
Economic Development Advisory Committee 03/16/2015

Economic Development Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes Recorded by Sharon Rossi March 16, 2015

Members Present: PRenaud, AWood, JMoran

7:00 p.m. Meeting Opened

PRenaud motioned to accept last meeting minutes. AWood seconded the motion. Vote unanimous in favor.

PRenaud reviewed the Master Plan changes with the committee. On page 10, table 7, he stated that the non-taxable land will be added. Language will be added explaining the disproportionate number of workers that are skewed by the CMRC information on graph 10.

PRenaud showed the 3-phase power map to be included in the Master Plan. Currently three phase electricity is only located to the end of the business district on Slip Rd. and to the Peterborough town line on Rte. 136 and up to CMRC, as well as three phase power in the industrial zone located on Sawmill Road to the Bennington line.

The recommendations at the end of the chapter were changed to be less definite as regards action.

Under Municipal Policy Analysis Findings, in second bullet, the sentence was changed to read: Examine feasible alternatives on the dimensional requirements for the Village District and its potential economic development and expand uses similar to some of the neighboring towns.

Under Utilities and Infrastructure Needs in the Recommendations section:

In the first bullet, the sentence was changed to read: Consider the feasibility of public sewer and/or water infrastructure to support industrial and residential development. In the second bullet, change the last sentence to read: Investigate co-location of broadband technology and equipment such as wireless antennas and existing structures. Also it was decided that the two bullets in this subsection were to be listed in reverse order.

PRenaud said there may be a conflict with RSA 79-E that the town adopted if the town decides to adopt a tax increment finance district, which is one of the considerations in this section. The EDAC will investigate the feasibility of a TIF district later this year.

Under Local Policies/Support:

The third bullet "Support the business district as a focal point for activity" was removed.

PRenaud said we shouldn't put all our energies in the town center and should be focusing more on the industrial zones that we have. We are waiting for the final draft from LMurphy to the Planning Board, and then we, EDAC and Planning Board, would have to have another discussion and then a public hearing to adopt the changes. PRenaud asked if there are any more changes to the chapter. No, was the consensus of the committee.

PRenaud said a major concern for all committees is the lack of volunteers. We have to have more people on this committee. I would like to have a mix of people on this committee. If you know of someone who would like to join, please let me know and I will talk with them.

PRenaud handed out final report copies of the charrette conducted by PlanNH to the committee. He feels that there are some issues which the EDAC should address.

Charrette commentary:

PRenaud said that this report is basically what the townspeople voiced during gatherings held in September. One item was to make the town more walk able. Revitalizing of the Recreation and Parks department was another recommendation.

AWood said this report is more an urbanite vision by the PlanNH group. Rymes gas station is a location that could be, in terms of this charrette, an entry to the park behind the Harvester Market. However, those underground tanks, by law, have to be bonded in order to have them removed.

PRenaud read some of the PlanNH recommendations: Streetscapes will be a Select Board decision. It would have to be a warrant article drawn up by the Select Board and brought before the residents at town meeting. AWood said "As many small businesses are home based, the sidewalks are not of economic value to the town. There are a lot of interesting ideas here, but this committee sees other items that are more important."

Trails: JMoran said an inventory of what is on public land and if it can be put to use should be done. The Greenfield Trails Association said many of their trails are public, but there is no way to get to Point A to Point B on public trails.

AWood said there are some good resources in town. The industrial complex has some infrastructure costs to become feasible - power source, broadband, and possible tax breaks. On the tourist side, the town could capitalize on that and would be able keep the characteristics of the town. To broaden the tax base is to grow the business industry which is hard to do without an industrial complex. We need to keep home businesses and small businesses friendly.

JMoran said we are working on the number one issue: broadband, which will benefit all homes, business, etc. in the town.

Some ideas offered:

- Encouraging a FedEx mailing station for the town center.
- Talk to owner of Norah's Depot and inform them of RSA 79-E, which could make the property more saleable.
- Do rehabilitation audit on the Meeting House.
 PRenaud said he is going to push this and hopefully get a committee to work on this. PRenaud also said it would be nice if the local trades people in town could give an estimate of what it would cost to fix and update the Meetinghouse. AWood said there is an advantage to the town, if we raise the money, and the work is done by tradesmen from town, it would bring the community pride up and keep the money flow in town. AWood said that fixing the town buildings doesn't change the EDAC goals which are to bring a growth in business. Upgrading of the Meeting House is also a suggestion from the charrette.

Zoning recommendations from the charrette are:

To bring a stronger community atmosphere, make the center denser. The charrette suggested building out extensions or accessory buildings closer to the sidewalks. This suggestion would result in a definite change to the town character. They are suggesting eliminating the front setbacks, changing minimum frontage to 50', and 1/4 acre minimum lot sizes in the Village and Business Districts.

PRenaud said this is questionable whether these changes will have a positive economic impact. JMoran said the availability of small lots would be to upping the tax rolls. Smaller lots and buildings could be used for rental. AWood said 1/4 acre lots will not allow individual septic systems or wells. The smaller lots would require a community well and septic. PRenaud said we need to really discuss this. We need to make a list of pros and cons of this charrette's recommendations and let the Planning Board know our feelings. He feels that most of the recommendations are geared more toward community development, with little direct economic development impact.

Zoning requirements are going to need clarification and reconsideration in many areas. The Planning Board will be reviewing parts of the Zoning Ordinance this year and could consider some major changes. One of the issues is the larger homes in the Village district and whether to allow them to become multi-family. The committee felt that if they are converted to apartments and a small professional business in the building as well, the older homes would need electrical, plumbing, and septic upgrades which would be costly.

JMoran said the solar garden in the park suggestion is something that he has been researching. He did research on the installer in Peterborough, NH and Putney, VT. The town will have to front the revenue for set up costs and would get revenue returned as residents of the town bought their

individual solar panels. Group net metering is ideal for residents, maybe not so for town government.

PRenaud said he went to a regional energy seminar in November and talked with a gentleman who owns his own solar company and found it to be very interesting. Many projects were presented at the seminar involving energy audits, building rehab, and regional solar energy organizations.

Other Matters:

AWood said we need to pull a public discussion about broadband with the citizens in the town, solicit more ideas and let them know we are working on the problems.

PRenaud said we have to look at the charter and we need more members on board. RMarshall has offered to help us. At our next meeting we need to reappoint or appoint our chair. There is a possibility that I could be the new Planning Board chair and I don't feel that it is appropriate or possible to have me chair both boards. PRenaud would prefer to have someone else chair the committee in any case, so he can concentrate on the broadband planning issue.

JMoran said he will be leaving on business on April 21 and will not be available to come to that meeting. PRenaud offered to change the day of the week for the committee's meetings.

AWood said he will be working with the Robotics group, so moving the day of the week will not help. JMoran was in agreement. So the meeting day will still be the 3rd Monday of each month.

PRenaud had a phone discussion with JHunter of CMRC last week. JHunter said the Board of Directors of WiValley has approved Brian Foucher taking over RadiusNorth and is looking to expand their presence at CMRC and the mountain. If this happens, CMRC will get a lower rate and greatly increased broadband speed which parts of the town could access. However the Board of Directors is looking to gauge their potential ROI for this project. PRenaud reported that JHunter is going to set up a conference call with himself and BFoucher to plan a broadband related "Community Business Event" at CMRC. This event would enable businesses and the town to gauge the feasibility of such a project. Other attendees may be NE Forest Products, American Steel, Barbara C. Harris Center and other business owners.

AWood said he is very interested in attending the business event. PRenaud is going to try and talk to FairPoint again now that the strike is over. There is a TDS fiber optic line that runs through town and he is going to try and find whether it is legally possible for the town to connect to the line. If so, then we can look into the technical and financial feasibility of connecting to this. He also said with the recent FCC classification of internet as a utility, more broadband grants will open up for towns.

9:25 p.m. Adjournment:

PRenaud motioned to adjourn. JMoran seconded. Vote unanimous in favor.

