

Economic Development Committee Minutes 05/16/2016

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Preliminary Meeting Minutes

Recorded by Janice Pack

May 16, 2016

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

Meeting Opened: 7:00 PM

Minutes read by Paul Renaud, motion to accept by PRenaud, seconded by NNickerson. All were in favor.

Current Business: Fairpoint sent PRenaud a **Community Update** for us to use, to put in The Monadnock Ledger-Transcript, or The Spirit, post on walls, or whatever. Should we distribute Fairpoint's handout?

NNickerson said "No, we're not in the advertising business". JMoran thought the way it was left was that Fairpoint was supposed to do it, not us. AWood said "Our charter is to get better business base in our town without bringing in expenses. We want to promote competition, but we aren't in the job of saying "you win". To that end, we should not be promoting one (company) or the other." NNickerson suggested that we put a note in The Spirit (without anyone's name) saying that Fairpoint has upgraded their service. That wouldn't cost anything.

Parker Farrell from Fairpoint was supposed to contact with AWood, and other business people like American Steel. AWood said he finally did have some long conversations with him, which he initiated. He did not feel the deal they offered, with a 5-year commitment, made sense for him. They quoted about \$19,000 to get the fiber to his location. He doesn't feel they are very efficient at trying to do business. They are clearly interested in the residential side, but not the business side. He wonders if, with the upgraded service, you're still seeing the 3:00 dip. JMoran finds a big difference in his upgraded service. PRenaud added that he hardly ever loses his connection now; the reliability has improved. NNickerson wonders why Fairpoint is jacking up the cost to get the fiber to AWood. PRenaud feels it has to be the cost of the uplink speed. JMoran says it could be because they really don't want to do business with him. AWood is very frustrated with Fairpoint at this time. WiValley also doesn't seem to want to do business with businesses, and they seem to have a lot of issues, like lack of technical capability and personnel. AWood says they are in the ISP business, and severely handicapped with the address space.

PRenaud said that when he speaks to Ellen Scarponi, or anyone else at Fairpoint, he will bring this up. Now he is having trouble getting in touch with Scott Brooks at TDS. He gave them our survey, which SBrooks said would allow them to do a feasibility study, but PRenaud doesn't think they will do that until they decide if they really are interested in coming in to Greenfield. He can't do the presentation for the Select Board until he knows exactly where we stand with TDS.

NNickerson sums it up by saying that SBrooks TDS owes PRenaud (as Chair of EDAC) 2 things but he hasn't responded. Perhaps AWood could go forward and get another contact at TDS as he is a business.

Maybe he can get some answers whereas PRenaud as a government body cannot. PRenaud said we do need to find out from TDS what the cost for a build out would be. Until we know, we can't really go forward. JMoran said that SBrooks had stated that he has an engineer who knows the area who could give us a ballpark number as a basis for negotiation in moving forward. NNickerson says as a Town (DPW, Fire, Police, Library, etc.) we're spending about \$15,000 in internet, cable and phone that could all be used as a carrot for future business.

Solar Energy - JMoran said that solar power doesn't make any sense unless you can get hooked up through Eversource through net metering. PRenaud clarified that it was for roof top net metering. Group net metering is different, and the capacity for both is totally different. One is owned by an individual or small groups. You use what you need, and sell the rest back to Eversource.

PRenaud mentioned Ray Cilley coming before the PB with his proposal for the solar array to be put in the field, which he may instead put on the roof of American Steel. He also brought up Peter Davenport's mention of putting a solar field array on the community septic (selling the solar power back to the Town for use), and discussed his possible motives (diversification, making money, becoming a bigger part of the community). He talked about a presentation called Solar 101 which gives consumers information on net metering and group net metering, making suggestions on how to streamline the permitting process, and various incentives from the state government, and local entities, including tax credits offered.

PRenaud wonders if it's worthwhile for EDAC to advise the Planning Board and Select Board on solar arrays.

JMoran felt that from an EDAC prospective, having a solar garden might allow members of the community to each have a part in it, and all be able to realize a tax credit or savings. EDAC's mantra is: What's the benefit to the town's taxpayers? And what is the detriment to the town's taxpayers? Perhaps the only detriment might be aesthetics, but the benefits include the fact that they are extremely low impact, and could also attract people to the town for the green point of view. AWood feels it's an ideal type of business to promote, and all agreed. PRenaud says the master plan is totally silent on solar energy and feels that for Future Land Use, it needs to be addressed.

Rail Trail - PRenaud went to a workshop put on by the Transportation Advisory Committee which wanted town officials from Greenfield present because of all of the tracks going through the town. They wanted to know if we were interested in converting some of the tracks to trail. They discussed who owns the tracks, and the concerns (trestle bridge, funds to upgrade) and wanted to see if there was any interest.

AWood asked "What is the impact?" Existing tracks come out, and they develop a trail to be used for hiking, biking, walking. This could add business for the town, especially the Harvester Market. JMoran says aesthetically, it takes an eyesore away and brings in a trail that adds a positive influence, and could increase property values. On the other hand, he's been following a story from NY where they decided to make a public use trail, but then a group of private citizens went up against it because it was a change of use/change of purpose. They felt it was short sighted as they may want to bring the possibility of rails back in the future. AWood says the property owners who abut it may complain (tax and security implications). NNickerson said that when Mason pulled up their tracks, they had a lot of problems with vandalism, and security.

That being said, in a perfect world, it would be great to have the trails for walking, snowmobiles, etc. PRenaud heard from Jon Manley that all of the trails are still basically capable of carrying trains and that the paper mill in Bennington would eventually like to have the trains there.

The Historical Society does bring up one train in the fall for their function, so they are still capable of hauling freight.

JMoran said the folks in NY proposed a compromise by allowing the rails to stay, and using a device, some sort of hand-cart, to self-guide oneself along the trails. PRenaud asked if we should look at this further.

JMoran said there would have to be some investment; AWood said probably at best, a wash. An investment to get there, for a dubious amount of return. NNickerson said some people would be happy, some not; perhaps a 50/50 split. AWood said "you're introducing a new corridor. Limited access, basically an unpaved road. So it's one thing to regulate it, another to enforce it." AWood wanted to wait and see what Lyndeboro does. PRenaud will inquire and report back.

225th Anniversary Celebration on June 25th - PRenaud mentioned the time capsule, and members discussed what to put in (an old router? A phone?) It was also suggested that each group might want to have a booth where they can explain what they do, which PRenaud would elect to man rather than be a dunk tank volunteer.

Summer meeting schedule – Should the committee meet to speak further about the solar opportunities? And what about the TDS and Fairpoint issue? All of the members said that they were okay with continuing to meet throughout the summer. We will meet again June 20th, and decide from there.

PRenaud asked to have someone else step up to chair the committee.

JMoran said that we've gone over this before – none of those present are able to. The people who are most competent to run the committee are also the busiest. So if PRenaud stepped down, the committee would disband and it would just be a group of private individuals helping out the town. JMoran said "sometimes carrying the weight of the office with you can be a good thing, but if you can't do it, you can't do it."

AWood said the other option would be to maintain the committee and find someone else to lead it. The committee discussed possible options, but no decision was reached. PRenaud agreed to stay on a few more months and hoped that a solution could be found. AWood asked for the job description of the Chair, and PRenaud gave a brief description of the things that were done on behalf of the Committee outside of the meetings. AWood said that we need to focus on how we meet our charter: How do we foster economic development? What would we do to fix the economic development of our town? PRenaud said that as far as the Select Board is concerned, they see this committee as part of community development rather than economic development.

Motion to adjourn by Jack Moran, seconded by NNickerson, and all were in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 9:14 PM