



Economic Development Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 15, 2020

Emma opened the meeting at 6:10 pm

Committee members in attendance: Emma Bates, Mark Govoni, Neil Nevins

Others present: Jason Mutschler, Laura French, Graham Gifford, Ken Cogswell

1. Minutes

The minutes from December 18, 2019 were reviewed and approved.

2. Exit 9

A. Emma said Nancy Martin is doing some research on a restaurant.

B. Neil said when they initially met with the developer they were clear in terms of not having anything at Exit 9 that would conflict with the existing small businesses. When you're dealing with big box and small box retail, the impact is negative in terms of wages, which are low as well as other things. He said Dollar General is littering the country, the proposal is for 20,000 stores. There is a Dollar General in Henniker now. The Dollar General in Bristol closed, they come in, flush with cash, and after several years they're gone. Having vacant retail space generally depresses the real estate values. Neil said there was no indication from the developer that a Dollar General is being considered. Emma asked Neil if he has heard anything more from the Boys & Girls Club. Neil said the Director was very much interested in talking to the developer. There may also be some interest for an auto parts store at Exit 9. Emma asked if the developer has come back to the Town to begin the Planning Board process. At this time, no one has heard anything.

3. Masonic Hall

Emma said the hall is going up for sale, the hope is to sell it by spring so the members can move to Penacook. The acreage is unknown on the property and currently there is no parking available. A possible use for the building is a commercial kitchen, but, the parking would be an issue. Another thought was a daycare.

4. NH Works

Emma said Charlie Albano is arranging for a speaker to meet with the Committee.

5. Mountain Biking

Mark said he started working on the project and there is a number of different issues, land, getting it done, and then getting the Town to okay it. He said in thinking about those things, he came back to what he has viewed as one of the real impediments to Warner making an advancement, which is outside this Committee, no one wants anything to be done. It's not so much getting the Town government to say okay, it's more can we get the people behind this. Mark said he has read what has gone on in Warner over the years and found Warner used to be a very entrepreneur town and worked hard to get people to come into Town. It seems over the years, less of that has happened and more has happened to keep people from coming to Town.

Mark went to Kingdom Trails in Vermont to figure out why is this worth while, what will Warner get out of having bike trails. Mark said Kingdom Trails has been established for over 20 years, they have over \$10,000,000 in economic impact over 5 towns. Kingdom Trails estimate that 84% of people come from outside and spends an average of \$115 a day and stays 2 and $\frac{3}{4}$ days. Mark said it's worth while doing, if people can be convinced to do it, and we can logistically actually get it done. Emma asked Mark if there has been an environmental impact study done. Mark didn't see any. Emma feels that would be good information to have, what is the impact to animals, erosion, water etc.

The Committee talked about the meeting regarding ATV usage that took place at a Selectman's meeting, mountain bikes are less of an impact and an enormous difference. There was talk at that meeting about studying other uses in the Minks, concerning the environment, cultural/historical aspects. Mark doesn't see a problem getting the land, it's getting the trails built, having people with the knowledge to do it, the trails are not like hiking trails. Emma said

the other component is parking, people talked to her about their concerns on that. Mark said the first thing that needs to be determined is, can it physically be done. Jason said the New England Mountain Bike Association could provide volunteer labor. Jason is also looking at the organization to host a trail building school in Warner in the upcoming year, but, it was already scheduled in Keene. Mark said the first thing that needs to be done is the land needs to be identified and then the project needs strong support. He will also set a meeting date with everyone on the Committee to settle on who exactly will be approached.

6. Tourism

Emma said Will Minsinger checked out VisitNH.gov and found there were many Warner events listed on the site, but, not all. Emma said Will thinks the Committee should make a list that can be added to the site. You can join as an industry member to be able to list things. Will will be reaching out to Stay-Work-Play to see if they would do a presentation for the Committee. The Committee will be thinking/looking at presenting to the Selectmen the benefit of having a part-time person watching and listing Warner activities to try to increase tourism. Laura feels it's up to the organizations themselves to post their events and feels it would be difficult for one person to keep up with local activities. Laura said if you're going to have someone from the Town do it, that's marketing the Town, rather than having someone listing all the activities when the entities have already done that. Emma asked if there is enough activity in Warner for a marketer, or is it being achieved individually by each entity. Someone felt it would be premature to have someone posting things that are happening in Warner, you first have to have things happening in Warner. There are many things happening in Warner, each entity is doing lots of different things, the point is it needs to be under one umbrella. Come to Warner to bike, go out to lunch, go to museums, go hiking, etc., that's the missing link, come to Warner and spend the day. Neil said that's why the website was revamped and the brochure was created. Emma asked if a web page should be dedicated along with the ability to update, all the activities that are going on in Warner. Laura said the Library has an event calendar on their website, but Laura thinks a page with some graphics would be helpful. Graham said it's a little more intuitive for someone to go to the Town website rather than the Library website for activities.

7. Charging Stations

Emma said money is being used in NH from the Volkswagon money recall to put in charging stations in towns. Warner was entered as possible location by the Energy Committee. The NH Telephone Museum is willing to put stations in their parking lot, MainStreet Bookends is interested as well.

8. Mural

Emma said the Warner Fall Foliage Festival has granted \$2,500 towards the mural. Charlie Albano will be presenting to the Men's Club on February 27th and will be submitting a request for funding to the Nancy Sibley Wilkins Fund. Emma said some people have reached out to her for more information. A woman who created a mosaic at Simonds School will be submitting a proposal for the mural. In total, 5 people have reached out to Emma about their interest in the mural project. Emma will be speaking about the mural on the Yankee Cable Network.

9. Public Comments

Laura asked if the EDAC will be doing something in regards to tourism. Emma said yes, there is a sub-committee that is working on tourism. The mural and the brochure were recent projects and are always looking for suggestions.

10. Sidewalk Project

Emma said there is a lot of research that say sidewalks are a benefit to the community and economic development. She said the Budget Committee is pushing back, they are against the project. The project is a sidewalk from the village area down to Exit 9. Emma asked if the Committee should be writing a letter to the Board of Selectmen or show up at the Budget Committee meeting to say the EDAC thinks it's an issue that impacts economic development and the Town should be investing the money. Neil said it's in the Town's Master Plan, to make the community walk-able. Ken Cogswell said to add to the discussion is there a preliminary plan, how much money etc. Neil said 80% can be covered by grants and the grants are time sensitive. Neil said the proposal is to ask the voters for \$10,000. Ken Cogswell said during a Selectman's meeting some residents voiced a concern on how close the sidewalk would come to their house.

11. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at about 7:10 pm.

Recorder of the minutes: Mary Whalen