

**Essex Strategic Planning Committee
June 8, 2016, 7:00 PM
Essex Senior Center, 17 Pickering Street**

MINUTES

Members Present: David Gabor – Chair, Mike Burke – Vice Chair, Charlie McNeil, Keith Symmes, John Bediz, Annie Cameron, Peter Madsen, Lisa O’Donnell, Julie Scofield

Staff Present: Brendhan Zubricki – Town Administrator, Matt Coogan – Town Planner

Guest: Maria DiStefano, Northeast Regional Director, MA Office of Business Development

David Gabor began the meeting at 7:03 PM

There was no public comment.

The April 27, 2016 meeting minutes were approved with revisions.

Special Guest Presentation: Maria Nigro DiStefano, Northeast Regional Director, MA Office of Business Development

Ms. DiStefano provided the Committee background on the Office of Business Development (MOBD). MOBD administers the state’s Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP), which provides tax incentives for private investment and job creation. Ms. DiStefano reviewed the details of the EDIP, including the ability for local municipality to provide Tax Increment Financing (TIF) for local businesses. Ms. DiStefano also provided information on Main Street economic development, and provided examples of successful downtown programs and development in communities nationwide in similar size to Essex.

Continued discussion of Economic Development for Town – The Committee discussed the creation of a subcommittee of the SPC that would focus on creating an Economic Development Plan for the Town. Annie Cameron was assigned to create a mission statement/ charge. Suggestions for members included SPC members Annie, John Bediz, Charlie McNeil, Peter Madsen, Julie Scofield, David Ganor, and Bob Coviello. Other suggested members were John Guerin, Ken Riehl, Jeff Soulart, and Shirley Singleton.

Continued discussion of consideration of Community Compact Best Practice Areas – Brendhan explained that the Town has already created a Community Compact for Climate Change Initiatives and mentioned the current project the Town is involved in that receives funding through the Sandy II grant funding for implementing climate change mitigation initiatives

There was a discussion of creating Town revenue outside of property taxes. Brendhan mentioned that the Town has diversified its revenue sources, including revenue from sales and rentals at Conomo Point, the local meals tax, increases due to prop 2.5, the clean water state revolving fund, and various grant programs. Economic development could be another means to create additional revenue for the Town.

SPC voted unanimously to recommend the Board of Selectmen enter into a community compact for the Preparing for Success Best Practices within Housing and Economic Development Section

Review of goals and actions matrix – finish prioritizing actions – Members provided updates on meetings and trips they attended that related to the Strategic Plan. Annie and David reported on the Gloucester Marine Genomics Institute (GMGI), and organization that is interested in providing student technical training. There would be potential collaboration with MERSD and GMGI. Charlie reported back on a site visit of a new public safety building in Newmarket, MD. The building cost \$1.2 million and both the community and fire department were similar in size to Essex. The building was funded privately through donations to the volunteer firefighter organization. Charlie will look into getting financial plans for the project and can provide copies of blueprints.

There was a discussion on the potential future of the Allen properties. One potential use could be a combination natural resource/ open space area and downtown municipal parking through a partnership between the Town and Essex Greenbelt.

Brendhan and Matt presented the Committee a document outlining the projects that the Town is currently working on that are part of the Strategic Plan. For the next meeting, Brendhan and Matt will prioritize the strategies on the memo for what the SPC recommends the Town should work on, as well as what the priorities are for the SPC to work on.

The meeting was concluded at 8:45 PM.