



Economic Development Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
Friday, September 9, 2016

Note: Recording of this meeting had no opening time stated or roll call and it was assumed it started at 6:00 pm and assumed all were in attendance.

In attendance: Charlie Albano - Chairman, Ginger Marsh, Christine Frost, Joe Mendola, Peter Anderson, Darryl Parker, Aedan Sherman, Mike Amaral

Others present: Cindy Harrington – NH Department of Resources and Economic Development (DRED), Clyde Carson - Selectman

1. Purpose of the Committee

A. Charile said before Cindy Harrington from DRED starts her presentation, he wanted to bring everyone up to the same level in regards to the purpose of the Committee. Charlie read the following from the Master Plan about what the task is: *In 2008 the Planning Board distributed a Master Plan community survey with a wide variety of topics based on the survey as well as other community input. The Planning Board eluded the following economic development focus was expressed in the survey. The goal was to support the existing business community to encourage economic growth that serves local needs, is environmentally responsible, will fit esthetically with the towns historic architecture and provides a net increase in municipal revenue. Establish an Economic Development Committee to advise and implement economic development activities and provide an official liaison with the town and the business community.*

The Committee's charge reads as follows:

Develop a work plan with sufficient detail to effectively guide the committee's work that shall address at a minimum determining citizen wishes regarding the types of economic development desired for Warner.

- *Identifying locations available in town for different types of businesses.*
- *identifying existing barriers to attract businesses.*
- *Identifying strategies and specific objectives, retaining, attracting and encouraging economic development.*
- *Provide a preliminary report on progress to the Select Board no later than 3 months after the first committee meeting including a draft work plan for review and comment.*
- *Finalize the work plan no later than 2 months after receiving comments on the draft work plan.*
- *Implement the work plan, provide regular progress reports to the Select Board and public.*

B. Charlie said in about 6 months or so the Committee will provide an update to the Selectboard to identify the progress the Committee has made and suggestions to that.

2. DRED Presentation

A. Cindy Harrington from NH Department of Resources and Economic Development (DRED), said this is a customized presentation for this community. DRED has been presenting to communities around the state for several years. She said she presented to Bradford about a year and a half ago. Bradford was looking how to develop their Main St. Cindy said she when working with Bradford she and her Deputy Director came out and drove around in Warner and made some observations. She said it was actually a great hour spent in downtown Warner observing the community and she was very impressed. After listening to Charlie this evening about the plans and goals of this Committee and the direction the Committee wants to go, she said her presentation is very in line to what is already planned.

B. Cindy began by covering why Warner, business retention, recruitment, website, social media and website.

C. Why Warner? Cindy said you have to think about the region. When coming off the highway what would make me want to go a little further into downtown Warner. Cindy said she didn't see a lot of signage enticing her to go further beyond Exit 9, she said if there is a way to promote downtown Warner at Exit 9, that would be the area to capture them.

- D. Cindy thought it was fantastic that Warner has a few museums, she said that's a draw for visitor's and should be promoted more.
- E. The Fall Foliage Festival is another draw. Same for Kearsarge Mountain, visitor's can come from either Exit 8 or 9 which will bring visitor's through downtown Warner. Cindy said business retention, this is important because 80% of your businesses is going to come from growing what you have and if you loose what you have by spending all your time trying to recruit in, what you have may disappear. Cindy complemented how nice the sidewalks are downtown. Creating long-term relationships with your businesses. A lot of communities will have a Business Visitation Program which is a cordial routine regular visitor call, walk in and talk and ask if they are happy in Warner and if they have any issues doing business in Warner. It helps to make the business feel they are part of the community.
- F. Promoting your businesses is a nice way to promote your community so when you Google Warner, those articles, if there on there, will come up and it will show your business friendly. Your social media, recognizing business, Cindy said Warner does a great job with the Fall Festival, but ground breakings as the commercial areas are developed are great things to promote on your website. Cindy said she can take Warner's articles and blogs and further promote Warner on the state website. Having a good relationship with the Chamber of Commerce is beneficial as well.
- G. Cindy said you could host a reception during the holiday's were you thank businesses for doing business in the community. The businesses can network with each other, it's a meet and greet with your community. Darryl said the town he was in before did a semi-annual luncheon, the town invited the businesses to come have lunch with the Mayor and the Councilmen and all sit together and talk and have a presentation about the town. Cindy said it's more to get to know them in a casual setting and business owners getting to know each other, it may also help to draw out the in-home businesses as well. Ginger said the church use to have a business leaders luncheon, she said as long as there's food people went, when it came to provide your own lunch it stopped. Ginger said when the attendance was high, about 40 people, a lot came out of it.
- H. Clyde said the Selectmen has put a lot of thought on how the roundabout can be used as a gateway into downtown Warner. There will be signs pointing to the village area and signs pointing to the museums and State Park. Cindy thought that was excellent.
- I. Cindy said business recruitment would be the next step. Think regionally, act locally, because you cannot promote just Warner if your trying to draw interest in your community. In doing that, reinforce a single point of contact, often times if someone is interested in your community they will call but they want to remain confidential.
- J. Clarification on what the approval process is for a business that wants to establish in Warner and who would they contact, a checklist is helpful. Cindy said typically when she works with a company interested in a community she will bring the business leaders to the community and meet with the Economic Development Director, Town Manager, Selectmen in a private meeting, they bring in Police, Fire, Building, Waste Water etc. in as well and talk about what the company is going to do, and then they know what permits are required when they walk away and how long it will take them, they are well informed.
- K. Darryl said he is on the Planning Board which has rolled out something like that in the last 24 months. They do a preliminary prior to a site-plan and they walk the business through the various parts and the business gets feedback from the Planning Board. Darryl said expanding that, opening it up to the town services may be beneficial. Cindy said you could also promote that on your website, the process is a one stop, no surprises. Clyde asked if Cindy could provide a town that's doing that particularly well? Cindy said she worked with the town of Hooksett where a company wanted to expand, it was a \$50,000,000 expansion.
- L. Cindy talked about prospects, she said the number one thing that a prospect wants is skilled labor. Second is access to highways, airports and hotels, it can be unique for each company. Cindy said her office can help with the market research and demographics out the state, she said her office purchased an economic modeling system.

- M. Cindy said then the business will ask about incentives and taxes and where the town stands. Cindy said if the town has a prospect she can be called and meet confidentially with your prospect.
- N. Cindy said she looked at the town's website and recommended having one section where a prospective business can click on Planning Board, Fire etc. so having that checklist will help so they don't have to click so many times and search. She said DRED purchased a contract with GIS and on their website they have choosenh.com and any prospect can go to choosenh.com and be able to access all kinds of information such as all buildings available through out the state that are listed in the database, demo-graph research, look at businesses, mapping, comparable's and community profiles to name some of the functions. Cindy said there's a webinar coming up on September 15th and she encouraged the Committee to spread the word so any commercial property owner would like to see their property listed on state database that they sign up and log into the webinar. Cindy said right now there are 3 businesses from Warner listed. The information to access the webinar is in the packet that Cindy provided to the Committee members.
- O. Joe asked how is choosenh.com promoted. Cindy said a press release was issued this week and it is on the DRED website.
- P. Clyde asked how are town's demographics made up. Cindy said it pulls from census data and other data sources, it's live data that is always being tracked.
- Q. Christine asked if you can do an analysis yourself? Cindy said yes.
- R. Cindy said DRED's primary tool is it's website, social media and trade shows. Joe asked how to follow on twitter. Cindy said nheconomy.com, she said she will send Charlie the link.
- S. Clyde asked if companies are looking at the 89 corridor. Cindy said absolutely, she said we promote to Montreal and Quebec. Aedan asked if we should focus on the areas off of each exit or promote the whole town. Cindy said she would look at where the properties are located and have a map showing where the properties are and what Warner is all about.
- T. Cindy talked to the Committee about promoting Warner on the website. Charlie asked if DRED will help with setting up the website and Cindy said yes.
- U. Cindy said the job training program is part of our office, you meet monthly at their office, companies can apply for grants and DRED tries to process them quickly. Cindy said she spoke to Charlie about a revitalization zone, Warner doesn't have any zones in place but there are several zones throughout the state, it's a tax credit for a company. You would assess your community and identify underutilized properties, vacant properties, and you can apply to the DRED office. Clyde asked how a town can initiate that process. Cindy said the Selectmen would have to approve the zone, submit an application with the minutes to DRED, then it goes to Commissioner Rose for approval. Then you can promote on your website as an economic revitalization zone. Joe asked if it would work as a tenant as well as an owner. Cindy said if your a tenant, it's based on the tenant's investment. Darryl asked if it's aimed typically at larger businesses? Cindy said no, it can be a small businesses, the size doesn't matter.

3. Questions from the Committee

- A. Aedan said it seems the general overall is based on the website, promote our selves in such a fashion the way we want the town to look like. Cindy said it's important to keep within your vision and your goals that way you get the businesses you want in Warner. Cindy said you could use the unveiling of your website for hosting a business reception.
- B. Clyde asked Cindy to expand on region promotion. Cindy said if you think about thinking regionally and acting mobile. If your outside NH and looking for a location, your not going to find Warner, you'll find NH or Merrimack County, you might find what's unique to your region. You want to promote what's unique to the region as part of Warner. Cindy said it would be worth while to invite someone from your regional planning as well. Charlie said they are on our list. Aedan said Central NH Regional Planning Commission about 3 years ago brought an economic development firm in from Massachusetts which touched on a lot what Cindy has said but it also expanded on what Clyde was saying. The speaker made it almost bullet proof on what should and shouldn't be done as Economic Development.

- C. Christine asked if data has begun to be compiled on any of the impacts of the businesses coming in? Cindy said that's not something her office would do. But she encourages it, it's something regional planning would do with communities in their region.
- D. Christine asked what roll could Warner play in participating in the upcoming state economic development plan. Cindy thinks they will have focus groups. Charlie asked if a town like Warner can be invited to participate. Cindy said yes.
- E. Charlie said he has heard different communities that offer tax breaks to businesses that are interested in locating in that community. He asked Cindy if she has any knowledge if that works or not in the short or long-term? Cindy said she has not heard about that. She knows there are tax breaks for historical buildings for a certain number of years. Charlie said he knows that tax breaks go on in North Carolina. Joe said NH doesn't do that. Cindy said she has not seen any type of tax break for a business in her 10 years. Peter said there is an RSA allows the town to offer tax breaks with approval by the Selectmen. Aedan said Central Regional Planning, this is one of their major points, they say tax breaks is the absolute last thing that any town wants to do. Charlie said he would like to see how it works in other places.
- F. Charlie asked Cindy if she has found transportation to be an issue in rural communities. Cindy said it's known if a company locates to a rural community that your employees need to be able to drive.
- G. Aedan said when Riley Auto and Taco Bell looks at a region they look at roof tops. If there's not enough roof tops, they won't bother looking at that region. Aedan asked does NH have a model to get them to not concentrate so much on roof tops? Aedan said they weren't concerned about the fact the commercial area is next to a highway. Joe said that's part of his business, it's the be all, and the end all. Joe said Crackerbarrel sits off the highway, they told him the biggest meal is lunch, there's not enough people here at lunch time. The 16 acres will sit there until we get the roof tops. Without the roof tops retail doesn't exist.
- H. Darryl said as an Economic Development Committee should we be looking at bringing in businesses or should we accept the role being a bedroom community. And how do you encourage roof tops. Aedan said once we figure out what businesses are looking for, and once we put those pieces together the businesses will naturally come. Build a set of core strengths.
- I. Darryl asked how do we get additional education for Economic Development. Cindy said there's an organization called New Hampshire Economic Development Association (NHEDA) that any of you could be members of, they meet quarterly. Christine asked if NH Business and Industry Association offers any training. Cindy said no, they have different committee's, no training for Economic Development. Cindy said you may want to host a regional meeting for a round table.
- J. The Committee thanked Cindy for her presentation.

4. Committee Discussion

- A. Charlie said if the Committee should take the information Cindy provided, review it, and come back to the October 14 meeting with suggestions the Committee can tackle. Joe feels the next step is to have Central NH Regional Planning Commission come and speak on the 14th. The members talked amongst themselves on what their next step will be. Aedan thinks CNRPC should meet with the Committee as well to find some educational opportunities to make sure what the Committee is doing is the right way, he said to build a skill set before we start taking action on all the information provided. Charlie likes the idea of bringing in another town that is actually doing it, like Hooksett, or even another community. Joe feels Hooksett is not the right choice because of it's size. Joe feels the Committee should be looking at the land pieces available in Warner and how fill them and what to fill them up with. Ginger said we can say all night what we want, but if there's not enough roof tops, their not going to come. Joe said he can assist with that. Aedan said should we find out what the townspeople want. Peter said we have the survey. Darryl said his opinion would beto focus on retention, he said Knoxland wants to build and wants to build right now. He said if we are doing a good job in working with our local businesses, we are going to discover opportunities to help them develop. And, if we can develop our Committee around the retention and around working with them, Darryl said Knoxland will take our help today. He said RC Brayshaw is also looking to expand in another area in town.

- B. Christine said 90% of the businesses in Warner are sole proprietors. Christine feels it would be easy to outline 2 or 3 things that say here is where we are focusing while we build our knowledge base and continue to look at properties. She thinks the Committee has hit on 3 big ones, retention, outreach and keep an eye on properties so we don't miss opportunities, while being educated.
- C. Charile talked about how to set the foundation for the Committee to move forward. Number 1, organization and education. Darryl said this is a multi-year process. Number 2, business retention and number 3, commercial development. Charlie feels a sub-committee is needed to focus on the commercial development, the same for business retention. Charlie said this is a working committee to set an outline so that the Selectmen will be able to have a plan. We're trying to set the foundation for it to move forward. Charlie asked the Committee if they see commercial development as a sub-set. Joe said absolutely. Darryl said he would say organization, retention, development, in that order in terms of priority. The Committee identified commercial properties as non-residential properties, retail falls under commercial.
- D. Charlie asked how does the Committee retain the information that was presented this evening. Christine said we need to get it down on paper, she said she would begin to start piecing things together. Aedan said the Committee needs to take some time to read what was provided in the packet. Darryl said ultimately the Committee has to respond to the Selectmen with recommendations, the tasks and objectives the Committee see's an EDAC fulfilling. Before the Committee moves forward he recommends creating this at the next meeting. Aedan recommended waiting until after meeting with Central NH Regional Planning Commission, they will provide some structure for the Committee. Charlie recommended the Committee digest this evenings presentation and come to the next meeting with priorities as to what the Committee should address. Joe said he would attend the webinar Cindy spoke about and will report back, he said he will also talk to R.C. Brayshaw. Peter said Brayshaw is in the thinking stages at this time. Ginger said a checklist for a proposed business is needed as well, and she feels the Committee needs to digest what was presented and come back next month, put off meeting with CNHRPC for one month. The Committee agreed to hold off till November for the meeting with CNHRPC. The Committee will digest the presentation, Christine will capture the information in written form and will meet next month on October 14th. Charlie said the meeting dates to consider for November are 9, 10, 16, or 17th.

5. Economic Development Survey Results

- A. Darryl passed out the results of the survey. Everything was tallied, the order is most popular to the least popular. Selectman Dabuliwicz had requested the survey be compared to the survey taken in 2008. The one big difference is senior care, Warner is getting older and people are caring for older parents. In 2008 there was a high demand for a pharmacy, and in 2016 the demand fell off by 15%, the need was met. Christine said what would have been helpful is if people listed their top 3, this would have provided much more data. Darryl agrees, he doesn't feel the survey was a good one. Ginger said maybe one of the Committee's task is to re-survey.

6. Adjournment

A motion was made and passed to adjourn, no time was stated, estimated time is 8:20 pm.

Recorder of the minutes: Mary Whalen