

Minutes 04/15/2009

Bedford Economic Development Commission

Draft Summary Minutes

April 15, 2009

Bedford Meeting Room

10 Meetinghouse Road

A regular meeting of the Bedford Economic Development Commission was held on Wednesday, April 15, 2009 at 8:00 AM at the Bedford Meeting Room, 10 Meetinghouse Road.

Members Present: Russell Marcoux, Town Manager (Chairman)

Pam Brown

Councilor Bill Dermody

Mark Prestipino

Michael Sandhu

Rick Sawyer, Planning Director

Jack Sullivan

Chairman Marcoux opened the meeting at 8:07 AM and conducted the meeting.

Approval of Minutes – March 18, 2009

MOTION by Mr. Prestipino to approve the minutes.

SECONDED by Councilor Dermody.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Item #1 – Report of Committees and Discussion of Progress.

Chairman Marcoux stated that in the absence of Mrs. Wolf that we would delay the web site discussion.

Mrs. Brown and Councilor Dermody reported Mr. Reilly would be preparing a draft report for the Program Development committee regarding the possibility of an economic development position.

Chairman Marcoux stated that a Business Forum has been scheduled for May 6th at 8:00 at the Bedford Town Library.

Mr. Prestipino stated that Mrs. Wolf deserved a lot of credit for organizing the forum and preparing advertisements. An invitation will be going out to business leaders and developers and notices will be in the local papers. The forum will have a focus on general conversation with broad themes and the committee is developing a list of questions.

Mr. Prestipino next reported that he will be meeting with the UNH Survey Center on April 16th to discuss the possibility of them assisting the Commission with a written survey that would be sent to local businesses.

Mr. Sawyer informed the Commission that the Master Plan telephone survey was likely nearly complete and from all accounts it was working very well. He continued to state that there will be a community wide public forum for the Master Plan on Saturday May 9th at the Lurgio Middle School Cafeteria from 8:30 AM to 12:00 Noon.

Chairman Marcoux stated that we have an opportunity to apply for a graduate level student to assist the Commission through a Fellowship Program sponsored by NH Municipal Management Association, the Local Government Center and UNH. The financial obligation to the town would be approximately \$1800 and he asked for the Commission's input on how to proceed.

There was general consensus that the program was an excellent opportunity and that we should apply.

MOTION by Councilor Dermody to recommend that the Town file an application to the fellowship program.

SECONDED by Mr. Sullivan.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Item #2 & 3 – Discussion of Action Items & Business Focus Group Meeting

Councilor Dermody thanked Mrs. Wolf for the development of the outline for the forum and suggested that the Commission should dedicate a full meeting to the thoughts and ideas on how to move forward that have been raised in recent emails. He stated that we should come to one conclusion as a Commission.

Mr. Prestipino stated that we have some good early groundwork on marketing and the website and that we will be developing sustainable long term information through our outreach programs including the survey. Two themes that should be explored are starting with a full time director and starting with a part time position with the idea of ramping up to full time.

Councilor Dermody agreed with Mr. Prestipino but stated that we were missing the response of Mrs. DeSouza.

Mr. Sandhu questioned when we should have the debate.

Mrs. Brown stated that the thinking in the emails was very good and that we needed to focus on the forum discussion now as we won't have many chances to get this group of business leaders together.

Mr. Prestipino stated that having such a diverse group of individuals on the Commission is good.

Mr. Sawyer suggested that we focus the May 20th meeting on discussing the comments.

Chairman Marcoux agreed that the May 20th agenda could focus on the web site discussion and the various comments and suggestions that have been passed around via email. He stated that he and Mr. Sawyer would assemble everyone's comments into one master list without individuals' names for the discussion.

Mr. Prestipino returned to the discussion of the Forum and stated that it should open with a brief description of who the Commission is and what it is we are trying to achieve, then we should ask what we can do to help existing businesses, to recruit new businesses and their feelings on the development process.

Mr. Sandhu stated that we could describe what we have learned so far and ask what the Commission could do to help the business community.

Chairman Marcoux stated that we would be clear that there would be amnesty to provide for open discussion.

Councilor Dermody stated having it at the Library would allow people to relax.

Chairman Marcoux asked that Mr. Sullivan follow up with representatives of Derry to find out how their recent visioning session went.

Mrs. Brown stated that the chairs should be set up in a circle to encourage discussion. She said the questions should get personal, how are they thinking, we should learn about them, learn how they make business decisions, what keeps them in Bedford, are they thinking about moving.

Mr. Prestipino stated that we should reach out to all types of businesses; family built and operated those who own their own buildings and those who rent.

Mr. Sullivan stated that he recently attend a regional committee meeting where Bill Sirak said that three business were about to leave Hooksett and no one knew and that two needed to expand and did not know that there was someone to help them.

Councilor Dermody stated that we want to provide a level of support to the business community with such things as the planning process and infrastructure, but questioned if that discussion was too specific for forum.

Mr. Prestipino stated that the forum should be introductory in nature where we do little talking and a lot of listening then we should follow up with a series of focus meetings on; development, financial services, retail, medical, land owners and transit.

Mr. Marcoux stated that he would send out the mailing list for everyone to review and to add to and then there was a general discussion about certain people that members of the Commission wanted to invite.

Chairman Marcoux reviewed the action items that had been discussed:

- 1) Website research – Councilor Dermody & Mrs. Wolf
- 2) Contact Derry – Mr. Sullivan
- 3) Meet with UNH Survey Center – Mr. Prestipino
- 4) File for Fellowship program – Mr. Marcoux

- 5) Further develop program for the business case – Mr. Reilly, Councilor Dermody & Mrs. Brown.
- 6) Assemble all of the recent email questions & thoughts – Mr. Marcoux & Mr. Sawyer.
- 7) Review of the business focus group – May 20th agenda.
- 8) Discussion of future meetings and focus groups – May 20th agenda.

MOTION by Mr. Prestipino to adjourn.

SECONDED by Mr. Sullivan

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

ADJOURNMENT at 9:28 AM

The next meeting of the Commission is scheduled for May 20, 2009 at 8:00 AM.

Submitted by: Rick Sawyer

Audio tapes of this meeting are available for listening during regular office hours at the Town Office Building, 24 North Amherst Road, Bedford, NH.