

April 2017

To the Town of Warner Selectboard,

In 2016, the Selectboard authorized the Economic Development Advisory Committee to be established ad hoc to investigate creating a permanent Economic Development Advisory Committee of the Town of Warner and to establish a general plan of action. The Committee has completed its work and offers the following recommendations as well as an Executive Summary and Work Plan that sets a potential Advisory Committee up for success.

The following recommendations are offered:

- Establish a permanent Economic Advisory Committee within the next six months, with the following organizational structure: At least one designee from the following bodies; Selectboard, Planning Board, Conservation Committee. Three (3) local business representatives approved by the Selectboard. Six (6) members from the general public approved by the Selectboard. All members of the committee to be rotating on a three year basis, with a term limit to be established at a later date. There is no statutory authority within New Hampshire other than 'advisory' to the Selectboard, so no decision-making or authorities may be extended to the Advisory Committee. NH R.S.A.41:8 allows the Selectboard to establish such Advisory Committee based on its ability to manage the Town but there is no delegation of authority. The Advisory Committee will meet with the Selectboard on a bi-monthly basis to report out on progress, seek action by the Selectboard and engage the Selectboard and members of the public on a regular basis.
- Redesign and update the Town of Warner website in order to focus on tourism and economic activities that will enhance Warner's image, vitality and economic opportunities. We have learned from State officials and experts in the field over the course of the past year that this is critical and often creates the first impression to businesses that may never initially communicate with anyone in Town.
- Professionally develop and conduct an annual survey that assesses the needs and aspirations of the people in Warner and provides guidance on actions that lead to sustained economic prosperity.

Please find attached the following documents:

- Executive Summary
- Draft Work Plan
- Initial Committee Highlights and Recommendation if the committee is created

On behalf of the ad hoc advisory committee I submit these recommendations and thank you for this opportunity.

Charlie Albano Chair

Executive Summary

In 2016, the Select Board established an ad hoc Warner Economic Development Advisory (EDAC) Committee. The purpose of this committee is:

“To support the existing business community and to encourage economic growth that serves local needs, is environmentally responsible, fits aesthetically with the town's

historic architecture, and provides a net increase in municipal revenue” (Warner Master Plan).

The committee emanated from Master Plan recommendations which further states “that an economic development committee is to advise and implement economic development activities and provide an official liaison between the town and the business community”.

The **Goal** of the committee is to establish a plan that is essential to enhance and develop a sustainable community that encourages economic development within the context of healthy living for both residents and visitors.

The EDAC has had approximately 8 meetings, and invested many hours in outside research. We have started the initial internal educational process of defining community economic development and what it can mean for a small community like ours. We have read and reviewed numerous documents, invited and spoke with the representative from the State Department of Resources and Economic Development (DRED) and have created working groups within our committee that are helping to define economic development goals and objectives.

With much additional discussion, research, and review of historical information from the Town including the master plan, surveys and results of the Town Charrette in 2004, we agreed that four (4) key areas were to be our initial focus. Organization and Education, Business Retention and Expansion, Business Development, and Tourism.

Using a standard goals, objectives and tasks methodology – we proceeded in setting up subcommittees to focus on four (4) specific sectors:

1. **Organization and Education**
2. **Business Retention and Expansion**
3. **Business Development**
4. **Tourism**

These sectors were the foundation of developing the **work plan**.

We plan to have an open process to inform and educate the community about economic opportunities, listen to suggestions and eventually implement a plan to improve the economic base of Warner.

The Work Plan Organization and Education

GOAL A: Gain a common and shared understanding of the elements that improve community vitality

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE: Within two years, educate the residents of Warner why it is important to use a regional narrative to ‘market’ Warner to businesses and tourists.

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE: Warner EDC members will attend statewide trainings when available to increase knowledge on techniques, and be aware of opportunities available to the Town, businesses and entrepreneurs.

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE: Outline connections between surveys conducted in 2008 and 2016, the most recent Town Plan, current policies in place and document barriers or inconsistencies to business opportunities.

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE: The Warner EDC will consistently invite guests to their meetings that will engage community members, educate on best practices, provide guidance of financial resources and learn of opportunities that craft comprehensive community development.

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE: Create consistent and frequent mechanisms to reach out to community members, clubs, and businesses to inform of progress of the Warner EDC and discoveries that are interesting and informative.

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE: Assure the community that their interests and expressed concerns, as well as the integrity of the community, will guide the work of the Warner EDC.

TASKS:

- Research and succinctly articulate to the community what attracts and retains businesses
- Meet with local and regional business leaders to gain knowledge of how they view the region
- Invite tourism leaders to discuss what draws people to areas and what impact tourism can have on communities
- Focus the website so that it comprises what broader regional assets are available
- List training resources on website
- Put links on website that are noteworthy regional and includes statewide rankings and memorable connections
- Invite the Planning Board to help identify policies that may create barriers to existing and new businesses
- Create packets and brochures for businesses, local and state officials and commercial realtors about what Warner's defining characteristics and vision for growth

GOAL B: Manage expectations of what can be accomplished through the establishment and work of the EDC.

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE: Acknowledge the limits of focused resources and what 'financial' changes individuals may expect.

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE: Identify and highlight the positive attributes of Warner that result from the EDC.

TASKS:

- Create consistent messaging of the impact that development has on the tax base, and on individual tax bills (using twitter, facebook, website other social media as well as pamphlet)

- Conduct surveys as necessary, which will provide the Warner EDC with insight on how to move forward on certain issues.
- Create one-page fact sheets on issues: i.e. impact of additional revenues through new development and estimate how those dollars would change the tax bill.

GOAL C: Provide a consistent mechanism to observe, explore, pilot and implement opportunities for the Town of Warner to enlist pro-active community development.

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE: Learn the work of other groups in Town and learn how their efforts can be supported.

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE: Identify resources that could be used to implement objectives supported by the Warner community.

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE: Be efficient with resources; do not reinvent what's already working well and highlight the good work of others.

TASKS:

- Promote the work of other organizations and identify how that enhances opportunities for Warner.
- Establish a list on the website of financial resources that assist economic development and businesses to include grants, policy opportunities, tax incentives etc.
- Meet and learn from other economic development groups from around the state.

GOAL D: Promote Warner as a welcoming, family friendly, youthful place that establishes and renews memorable personal connections

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE: Increase the knowledge and comfort level of social media and know the most impactful ways to engage people.

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE: Engage current family and youth that are within Warner and ask advice about what attracts them here and what would keep them here

TASKS:

- Website is filled with visually welcoming pictures and is easy to maneuver
- Support and increase opportunities to gather publicly and informally
- Work with the various museums and activity centered groups and venues to present a coordinated effort.

Business Retention & Expansion

GOAL A: To provide the necessary tools and supports to assist existing businesses to thrive and help new business to be successful.

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE: Actively participate in community initiatives that will improve Warner's quality of place and reinforce a positive image of Warner among local employers and their employees.

TASK: Invest in annual and regular tourism events like the Warner Fall Foliage Festival and the Davisville Flea Market.

TASK: Develop a plan to establish a permanent and staffed Parks & Recreation Department and improve visibility and use of local recreational activities.

TASK: Improve road signage within and around the Town of Warner.

TASK: Increase the walk ability of Warner by supporting Complete Streets and trail development.

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE: Assist Warner's primary employers and small businesses to enhance and encourage local expansion by engaging in public relations efforts that help improve their visibility and brand awareness.

TASK: Prepare a directory of primary employers and small businesses with relevant business and contact information for collaboration and growth.

TASK: Establish an annual meeting with primary employers and small businesses to present economic development activities, opportunities and listen to input.

TASK: Work with primary employers and small businesses to improve business representation on the Town of Warner boards and committees

TASK: Develop an economic development chapter for the Town Report that includes data on tourism, workforce, and business climates.

MEASURABLE OBJECTIVE: Work with local farmers, farms, and agricultural businesses to foster and celebrate the rural character of the Warner area.

TASK: Work to establish an agricultural organization or committee within the town of Warner that includes local farmers and agricultural interests like the 4-H.

TASK: Increase the Town of Warner's collaboration with the Warner Area Farmer's Market with improvements to the market venue, better signage, marketing, and public relations.

TASK: Support efforts to increase and place emphasis on agritourism including events like the Kearsarge Maple Festival, the Warner Fall Foliage Festival and annual farm tours.

Business Development (Commercial/Retail)

Goal: To provide the necessary information, data and municipal structure to attract new commercial businesses to locate/expand in Warner.

Objective: Identify factors which are advantageous for development.

Objective: Identify factors which will negatively impact development

Objective: Identify and catalog all parcels of commercial property in order to understand the scope of possible business locations.

Objective: Identify commercial properties that are for sale.

Tasks: Work with State departments and other economic entities to provide existing data, planning tools, research, and assistance in matching external commercial businesses with their desire to locate in New Hampshire/Warner.

Task: Link Warner's new Web-site to regional and state resources that enhance visibility for prospective commercial business to assess: work force availability, education, available properties, tax information etc.

Tasks: Interview owners of existing business in Warner who can offer opinions as to how to enhance business opportunities.

Task: Meet with commercial property owners to assess their willingness to sell existing commercial property.

Task: Research commercial opportunities at exits 7 and 9 to broaden the tax base.

Tourism and Economic Development

Goal: Increase the number of people to visit and stay in Warner.

Objective: Create a Tourism Plan.

Objective: Create a “tourism” component on the *new website*.

Objective: Identify tourist attractions in and around Warner (within 20 miles), which will include at a *minimum*:

- Places to stay
- Restaurants
- Farms
- Retail businesses
- Local and regional attractions
- Things to do and see.

Task: Work to promote existing businesses, restaurants, etc

Task: Work with the NH Bureau of Tourism to find ways to attract visitors.

Task: Collect visitor data.

Task: Survey visitors regarding reasons they visited; suggestions to improve what we do; and what would make them visit in the future.

Initial Advisory Committee Highlights and Recommendations If the Committee is Officially Created

1. Develop a Mission Statement.
2. Develop a work plan for the purpose of revising the Warner Town Web-Site with a “Tourism and EDC” focus.
3. Develop a “tourism” plan that will highlight why people should visit Warner.
4. Establish a working relationship with the State Bureau of Tourism to assist us with attracting visitors to Warner

5. Create a Town of Warner *Brochure* that highlights who we are and the many reasons to visit, listing all community events and attractions.
6. Establish a working relationship with state agencies to assist us with web site development, linking state data to our web-site and listing our commercial properties
Conduct a new economic development survey for residents and business in order to better understand the communities' interests and priorities for economic development.
7. Solicit a community group to develop the "Branding" of Warner, which will help attract businesses and tourists.
8. Conduct an annual community meeting to discuss and take suggestions on improving economic development initiatives in Warner.
9. Contribute regularly to the Town newsletter, providing an update on the latest work of the EDC.
10. Town applies to applicable funding sources to address work plan objectives.
11. Join the **Kearsarge Regional Chamber of Commerce** to coordinate/highlight retail businesses.
12. Establish quarterly local business meetings.

Next Steps:

Using the above described Work Plan; develop a 12 month plan that will prioritize tasks and actions to be taken.

Committee members:

Charlie Albano
EDAC Chair

Aedan Sherman

Peter Anderson

Christine Frost

Ginger Marsh

Joe Mendola

Darryl Parker

Michael Amaral

