

Economic Development Committee Minutes 10/17/2016

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

APPROVED Meeting Minutes

Recorded by Janice Pack

October 17, 2016

Members Present: Paul Renaud, Jack Moran, Norm Nickerson, Andre Wood

Meeting Opened: 7:00 PM

The Minutes were reviewed by Paul Renaud, and NNickerson made a motion to accept them as written. This was seconded by JMoran, and all were in favor.

Next on the Agenda was the **Zoning Ordinance review for economic development related amendments**. JMoran stated: "We need to expand the business footprint". He felt that the language was too restrictive, especially in the Business District, and said "The doors should be wide open, allowing full access to whatever business wanted to be there." The Committee discussed at length what businesses they wanted to open the Town's doors to, and which ones were undesirable. It was determined that the other mandates in place should safeguard us from a problem down the road if an undesirable business wanted in. It would still fall to the Planning Board to decide if an applicant was bringing in something that would meet their criteria.

In the Center Village District, paragraph 1 states: "It shall be primarily a district of residences. Customary Home Occupations and Professional Uses, as defined in Section IV.B, are permitted in this district." It was felt that the biggest problem was the use of the word "customary". It currently allows agricultural use, but that isn't a big driver of revenue. The Committee discussed what kinds of business would be "professional" – ones that require some sort of certification or advanced degree? It should include doctors, lawyers, accountants, barbers and beauty salons, to name a few. Some of the language in paragraph 2 will need to be changed because of the new Accessory Dwelling Unit regulations which went into effect earlier this year.

In the Business District, paragraph 1, a., cites types of businesses that are permitted. JMoran felt this was too restrictive; "you can't get caught up in rules because they will change." PRenaud asked how it should be tweaked. The Committee agreed that we have enough controls in place to keep a new business in check (i.e., regulations on noise, lighting, discharge, parking, etc.). It was agreed to remove the list of approved businesses – strike everything after "...for the transactions of business" and take out the words "the above" in the next sentence. Regarding d., entertainment halls, AWood wanted to strike that sentence entirely and JMoran agreed. "Entertainment hall" isn't defined anywhere – is that just to disallow bars? Again, one way to make things better for residents is to increase the value of town land and bring in new businesses. The other regulations will determine which businesses are desirable. The Planning Board can review the impact, and Code Enforcement will also keep things in check.

The sign criteria may need to be changed, as it could be discriminatory. Three square feet is really small. The sign requirement could be an issue for both new proposed businesses and residents, but the Planning Board will be looking at the sign ordinance in the near future anyway.

AWood is not against having a process in place to govern what business ventures are acceptable, but wants it to be fair. In the current ordinance, the applicant will have to come before the Planning Board anyway. Any change of use would trigger a site plan review, and everything else is subject to the impact review. PRenaud wants more clearly defined reasons to trigger a site plan review. It could be more advantageous to regulate based on impact. Rather than defining the type of business that would be acceptable, let the impact review either allow or disallow a proposed business. The main thing is to give as much leeway as possible for someone to do something with their property, while maintaining the character of the district.

The Committee feels we need to increase the potential for economic development by decreasing the restrictions in place. There is no reason to restrict the running of the business solely to people living in the home as currently mandated in the ordinances for the Center Village District and General Residence District. PRenaud wanted this for Rural Ag, too. JMoran agreed, and so did NNickerson. Also get rid of the words "having a new owner" unless there is a change in use. That will make it easier to transfer property.

Regarding the "Buying, selling and exposing for sale home produce and products", in the Business District only, it would include camp fire wood not grown on the property. This is another area that seems overly restrictive. However, the Committee opted to leave that as it was for now.

Other Business

It was decided to table the Local Business Directory/Event until the next meeting, which will be held on November 21st at 7:00 PM.

PRenaud Briefly spoke about solar energy, and referred to the new energy chapter that was coming for the Master Plan.

Regarding the Regional Planning Commissioners, PRenaud spoke to Lisa Murphy again about the Regional Planners Meetings. We could have up to 2 representatives for this town, and there are 3 meetings each year. The June one is the annual meeting, the fall

meeting was held last Tuesday and the next one is in February. JMoran said that who goes doesn't really matter; we're representing the Town. The SWRPC is also looking for new members for their Advisory Committee, which meets 4 times a year in Keene. Those meetings are held in the afternoons.

Paul mentioned the vacancy on the Planning Board to see if anyone was interested.

AWood said that he heard from Scott Brooks at TDS who put him through to the guy who handles business accounts in this state, and who gave him a pricing plan for fiber. He can get more bandwidth and reliable service at a lower cost. If they come in, they'll corner the market, but they are still waiting for "their upper echelons to pull the trigger."

SBrooks would like a commitment of businesses who would be willing to sign on. It was determined that we really cannot help him capture this as it shows favoritism. We need to be careful about how we would go about helping them build a customer base, but it would be nice to invite him to the business forum event when it's held. That way others could hear firsthand the options TDS could provide.

Hearing no more business to discuss, PRenaud motioned to adjourn. This was seconded by NNickerson and all were in favor.

The meeting Adjourned at 9:33 PM.

THESE MINUTES WERE APPROVED AT THE MEETING HELD ON 11/21/16.