

Economic Development Advisory Committee Minutes 05/27/2014

Economic Development Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

Recorded by Paul Renaud

May 27, 2014

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

Also Attending: Sue Corcoran, Project Manager, NH Broadband Mapping & Planning Program

Carol Miller, DRED, Director of Broadband Technology

Andre Garron, UNH Cooperative Extension Specialist, Regional Economic Development

Steve Waleryszak, Southwest Region Planning Commission

Bob Marshall, Greenfield Planning Board Chairman (arrived at 8:00 pm)

7:08 p.m. PRenaud called the meeting to order.

Broadband: PRenaud stated to the visiting attendees the major reason for the formation of the EDAC was to find ways to lessen the burden of property taxes by broadening the tax base in town. PRenaud said this problem is primarily due to the school district portion of town taxes. NNickerson explained the taxation process for ConVal. He felt the school budget is a huge cost for a small town.

AWood asked "What kind of town do we want to become? A community of small businesses, a town with larger industry, or mainly a bedroom community. Fast internet to support even a bedroom community is critical. This would bring in younger people and younger families to occupy existing houses in town. New houses are costly for the town." JMoran said that there are a higher number of foreclosures locally, property values aren't escalating and the market here is slow.

CMiller asked the committee about the status on updating the town's Master Plan. PRenaud explained it is an ongoing process, starting in 2012 and will continue into next year. The Planning Board is expected to update four chapters this year, three of which are contracted to SWRPC. He listed the specific sections yet to be done. CMiller asked if there is a broadband plan for the Master Plan. PRenaud stated that one of the goals of these meetings is to formulate a broadband plan by the end of the year.

CMiller stated the town doesn't necessarily need a network connection to every home, just where business is available. You would need to determine aggregate demand in a section of town. SCorcoran said it is important to find out how people define the town today, and how people define the town in the future. SWaleryszak commented that regardless of the vision of the town, the town will need infrastructure. AGarron stated infrastructure is needed for small or large businesses. The committee discussed that the lack of broadband infrastructure could be affecting real estate turnover, business growth, and population retention/growth in town.

The discussion turned to the possibility of conducting a broadband survey in town. SCorcoran said two questions to answer are 'what level of service do you use?' and 'would you fund a municipal network?' SWaleryszak said there is a Granite State Futures survey on the SWRPC broadband plan link. He will email this to PRenaud. SWaleryszak will also share a plan developed by nearby Hinsdale for the committee to review.

The group discussed drafting a survey to provide to Greenfield that is concise and scientific with the hope of high participation. A good portion of the meeting was spent discussing possible questions and methods of distribution.~A draft survey culled from discussion notes by PRenaud and SCorcoran will be distributed to committee members within 2 weeks. PRenaud asked if having speed test participation should be part of the survey. SCorcoran thought this should be separate from the survey and we should address this at a later meeting. PRenaud asked what survey participation level would be sufficient to have a representative sample. SCorcoran and SWaleryszak responded that 10% - 20% survey response will be a representative sample.

CMiller and PRenaud informed the committee that they will be meeting with a Comcast representative next Tuesday, June 3rd at the DRED offices in Concord. This is an initial~meeting to explore cable in Greenfield. There will be an update of the Comcast meeting at the next EDAC meeting.

SWaleryszak will email to PRenaud a list of regional contacts that are knowledgeable about broadband in communities near Greenfield. This would enable the town to begin investigating the feasibility of pooling resources for broadband expansion.

8:35 p.m. JMoran distributed materials on NH Community Development Block Grants from the Community Development Finance Authority (CDFA) and Community-Oriented Connectivity Broadband Grant Program from the USDA. He stated that the CDFA is holding a grant writing workshop next Wednesday, June 4th in Concord. He is planning to attend if there are still spots available. PRenaud also expressed an interest in attending the workshop. JMoran said this year's deadlines for grant applications are July 7 for the USDA and July 28 for the CDFA.

8:45 p.m. Plan NH Charrette: BMarshall thanked the Committee members for all their work thus far, particularly on the rezoning amendment, RSA 79-E, and the broadband issue. He also expressed his personal gratitude for the work that the Committee will be doing in the future.

BMarshall informed the committee of the charrette scheduled for Sept. 26 & 27. There will be a pre-charrette planning meeting on Saturday, June 7 at 9 AM in the Wensburg Room of the library. It will be an informal meeting to gather input from residents on details and logistics of the charrette. A tentative schedule of events will be made available at that time. He further described the process of the charrette; he is planning to take the Plan NH planners on a bus tour of the State Park, Oak Park and the school with visits to the industrial areas at the north and south ends of town, which will also include CMRC. On Friday, Sept. 26th from 3:30 – 5:00 PM, a public hearing will be held with the planners followed by a community meal. Another Public Hearing will follow at the library which will include a village walk. BMarshall stated there will also be a pre-charrette meeting with the department heads on June 19.

BMarshall told the committee that any documents or agenda from the EDAC would be welcome in the lead up to the charrette. He encouraged committee members to visit the downtown area for ideas. He stated the purpose of the charrette is to have a vibrant, walkable village center.

9:05 p.m. PRenaud asked if there were any suggested changes to the minutes of the April meeting. There were none. PRenaud motioned to accept the minutes as written. NNickerson seconded. Vote unanimous to accept the minutes.

Election of Officers: NNickerson nominated PRenaud for Committee Chair. AWood seconded. PRenaud asked if there are other nominations. There were none. Vote unanimous to appoint PRenaud as Chairman. NNickerson nominated AWood for Vice Chair. PRenaud seconded. Vote 3-1, AWood voting nay, to appoint AWood Committee Vice Chair.

9:15 p.m. Adjournment

NNickerson motioned to adjourn. AWood seconded. Vote unanimous in favor.