

Minutes 06/17/2009

1

Bedford Economic Development Commission

Draft Summary Minutes

June 17th, 2009

Bedford Meeting Room

10 Meetinghouse Road

A regular meeting of the Bedford Economic Development Commission (BEDC) was held on

Wednesday, June 17th, 2009 at 8:00 am at the Bedford Meeting Room, 10 Meetinghouse Road.

Members Present: Russell Marcoux, Town Manager (Chairman)

Henry Bechard

Pam Brown

Councilor Bill Dermody

Joseph Reilly

Michael Sandhu

Rick Sawyer, Planning Director

Alice DeSousa

Terry Wolf, Bedford School Board

Matt Henry, Intern

Members Absent: Mark Prestipino

Jack Sullivan

Call to Order

- Chairman Russell Marcoux, convened the meeting at 8:00 AM.
- The chairman indicated that he would not be in attendance at the July Meeting and that Vice Chair Jack Sullivan will be acting chairman in Mr. Marcoux's absence.

Approval of Minutes – May 20th, 2009

- **MOTION** by Mr. Bechard to approve the minutes.
- **SECONDED** by Ms. DeSouza
- **MOTION CARRIED** Unanimously (8-0-0)

Agenda

1) Review of WEB Site Report and Discussion

a. Meetings that have taken place

b. Recommendation for a town website

2

Ms. Wolf stated that she was impressed with what vendors had to offer. The cost to the town was also a lot less than she had expected. However, Ms. Wolf said that the BEDC should also look into other vendors in addition to what her subcommittee has already done.

Ms. Wolf gave the BEDC a virtual tour of some Economic Development website designs that other municipalities use:

- Derry:

- Quick to Navigate
- Incredible amount of control

- Manchester:

- Not very expensive (relative to size)
- Bedford's will not be as complex
- Funded through department of resources & development grant

- Hooksett:

- Economic Development website is brand new. Essentially, it is still a working project.

Ms. Wolf said that the next step should be to send out Requests for Proposal's (RFP's) to different vendors in order to move things along.

Mr. Reilly said that it is important to choose a vendor that is local because the commission should keep in mind their economic development mission. Budget concerns should also be addressed. Wolf agreed.

Mr. Sawyer indicated that economic development funds are available through a grant via the widening of I-93. The only stipulation is that the proposal must relate to the widening. Mr. Sawyer confirmed that the BEDC could make a strong case for the \$10,000 maximum award.

Ms. Brown asked if the maintenance fees were for a number of years. Ms. Wolf responded that maintenance and design together is quite expensive and there are additional questions that need to be asked. Usability should be the top priority.

Chairman Marcoux asked if there will be a recommendation by the July 22nd, Town Council meeting. July 22nd is the only time the council will be meeting that month. Ms. Wolf agreed that July 22nd is “doable”. Chairman Marcoux stated that money may need to be transferred among different accounts. The council must approve any contract greater than \$5,000.

Mr. Sawyer said a meeting should be held regarding the grant money. He reiterated that the grant proposal must be related to the expansion of I-93.

Chairman Marcoux thanked Ms. Wolf for all of her hard work.

2) Review of Business Outreach Forums

a. June 24

3

- Retail community (ms)

b. July 22

- Development community (ms/js)

c. August 26

- Professional community (mp/jr/hb)

d. September 23

- Resident community (pb/mp/tw)

e. Discussion on Business Visitations: due July 6th

The Chair started the discussion by mentioning that on June 24th, the retail community forum will be held at 8:00 am in McAllaster Room in the Library. Invitations were already sent out.

Though the list of businesses has grown, the responses have not been as plentiful as the leadership forums thus far. The same questions that were asked at the leadership forum will be

asked at the retail community forum.

The Chair informed the BEDC that they are beginning to get great local press that is covering the Bedford economic development efforts.

The Chair asked for any feedback the commission has received thus far through their charged business visitations that had been done since last meeting. Mr. Reilly said that the visitations were positive overall and the businesses were very willing to conduct the interviews. There was “comfortable” conversation with the businesses; however, numerous businesses mentioned the town’s strict sign ordinances as a major complaint. Mr. Reilly said that critical comments such as these are most helpful in this process. Chairman Marcoux agreed with Mr. Reilly and said that he also solicited criticism with regard to signage issues.

Chairman Marcoux reminded the Commission of the July 6th deadline and asked that they send their business visitation results to him.

Comments on Economic Development Sessions

a. NH-EDA Meeting, May 29 (NCIC Development Lender)

b. NH-DRED, June 12 (Revitalizing Development Zones)

c. NH-CRDC, June 17 (Development Lender & Success Tour)

Mr. Bechard started discussion regarding the May 29th NH-EDA meeting. He said the meeting focused on banking within the state of NH. The number of banks has drastically decreased in the recent years from 102 in 1989 to 34 banks today. This effects small business development.

Mr. Marcoux said that the NH – DRED meeting on June 12th, lasted approximately 1 hour and addressed issues that the town of Bedford had already undertaken such as economic development “zones”. He stated that the meeting gave Bedford a good “safety check” affirming that the municipality is on the right track with economic development.

The NHCRDC meeting is this afternoon (June 17th). Two members of the BEDC are going :

Bechard and Marcoux. this afternoon in Claremont, NH. They will be attending the Board meeting and a site tour of what has recently been redeveloped there.

4

Mr. Sawyer said that the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission (SNHPC) is conducting a regional development plan. They will be looking for someone in Bedford to be on the commission.

Mr. Sawyer also gave an update on the progress of its master plan. Mr. Sawyer said that they are writing a draft of the first chapters. The first chapters cover workforce housing and population data and make no substantial recommendations. However, the chapters following are very related to economic development. Mr. Sawyer has had discussions with RKG, the consultant working on the Master Plan. Mr. Dermody asked if the BEDC will be able to influence the Master Plan chapters that impact economic development. Mr. Sawyer agreed they would have RKG come in and present their work to the BEDC in August after the Master Plan committee has seen the draft.

d. Infrastructure Master Plan – Progress discussion

Mr. Dermody said that he had met with the Chair and Mr. Sawyer about the Infrastructure Master Plan. Right now there is a tentative list of projects that have to do with municipal infrastructure. Mr. Dermody also said that he is working on a schedule of costs and funding mechanisms. It may be possible to combine some of the items on the list. In September they will go back to the council to indicate whether they will move forward with the Infrastructure Master Plan. Mr. Dermody also said that the plan will recognize the three “main corridors” that Bedford possesses. This may be an area where the BEDC can provide valuable input with regard

to prioritization of the items on the list.

The Chair said that he will summarize the list of his priority list thus far and send it out to commission members. He reiterated that it is an extremely broad list. In no specific order.

Ms. Brown asked if there were criteria for the prioritization of the list. Mr. Dermody responded that there was no criteria, however, issues such as cost, timing, should play into decision making.

Chairman Marcoux referenced ICMA has “Best Practices” that are available to municipalities that may be used in the prioritization of the list.

e. Program Development, Updated Road Map

Ms. Brown initiated discussion by saying that both the timetable and action plan were sent out.

The BEDC’s next step should be to look at process of how we should develop and draft initial recommendations. She asked if BEDC should draft the recommendations prior to public forums.

There was discussion on both sides regarding the level of public input. Mr. Dermody said that there should be a “Draft Subcommittee” that should be appointed to streamline the recommendation effort. Mr. Reilly agreed and explained that the recommendations should be sure to move the commission in the direction of the BEDC’s initial charge.

Ms. Brown said that she will write the recommendation process plan and the BEDC will agree on a format at their July meeting.

5

Ms. Wolf said that it is important to hold public forums prior to writing the draft recommendations because public input is so important in the conclusions.

Ms. Brown asked the commission: what the process for public input should be beyond holding the forum? The Chair said that once a draft is done, BEDC could schedule a public hearing to get general feedback. He said that we should put the hearing into the timeline. He also

addressed concern, with other on the commission, that a vocal minority of dissenters may show up and alter the consensus of the majority.

Chairman Marcoux said that when the draft is done the town will issue a press release and upload it onto the website in order to solicit public feedback. The press will be happy to cover any conclusions the commission has reached.

Mr. Reilly said that BEDC must communicate the benefits of economic development articulately to the general public.

Other suggestions were made regarding the level of public input. Ms. Wolf suggested that the BEDC set aside 15 minutes at the beginning of each BEDC meetings to solicit public comment.

Ms. DeSouza suggested that the BEDC host a television program where the public may call in to address their suggestions/concerns to the BEDC. Some commission members agreed that feedback from the general public after the draft is completed was not necessary.

Ms. Wolf said that she is hesitant to field public concerns after the draft of the recommendations because then the BEDC must react to public comments. She said we should discuss whether to solicit additional feedback via an additional public forum at next months meeting.

Ms. Brown said that she will update the timetable and develop a template for recommendations.

f. Updates:

a. Business survey project (UNH)

b. Progress on economic development function strategy

c. Possible Ambassador Program

Mr. Bechard said that there is a professor at UNH named Andy Smith who manages the UNH Survey Center that specializes in developing scientific survey data and consulting services. The projects are typically done using mail, e-mail or telephone surveys. Depending on the price of

such services the BEDC may be well served using such a service. Mr. Sawyer addressed concern that it may be expensive and it may take months to garner the results of the survey. Matt Henry said that he will look into what he is entitled to through his status as a Graduate Student. Mr. Bechard asked that Mr. Henry contact him once he contacts the center for information. In addition a meeting will be set up by Mr. Prestipino with Prof. Smith to investigate the UNH Survey possibilities.

6

Mr. Bechard will make a verbal proposal for the SCORE Ambassador program. He said he will make a proposal in writing once he has spoken with that group one more time.

Mr. Reilly said that he is making “slow” progress on the economic development Function Strategy. He said that he has more work to do in this area. He also said that an indicator of what gets done is dependent on what happens at the June 24th meeting. He plans on mentioning the possible alternatives to the council and seek their input.

g. Plan for Council Presentation, June 24

Mr. Marcoux said that the presentation to the council will be from approximately 7:15 pm – 7:30 pm. Some issues that will be discussed will be as follows:

- June Forum
- Review of the Charge
- Website Feedback
- Economic Development Forum’s (time, stakeholders, attendees etc.)
- Interest
- Reaching out to businesses
- Possibility of an Economic Development Director

- Other towns doing economic development

- Sustainability

He asked who will be attending. Initially, only two members were definite. However, others indicated that they will probably show, and will contact Chairman Marcoux ASAP for a definite response. It was agreed that though Chairman Marcoux would play a role, it would be far more beneficial to have others on the BEDC take a leading role in the presentation. Others then volunteered to go, and now 8 will be present. Presenters will be Ms. DeSouza, Ms. Brown and Mr. Reilly.

New Business

Mr. Marcoux encouraged the BEDC to reach out to businesses to encourage attendance at the upcoming forum through personal phone calls if necessary.

Ms. Wolf informed the commission about the Department of Revenue Administration's Facebook page. She said it is interesting how such organizations are reaching out in creative ways.

Adjournment

- **MOTION** by Mr. Reilly to approve the minutes.

- **SECONDED** by Ms. Brown

- **MOTION CARRIED** Unanimously (8-0-0)

Respectfully submitted: Matt Henry