his clarification. Mr. Dermody said that the 2009 reference to the Master Plan was confusing and should be taken out.

Mr. Henry asked about assigning a dollar figure per acre or square foot would be helpful in making the business case. Mr. Sullivan said that for every acre of land it is possible to develop 10,000 square feet (including parking, and other amenities). There is no assumption regarding how much of the 200 acres is buildable. Mr. Sawyer said that he is unwilling to address the 200 or 300 acres because no substantial analysis has been done on the parcels and he does not want hypothetical assumptions to stick. Mr. Sawyer also clarified that there is 300 acres total but 200 acres along the Route 3 corridor. Mr. Prestipino said that it would be helpful to evaluate revenue to the Town per square foot because we can calculate the revenue received the past 15 years and say “this will not

happen in the next ten years”. Ms. Wolf asked if it was possible to get a value for redevelopment. Mr. Sawyer said that it was not possible. Mr. Prestipino asked if it would be useful to use some businesses that recently closed as a model for lost revenue. Mr. Sawyer said it could work so long as they are specific about the examples that are used, but it may not be something that the BEDC should spend time on beyond noting the importance of redevelopment.

Ms. Brown then described the “Key’s to Success” page that precedes the SWOT analysis. She said we need to make sure the SWOT analysis is complete. The Planning Premises and Guidelines section has been a bit of a struggle for us. It may be helpful to put it in front of the SWOT analysis. Mr. Bechard summarized the main idea of that section by saying it described the past 15 years which happened “naturally”, then forecasts the future and says it will not happen as “naturally” so it requires a helping hand. Mr. Prestipino said that because we are at build out, it can be assumed that residential development will not add anything to the tax base. If we get more involved in economic development it will be possible to add to the tax base on the commercial side.

Chairman Marcoux asked Mr. Henry to try to find data that supports the statement that “Bedford is in a better position than most municipalities”, while it is indeed true, we need to quantify that somehow. He also said that he will get information about the impact of State Revenue Sharing and Retirement Contributions that are going to impact Towns more than expected.

Mr. Dermody said that the section that said “very few towns are making a commitment to economic development” is incorrect because there are towns that have discussed improvements they plan to make. Mr. Prestipino said that while they may have discussed measures, they have yet to implement any significant function as Manchester and Londonderry has. Mr. Bechard said that Derry has hired a consultant to perform the function. Mr. Prestipino said that we can take the “very” out and just leave it as “few Towns have ...” Mr. Dermody also said that redevelopment should be better emphasized on page 11.

Chairman Marcoux said that he will come up with more of a description for the “Become more business friendly” section on page 11. Ms. Wolf said that she disagreed with the “Planning Premises and Guidelines” title and said it should be changed to “Historical Economic Growth” or something of the like. She also recommended placing it in front of the SWOT section because it sets it up so nicely. The Commission agreed.

Ms. Brown said she disliked Figure 4 because it did not really show any significant change. Mr. Henry agreed and said that if we combine figure 4, 5, & 6 it makes our thesis a lot clearer. He said that if you take out the commercial burden on the graph you can zoom in on residential and really see the change. Then you can use actual data from 15 years prior and combine it with hypothetical to see how they compare. Ms. Brown said that if we looked at total tax revenue and showed what proportion has come from commercial vs. residential historically, then project into the future it would be clearer. Ms. Brown said the manner we graph it could be discussed later after the meeting.

Ms. Brown went on to say that she thinks the peer review should be mentioned sooner in the document. Mr. Bechard said that he thinks we should add the incentives that other towns are offering. Mr. Henry said he will try and find out what other towns are doing with regard to business incentives. Mr. Prestipino said we should place the peer review section in the process section because it answers the question of “why we are writing the report?” Mr. Dermody agreed and said that we are writing the report because other towns are doing it so we are forced to. Mr. Dermody said that there should also be a better transition between surrounding towns peer review and NH-DRED, SNHPC, CRDC etc. Mr. Reilly suggested the SNHPC, CRDC, and NH-DRED sections could be mentioned under “option 2” in the recommendations section because they are outside resources that could be used. Ms. Wolf summarized by saying that the peer regional review section heading is essentially going away and being redistributed in other sections. Mr. Bechard said he recommends using it more as an exhibit and keeping it in tact. Mr. Reilly said he would not do it that way. Ms. Brown said they can talk after the meeting.

Ms. Brown said that priority needs is being taken out. Ms. Wolf said that that could be the possible options section instead. Ms. Brown said that the options section should be separate because it is more geared at assigning accountability for implementing recommendations rather than the town’s priority needs. The priority needs are essentially recommendations. Mr. Reilly said that if you discuss the business case for option 1, parts of “keys to success” and “recommendations” belong in the “expectations and deliverables” section.

Mr. Prestipino said that if you look at the flow of the document it is very purposeful and makes a lot of sense. He asked if we should change the word “recommendations” to something else. He also asked if the recommendations section should go before the possible options section saying “here’s what that person is supposed to do”. Ms. Brown said that perhaps “recommendations” is the wrong word. Other possible words mentioned were “requirements”, “must haves”, and “findings”. The BEDC determined “requirements” was the most desirable word and we should change “options” to “recommended options”. Ms. Wolf said that she thought the BEDC was only making one recommendation. Mr. Reilly said that the BEDC decided to make a few recommendations but prioritize them. Ms. Brown suggested that there be one “recommendation” and other less priority recommendations be called “options”.

Chairman Marcoux said that we need to emphasize that the recommendations of the function is that of the private sector members and not the staff members. The staff was purposefully not involved in the recommendations process for that reason. Mr. Dermody said that he will abstain if he has to vote on what is the recommendation. He said that option 1 is a good recommendation in a perfect world. However, the BEDC needs to understand the position of the Council. We need to develop a business case to support the recommendation. Mr. Prestipino said we need to be honest and explicit that we need option 1. Then “alternate options” can be discussed. Example: “option 2” and “option 3” become “alternative option 1” and “alternative option 2” with original “option 1” becoming the “recommendation”. The BEDC agreed.

Ms. Brown went said that the BEDC should estimate costs associated with each option. Perhaps there is not a large difference between hiring a person vs. contracted services. We should also calculate risks associated with each option. We could discuss various decision criteria we are analyzing each option with. For example: cost, return, risk, etc. Mr. Prestipino said that decision criteria amounts to how we will eventually define success. If success defined as taking a proactive approach to economic development and business retention, we should set goals as to how much this adds to the commercial tax base.

Mr. Bechard said that the business case should look a few years into the future because we should assume this individual is not going to bring in any additional revenue his first year on the job. There is going to be a lag prior to seeing return on investment. Not only will there be a lag because the individual will take at least a year to get acquainted with the position, but there will also be a lag because construction of additional business takes time. Mr. Dermody said that while that is indeed the case, it should not take 10-15 years to see a return. Mr. Prestipino said that the BEDC needs to discuss the best way to make the business case. Chairman Marcoux said that if the BEDC decides to hire an economic development person, there will inevitably be additional costs to support that person. Mr. Reilly said there are massive opportunity costs of not doing anything; however, it is tough to quantify this. Mr. Reilly then summarized the changes that were discussed and recommended that there be a subsequent meeting of the BEDC at Centrix Bank again to discuss the business case. The BEDC agreed. Mr. Sullivan said that the meeting should be open to everyone on the BEDC, not just the private sector members. It was decided that this meeting would be on November 23<sup>rd</sup> at 2:00pm, and that it be properly posted.

Chairman Marcoux explained posting requirements of the meeting so it is in accordance with RSA 91:A and summarized what will be discussed. Mr. Dermody said that the report should be given to the Town Council prior to the presentation on December 16th so they have enough time to read it. BEDC decided to meet on December 2 at 8:30am so that there is enough time for revisions and the document could be sent to the Town Council the week after. The BEDC agreed that the document is pretty much complete with the exception of the business case.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**None**

## **COMMISSION MEMBER COMMENTS**

**None**

## **ADJOURNMENT ( NO later than 10:00am )**

Any person with a disability who wishes to attend this public meeting and needs to be provided a reasonable accommodation in order to participate, please call the Town Offices at 472-5242 at least 72 hours in advance so that arrangements can be made.

**NEXT MEETING: December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2009, 8:30am**

**Adjournment**

- **MOTION** by Mr. Bechard to Adjourn.
- **SECONDED** by Ms. Brown.
- **MOTION CARRIED** unanimously (9-0-0)

**December 11<sup>th</sup> – Deadline for the final report to the Town Council**

**December 16<sup>th</sup> – Discussion of the report with the Town Council**

**Next Meeting: December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2009 8:30am**

**Respectfully submitted: Matt Henry**