



**Warner Board of Selectmen
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, March 22, 2016
APPROVED**

Selectman Carson opened the meeting at 3:00 pm.

In attendance: Selectman Clyde Carson - Chairman, Selectman Allan N. Brown, Selectman John Dabuliewicz, Town Administrator – Jim Bingham

Others present: Ginger Marsh, Darryl Parker, Ed Mical, John Leavitt, Barbara Annis, Rick Davies, Judy Newman-Rogers, Peter Anderson, Stefanie Hertzog

1. Buxton Company

- A. Eric Brown from Buxton Company explained he has been speaking with the Town Administrator with respect to how Buxton helps communities with economic development. Buxton specializes in retail and restaurant development.
- B. Eric explained Buxton has been working with retailers for the past 20 years helping them optimize where they should be putting stores, how they should market, how they should be merchandizing.
- C. Buxton retail clients have used Buxton research to evaluate over 80,000 sites in the past 12 months. Out of those they opened 7,500 stores. For every site a retailer opens, they evaluated 8-10 other locations. It's important from an economic development standpoint for a community to put themselves in a position to where retailers are paying a lot more attention to Warner rather than other communities and that's where Buxton can help. Buxton takes a two pronged approach when partnering with a community. It's retail recruitment, and using the same research giving access to local existing business to strengthen and improve.
- D. Buxton has worked with over 700 communities across the country. Rochester NH has been a client of Buxton for a number of years. Every dollar Rochester spent on Buxton basically returned \$91.00 tax revenue back to the community through property taxes and other taxes. There is a true return in investment with a partnership like Buxton.
- E. Buxton has recruited over 40,000,000 square feet of retail for all their community partners. Buxton has pioneered this industry 20 years ago and has been on the top of it ever since. Buxton has built models for retailers for 20 years, and they know what makes for a successful retail location. When in a community, they assess and determine what the best retailer match is by knowing who are the residents and workers as consumers, how far people are willing to drive and what are all the other retail market conditions that are present, such as competition.
- F. Their data and research goes beyond demographics. Demographics is a basic tool, data is tracked from 130,000,000 households across the country. The other important piece is convenience, retailers do not care about city boundaries and most who shop don't either. From a recruitment perspective Buxton can provide a clear picture to a retailer what the market area looks like in a region.
- G. Eric said the way to obtain this information is through their tool called Scout, which is a web-based application that they built, maintain and develop at Buxton. Eric said other research and data companies don't have something like this. And a lot of other consultants tend to deliver research and market analysis in the form of a book or PDF which ultimately collects dust on a shelf somewhere. Scout is a living, breathing platform and is designed to give town leadership the ability to access information and answers very easily. Eric said Buxton is not a data company. For example you could sit down with Target and highlight to them that your market trade area looks precisely like other Target stores that are out there. The reason retailers source Buxton for some of their analytic concerns is because opening a brand new store is a multi-million dollar mistake. With the information provided from the Scout application the town can show Target or a similar retailer and say these are the exact stores on the ground out there already that look like Warner. Additionally all Buxton's retail clients use Scout as well, so Warner would be a visual icon on the

map so that whenever a retailer is on Scout they can see all of the community partners that are interested in bringing in retail and they can have Warner at the top of the line.

- H. Buxton can also help the local businesses as well, all the detailed profiling can be drawn from Scout to understand the areas shopping preferences. Other areas in town could be highlighted as well for further opportunity for expansion. Buxton will also provide support.

Questions from the public

Selectman Dabuliewicz: How many small towns like Warner have you worked with.

Eric: We work with communities 3,000 and up to major metro areas, while your city limits may be 3,000, your overall 15-20 minute area may be 3 times the population and that's the story you want to tell to a retailer.

Selectman Dabuliewicz: How do you determine the area where there might be actionable regions, how do you figure that out.

Eric: We have built retailer models for 20 years and we know what a typical drive time area looks like. We have a partnership with the largest credit card processor in the world. It allows us to precisely identify who has stopped in town and swiped their card and where they came from. We can profile them and we can develop tools that you can use to find more people that look just like them so you can improve your market from the tourism perspective.

Darryl Parker: How did you select Warner.

Eric: It was based on some initial research that I did on the market place. The research highlighted to me that there was leakage occurring in the trade area. Basically you have residents here leaving Warner to satisfy certain shopping needs. The next step is who are the retailers we need to bring in or how do we strengthen the existing businesses.

Selectman Dabuliewicz: What are the fees.

Eric: A typical partnership with a community is a multi-year partnership, reason being nothing in economic development happens over night. Most retailers have the next 24 months figured out for their retail site selection plan. The first year of our partnership we make sure we set strong dialog with new retail concepts that your trying to recruit. Each year in the partnership, we are re-running the analysis to provide current data. The partnership is typically a three-year partnership. The fee is \$50K per year, to include a visitor profile per project that is an additional \$10K per year. We don't recommend the visitor profile every year because it doesn't change that much year to year. Typically we recommend a visitor profile once in the three-year contract.

John Leavitt: Success rate.

Eric: There's too many variables in the retail market place for me to come in and say I'm absolutely going to get you this sporting goods store. My guarantee is I'm going to get you in touch with the decision makers at these retailers with data that is indisputable because it's the premier information in the retail landscape. Half of the value of our partnership is retailers know our name.

John Leavitt: What's your success rate.

Eric: Again, I can't tell you....

John Leavitt: What your success rate has been in the past and the towns you represented, you should be able to give us that.

Eric: We've recruited 40,000,000 square feet of retail space for over 700 communities that we have worked with.

John Leavitt: That doesn't tell me your success rate per client.

Eric: The success rate completely depends on hundreds of other things. I've worked with communities that have gotten into our analytical information with the best of intentions and desire to use it and they didn't use it. I can tell you the success rate there was zero. I can't give you a number on success rate, what I can tell you is the common thread for communities that have been successful are proactive, they use the information, they sell their community, those people are getting out there and using it and not letting it be a static study that collects dust.

John Leavitt: So your success rate is based on the towns enthusiasm with trying to get the work done.

Eric: Absolutely, because again, I'm here from a position that the best people to sell Warner is you. I can't sell Warner, I can put together the data and information that proves a retailer is going to be great here. But, when it comes down to it, that retailer has to work with you and identify if this is where they want to be. The tremendous value we bring to the equation is first and foremost, we help identify who you are. The success depends on so many different things.

John Leavitt: Sounds like the businesses that you will recommend will be businesses that compliment the businesses that are already in town and perhaps draw clientele into town that would improve the existing businesses as well as the new retailer.

Eric: Most definitely.

Selectman Carson: A \$150K commitment for the city of Rochester is a lot easier to absorb than it would be for Warner. I wonder how many small towns have signed up for this and can you point us to some we could talk to.

Eric: One of our best clients is a community in North Texas called Celina. When they started with us they're population was about 5,000 and now they have grown to about 7,000. The research and input we put into every single project is the same, no matter what size the town.

Stefanie Hertzog: We've had problems in the past with businesses trying to come in. In the smaller towns, have the townspeople ever had a say, yes or no, for the incoming businesses and would we have any input on it? When the hotel wanted to come in, it was a major mess.

Eric: Typically whenever we work with a community, that input does come to us by way of elected officials or Town Administrator's.

Selectman Dabuliewicz: How do we get people to give us that feedback, is the Master Plan under revision?

Rick Davies: From the 2008 survey people want the tax rate lowered, opportunities for younger and older citizens. Also, some of the zoning ordinances have been changed in regards to commercial properties which may have held things up in the past.

Town Administrator: The factor dealing with small towns is manpower and people focusing on a particular area. He asked Eric to elaborate more about bridging the gap and assigning someone in the home office, how does that work and how do you tweak that to help a small community that doesn't have a Home Economic Development office.

Eric: You will have a dedicated staff member who will guide you through the process who is an expert in retail.

Selectman Dabuliewicz: What type of skills and knowledge would you be looking for in people who would assist us.

Eric: Expertise in sales and understands the community.

Town Administrator: How does Warner capitalize on I-89.

Eric: Having the visibility is something we would quantify in the matching process.

Barbara Annis: Do you also do light industry.

Eric: We don't specialize in light industry, there are others that do, and can I provide references, we are retail experts.

Town Administrator: What's your level of contact and or coverage for regional chains in the New England region.

Eric: Our data base is for over 500 retailers, what we have the capability of doing if there is a desire to understand a retail that may not be in our matching data base is we can still put some data together to see what the correlation to what is going on at a particular site. This can be provided at no cost, part of the on-going partnership.

Rick Davies: Did you give the same presentation to Hopkinton, New London, Sutton and Grantham?

Eric: I made a virtual presentation to Hopkinton. I have been marketing NH aggressively for the past 5 months. The reason is Buxton historically has not focused on New England and the mid-Atlantic region. Rochester NH has been our steadiest client for a number of years.

Town Administrator: When does Buxton pass the baton when a retailer decides to develop.

Eric: We can provide guidance on what the real estate life cycle looks like. Once you have a retailer looking at sites, we pretty much have done our job at that point. If a retailer looks at sites, they are serious.

Darryl Parker: Will a system like this give us the data where we could pre-qualify sites?

Eric: Scout comes in two versions, a touch version that's great for smart phones and tablets. And map space version that allows you load in custom map space visual data, such as layering in the municipal zoning. There are site statistics that can also be provided.

Rick Davies: There may be a mechanism that hasn't been used, design development provision which can be helpful for the applicant with the concept on how things are arranged, the final details would still need to go through

approval later on, it's our provisions and state RSAs. It's a tool that could be researched by an Economic Development Committee to see how it's used.

Eric: I would suggest those types of tools and that level of thinking is the type of thing a retailer likes to hear.

John Leavitt: Do retailers pay you a fee?

Eric: Yes

John Leavitt: That's a little bit of a concern. Wouldn't you be able to channel Warner's research into the retailers your representing.

Eric: Great question, the answer is no. We do work with over 3,000 retailers on a partnership consulting basis in which we build for them site selection analytic tools.

Chairman Carson asked Eric to provide some references which Eric will forward on to the Town Administrator.

2. Adjournment

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn at 4:07 pm.

Board of Selectmen

Clyde Carson

Allan N. Brown

John Dabuliewicz

Recorder of the minutes: Mary Whalen