

Town of Farmington  
Economic Development Committee Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, October 10, 2017

**Committee Members Present:**

Angela Hardin, Vice Chairman  
Ann Titus, Selectmen's Rep.  
Martin Laferte, Planning Board Rep.  
Sharron McKenney  
Elise Haig  
Kathy King

**Committee Members Absent:**

Randy Orvis, Chairman, excused  
Denise Roy-Palmer, Secretary

**1). Call to Order:**

Vice Chairman Hardin called the meeting to order at 6 p.m.

**2). Pledge of Allegiance:**

All present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**3). Public Comment:** None

**4). Review of Minutes:**

September 12, 2017- No errors or omissions.

Motion: (Titus, second Laferte) to accept the minutes as written passed 4-0-2 (King, Hardin abstained).

**5). Newsletter:**

Mrs. Titus said the Business of the Month for the October edition of the Economic Development News is RW Real Estate. She said the newsletter also includes information about the EDC and their next meeting, contact information about available Town owned commercial property and the NH Municipal Assistance Grant Program where the Town would receive \$20,000 to study using a Form Based Codes approach to develop the former Fire Station property.

Mrs. Titus said she has two businesses scheduled for Business of the Month for the November and December editions but is in need of more business articles for future editions. She asked the members and business owners to submit any information they feel might be suitable for the next newsletter to Erica Rogers at [welfaredirector@metrocast.net](mailto:welfaredirector@metrocast.net).

Motion: (Titus, second McKenney) to accept the newsletter as presented passed 6-0.

**6). Planning Board Report:**

Mr. Laferte asked the Vice Chairman to allow him to give his monthly Planning Board Report before continuing the goal setting discussion as the report may involve some of the goals under consideration by the committee.

Ms. Hardin asked Mr. Laferte to proceed with his report.

10/3/17 Meeting-Mr. Laferte said the agenda included a discussion regarding residential

dwelling units on the first floor in buildings on Main Street. He said the Town Planner is really pushing to prohibit apartments on the first floor of any building on Main Street downtown. The board discussed the matter but took no action he said.

Mr. Laferte said the board received a handbook on Form Based Codes at their meeting for review and discussion at a future meeting. He said this type of coding system is under consideration by the board but he did not think there would be any recommendations about implementing a Form Based Codes system until the 2019 Town Meeting.

Mr. Laferte said the Town Planner also suggested the board consider changes to the list of permitted uses in the commercial corridor along Route 11. He said he reminded the board that the area is part of the TIF District and of the plans to extend the water/sewer lines out along Route 11 at a cost of about \$4 million.

9/19/17 Meeting- The board approved an application by Z & E Properties for a Minor Site Plan Review for retail and light manufacturing uses contingent upon the installation of handicapped parking and related signage, protection for the propane tank and fixing the existing fence within one year from the approval date. Expansion of the business will require another review before the board he said.

Mr. Laferte said the board also approved an Amended Site Plan Review application by ACM Specialized Materials (aka The Metal Farm) owned by George Sacco. He said Mr. Sacco received permission from the Zoning Board of Adjustment to conduct auctions at the site. Some Conditions of Approval set by the Planning Board included to test and certify his sprinkler systems, the presence of a Police or Fire Dept. detail during auctions until the sprinkler system is certified, employ traffic flaggers during the auctions and to address parking and storage issues he said.

He said the Planning Board also granted a lot line adjustment to convey land from one parcel to a second parcel owned by the same owner on Elm Street.

Mrs. Titus asked about the status of the new Aroma Joe's coffee shop being constructed on Route 11.

Mrs. King said the owner is awaiting completion of the electrical work needed at the site.

Mr. Laferte said the paving at the site has not been completed and speculated that the coffee shop would be open within the next 30 days.

**7). Update Goals** – Members received a list of short term (accomplished in one year or less) and long term goals (accomplishment extending beyond one year) for review and discussion.

Ms. Hardin asked if the committee had any suggestions as to additions or subtractions to the list of goals. She said she just listed everyone's ideas from the last meeting and that the list is not in any particular order. She suggested adding updating the businesses list on the Town website to the short term goals list.

Mrs. King said that the Farmington Preservation and Improvement Organization conducted a business mailing and some of the mailers bounced back to them due to incorrect addresses. She said she asked a representative of the group to send the corrected addresses to Administrative Assistant Erica Rogers to update the Town website business list.

**Short Term Goals:**

**UNH Cooperative Extension-**Mrs. Titus asked about engaging with the UNH Cooperative Extension regarding the downtown revitalization.

Ms. Hardin suggested they postpone any action on this item as the Town Planner is working on setting up a meeting with the Extension in early 2018.

**Update the EDC folders-** Mrs. Titus said she talked to the Town Planner and the Planning/Codes Dept. Secretary who had suggestions for new information to be included in the folders. She suggested the creation of a subcommittee to gather the information to be included and then prepare the folders for distribution. She said she would Chair the subcommittee and asked for some volunteers to help her with the project. Ms. McKenney and Mrs. King volunteered to be part of the subcommittee.

**Display/Distribute the EDC monthly newsletter-** Mrs. Titus said Mrs. Rogers has been providing copies of the newsletter to her and they have been posted on the Municipal Building bulletin board and placed around town. She said she also plans to post the newsletter on the Community Face book page each month.

Ms. Hardin said she would also make copies available at the TD Bank.

Mr. Laferte asked that copies of the newsletter be included in the members' meeting packets.

**Communicate with the NH Liquor Commission-** Ms. Hardin said based on an article in Foster's newspaper it does not sound like Farmington will be keeping a state liquor store in town. She said Chairman Orvis had planned to contact the commission but has been unable to due to a recent illness. She asked if the goal should remain on the list until someone has a chance to speak directly to the commission.

Mrs. Titus suggested it remain on the list but was skeptical that a conversation would change the state's plans.

**Revitalize downtown with murals-** Mrs. King said she received permission from the property owner to paint a mural on the side wall of a downtown business and asked the committee how they would like to proceed with the project and pursue funding for the plan.

Discussion included what types of paint and materials would be needed for the mural, publish a request for proposals, request donations for materials, set parameters for possible topics for the mural, look for volunteers or students to complete the project for credits/community service, encourage building owner input/approval of the plan, where to advertise the project and request a conceptual plan from the artist(s) for approval.

Consensus of the committee was to ask Ms. Hardin to compose a letter to be reviewed by committee and then sent to the various area colleges seeking student interest in participating in the project.

**Make vacant downtown spaces look occupied-** Ms. Haig said that Lorraine Myers put a Christmas display in a window at the Friends of Farmington building and reported that all of the items were sold. She said this is an example of the value of good exposure when things are displayed well and that people walking along will notice it. She said she hoped the rest of the downtown area would "take off" from that idea.

Ms. Hardin said this item was added to the list as a result of the discussion about the vacancies upstairs in some of the buildings and suggestions on how to make the area more attractive by making the windows in vacant apartments look occupied.

Ms. Haig suggested they attempt to work with the owner of the space where the Farmington House of Pizza was formerly located to create a display in the windows there.

Ms. Hardin suggested the members continue to talk to building owners and encourage them to consider a setting up a display in their vacant shop/apartment windows.

**Host a small business seminar-** Ms. Hardin said she planned to schedule a seminar for business owners this fall but may not be able to put it together in time to avoid the busy holiday season so it may have to be postponed until spring. She said she hoped to have TD Bank sponsor the event and to hold it at the bank or at the Friends of Farmington building to promote both small business and the Friends of Farmington as part of their mission is to provide new business incubator space.

Mrs. King said the Friends of Farmington will host a business “Meet and Greet” at their building on Nov. 1 from 6 to 8 p.m. She said they hope to get other businesses to hold future meetings once a month at their business locations. Any business owner who did not receive an invitation to the Meet and Greet is asked to send an e-mail to [friendsoffarmington@gmail.com](mailto:friendsoffarmington@gmail.com) and all attendees are asked to RSVP so enough food will be available for the event she said.

**Attract a bistro or ice cream shop to downtown-** Ms. Hardin said this item reminded her of the Form Based Codes presentation presented by Community Development Director Allan Manoian who told the committee that everyone wants food which brings people out and other businesses will follow. She said she did not know how to go about attracting a food business to the area but said she definitely agreed on the need for a bakery downtown.

Ms. Haig said she would like see a business such as “Crackskulls Books and Cafe” in Newmarket which is a combination meeting place, book store and café come to town. She added there may be a lot of home bakers interested in opening a bakery that may be discouraged by all of the laws regarding food preparation businesses.

Mrs. Titus recalled how a past bakery downtown was well patronized daily and encouraged any home baker to see if they can work with a landlord to get one of the vacant store fronts downtown.

**Encourage the Zoning Board to amend ordinances for Route 11 and construction of accessory structures on an adjoining lot-** Ms. Hardin said the Town Planner is currently working on these issues and Mr. Orvis will update the committee as they move forward.

**Feature local businesses in prominent locations in town-** Ms. Hardin said the Friends of Farmington is already doing this and that the committee would like to expand on it.

She asked if Erica Rogers’ e-mail address will be changed from Welfare Director to include her additional role as Administrative Assistant to the EDC.

Mrs. Titus explained that the Town website is being redesigned and a new e-mail address will be assigned to Mrs. Rogers when the new website is up and running.

**Correct EDC meeting information on the Town website-** Ms. McKenney said there are two

places on the website that list incorrect meeting days for the committee.

Mrs. Titus said she will check to see that the mistakes have been corrected.

**Investigate ways to include more artisans/craftspeople downtown-** Ms. Haig suggested a pottery store such as Salmon Falls would be a good addition to the downtown area.

Ms. Hardin said she would contact a friend who is a Director of Development in another town and ask for suggestions on how to reach out to businesses and encourage them to come to town.

Ms. Haig said the amount of traffic coming through town may encourage potential business owners to consider bringing their business to town.

**Long Term Goals-** Ms. Hardin reviewed the long term goals which include expansion of the water/sewer lines along Route 11, revise the zoning ordinances to become more business friendly, bring natural gas to town and installation of new sidewalks, curbing and lighting downtown. Many of these issues will be addressed by the update of the 2005 Master Plan currently under review by the Town Planner she said.

Mrs. Titus noted the Safe Routes to School sidewalk/crosswalk work has begun.

Ms. Haig said the last meeting was “dynamic” and that she made copies of the minutes of the meeting and passed them out to business owners. She said the presentation on Form Based Codes at the meeting is wonderful news and if anyone has a business they will feel more confident in putting more work into their business. She said she was optimistic about the future for the town.

**8). Natural Gas- OHRV:** Tabled due to Mr. Orvis’ absence.

### **9). Old Business:**

**A). Update from the Town Planner-** Ms. Hardin read a memo from Mr. DeSantis regarding the Town’s application for a \$20,000 grant to be used to study the development of the former Fire Station property using a Form Based Codes approach and to utilize the UNH Cooperative Extension to assist in the process.

Mr. DeSantis attached a letter of support for the grant application on behalf of the EDC to be signed by Chairman Orvis and sent to PLAN NH if approved by the committee.

Ms. Hardin read the letter of support and then opened the meeting for discussion on the matter.

Mr. Laferte said the same letter was approved by the Planning Board and signed by the Chairman. He said the board was told that Selectmen had also approved and signed a similar letter of support.

Mrs. King suggested the edits to the letter should include:

First paragraph, first sentence-removal of one of the two “Economic Development Committee” phrases

Second paragraph, second sentence- add a “d” to “state” to read “stated”

Third paragraph, first sentence- remove “ment” from “development” and strike the word “of” to read “ ...to further develop the Town of Farmington.”

**Motion:** (King, second Titus) to approve the letter of support for the grant application to the NH Technical Assistance Grant Program with edits passed unanimously.

**B). Any Other Old Business:** None

**10). New Business:**

**A). Potential Historic Focal Point** - Ms. Haig said the Farmington Historical Society is trying to purchase the Eastman House and described some of the history of its previous owner. She said if the purchase is successful and the building is restored it would be a great place for events, meetings and as a destination/historic landmark for visitors.

Mrs. Titus agreed it is a great idea but noted the starting price for the property at the auction is \$109,000 and asked if Ms. Haig was asking the Town for money for the purchase of the property.

Ms. Haig said she was suggesting the town look at grants and other available funds to help fund the restoration of the building.

Mrs. King said the Historical Society President Stan Freeda said there are grants available for restoration purposes which the group can apply for but not to purchase the property.

Ms. Haig said the Society has some money set aside toward the purchase of the property.

Mrs. King said the Society has about \$49,000 of the \$109,000 needed and would have to try to get a mortgage to cover the remainder of the selling price.

Ms. Haig said it is “worth a shot” as every town should have a focal point to bring people in and help to further develop the main street. She said hopefully the Society will be able to purchase the property but they need help to fix it up.

Mrs. King said the Society could use a better location to display the town’s history and for their meetings and events.

Mrs. Titus said the Historical Society meets the first Friday of each month and the November meeting will be held on Nov. 3 at 6 p.m. at the First Congregational Church for their Annual Meeting and dinner.

Mrs. King added that the winning bidder at the auction will have 30 days to make payment on the bid.

Ms. Hardin suggested the Historical Society find someone or a few people “with the wallet” who may be willing to donate the funds out of a compassion for the cause. She then volunteered to show up with her power tools and paint brushes if they manage to purchase the property.

**B). Farmington First Night-** Mrs. King said there is now a Farmington First Night Committee Chaired by Sharon Turner and some of plans for the town’s first New Year’s Eve celebration include an ice skating rink in the old Fire Dept. parking lot, different styles of music at various locations, children’s/family activities, art show, bon fire, warming station at the Municipal Office Building, slide show of favorite memories and a Baby New Year photo contest with a photo shoot from a local photographer as the prize. .

Ms. McKenney asked if ice sculptures are planned

Mrs. King said the sculptures are very expensive ranging in price from \$400 to \$15,000.

Mrs. Titus said the kid friendly events for First Night will be scheduled for 6 to 9 p.m. and more adult activities from 9 p.m. to 12 a.m.

Mrs. King said the next meeting of the First Night Committee will be held on October 25 at 6 p.m. at Honey Dew Donuts and asked all interested residents and business owners to attend the

meeting. She added that the committee is looking for performers and asked vocalists, musicians, puppeteers, magicians, etc. to contact the committee for more information.

**11). Next Meeting:** Tuesday, Nov. 14, 2017 at 6 p.m.

**12). Adjournment:**

Motion: (Laferte, second Titus) to adjourn the meeting passed 6-0 at 7:10 p.m.

Respectively submitted

Kathleen Magoon

Recording Secretary

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Angela Hardin, Vice Chairman