

Bedford Economic Development Commission Minutes

December 9th, 2009
Bedford Meeting Room
10 Meetinghouse Road

A regular meeting of the Bedford Economic Development Commission (BEDC) was held on Wednesday, December 9th, 2009 at 8:00 am at the Bedford Meeting Room, 10 Meetinghouse Road.

Members Present: Henry Bechard
Councilor Bill Dermody
Russell Marcoux, Town Manager
Mark Prestipino
Michael Sandhu
Rick Sawyer, Planning Director
Jack Sullivan
Matt Henry, Intern
Alice DeSouza

Members Absent: Terry Wolf, Bedford School Board
Joseph Reilly
Pam Brown

Call to Order

- Chairman, Russ Marcoux convened the meeting at 8:00AM.

AGENDA

- 1) **Program Development: Report to the Council (PB)**
 - **Discussion & Work on Draft Report to Council (PB, HB, TW)**
 - **Discussion on Economic Development function plan (JR+HB)**
 - **Plan for Presentation to Council on Dec. 16 (All)**

Mr. Marcoux began by explaining the plan for the meeting. He said that the BEDC will run through the draft page by page and approve it in its entirety at the end of the meeting. The changes that were made included:

- Italic heading in front of the Executive Summary could be incorporated in the text instead. "We must invest in Economic Development" could replace it.
- Centering the Graphs

- Changing the section title from “History of Bedford Economic Growth” to “Historical Growth for the Town of Bedford”
- Replace the word “valuations” with “Base” in “Tax Relief via Targeted Economic Development” section
- Delete sentence that talks about increased services
- Include note on budget numbers, noting it is not inclusive of costs shifted onto municipalities at the state level
- Changing the wording in the Keys to Success section to include regional initiatives
- Mention land restraints in “limited undeveloped land” subsection.
- Delete mention of 15 year “build-out” period
- Delete “apathy”
- Move “establish a volunteer advisory committee” before “primary recommendation” section.
- Rewording of the Town Council authority section. They should have authority to change the zoning ordinances. The word “annual” was also added to articulate that town meeting only happens once per year.
- Mention collaboration by fellow parcels that are being redeveloped
- Add a sentence that says that the Advisory Commission is not a substitute for a long-term economic development plan.
- Capitalize Economic Development Director throughout the document
- Sentences were added to make the conclusion stronger

There was also discussion about providing a database of vacant properties where businesses can go to the economic development website for one stop shopping. Ms. DeSouza said that the issues were discussed when she and Mr. Henry met regarding the website and she asked the BEDC for their feedback. Some members of the commission said it may be difficult if the Town gets into the real estate business. Typically, the town finds out after the property is already sold. It was agreed that it should at least be looked into.

The BEDC agreed that it is important to stress collaboration by parcels of land being redeveloped. Development that is independent of one another is not the best use. This also exemplifies the need for an economic development person. . This individual should be the facilitator for all the different projects, and should fully participate in the end results.

There was also some discussion regarding whether the recommendation was for a full or part-time position. Some on the commission thought the primary recommendation was for a “full time position” while others thought it was just for a “position”. After discussion, it was agreed that the position that is being recommended should be referred to as “full-time” throughout the document.

Chairman Marcoux said that some members of the BEDC made comments regarding the \$10,000 annual increase in the business case. The discussion was regarding whether the report stressed that it was not a \$10,000 increase in salary for the employee, but an

increase in salary, benefits, and especially *operating costs* associated with economic development. Mr. Prestipino said that there may be times when Bedford wishes to outsource some services. That is what the \$10,000 is reflective of. Ms. DeSouza mentioned different tools that this individual will need such as marketing, travel, and other expenses that may constitute a \$10,000 increase. The BEDC agreed that it may not be stressed enough that the increase is not the Salary. The section was reworded to stress the operating costs piece of the \$10,000.

Mr. Prestipino said that he thinks that the false notion that businesses and government can either cut costs or cut spending should be mentioned because it is time for Town officials to prioritize the way they allocate money in their budget. By influencing the rate of development with the \$100,000 investment, the revenue side of the Town's budget could be adjusted favorably. Chairman Marcoux said that the BEDC should be careful not to direct the Town Council on what should be done with regard to the town Budget. The BEDC should focus on how Bedford should expand its tax base via economic development and not concern themselves with the allocation of resources because it is too political and should be left to the Council. Mr. Dermody said that while it is not the job for the BEDC to jump into Town politics, they should also be sure to justify investing \$100,000 so that the residents will be on board with the decision.

Mr. Prestipino said that his only hope is that the report is not "dead on arrival" because the commission has put so much time and energy into the report. Chairman Marcoux said that the consequences of doing nothing are drastic, and the report does a good job of articulating that to the Council.

Mr. Prestipino asked Chairman Marcoux why he thought discussing the budget was political. Chairman Marcoux said that any mention of the tax rate steps into the political realm because the BEDC would be asking them to make decisions about allocation resources which is something the Council may or may not want to do right now.

2) Approval of the BEDC Final Report

The BEDC voted to approve the Bedford Economic Development Commission Final Report. Though three members were not present, Chairman Marcoux said that he received e-mails from each of them saying they support approval of the document (those individuals are not included in the tally below).

- **MOTION** by Mr. Bechard.
- **SECONDED** by Mr. Prestipino .
- **MOTION CARRIED** (7-0-1)

Councilor Dermody said that because he sits on the Council he must abstain from the final vote in order to prevent voting on the document twice. Councilor Dermody said that he is adamantly in support of both the entire report and recommendation. However, the Town Council may or may not, at this time, accept the recommendation. Over Councilor

Dermody's vocal objection will the report be "dead on arrival". The Town needs to digest the report and develop the best way to address economic development. The twelve month effort cannot go without a reaction and acceptance by the Town of Bedford. It is to our vital survival as a community. We have got to grow our commercial tax base. Though the recommendation may be temporarily set aside, the report itself will not be "dead on arrival" in his opinion. He reiterated that the public should not interpret his abstaining as not supporting the report. He supports both the report and the recommendation.

Chairman Marcoux said that it is indeed proper for Councilor Dermody to abstain.

Chairman Marcoux reminded the BEDC about the leadership summit at St. Anselm College. Chairman Marcoux ended by thanking the BEDC for all of their hard work on the report.

NEW BUSINESS

None

COMMISSION MEMBER COMMENTS

None

Adjournment:

- **MOTION** by Mr. Sullivan
- **SECONDED** by Mr. Bechard
- **MOTION CARRIED** unanimously (8-0-0)

December 11th – Deadline for the final report to the Town Council

**Next Meeting: December 16th, 2009, 7:00pm –
Discussion of the report with the Town Council**

Respectfully submitted: Matt Henry