

Town of Farmington
Board of Selectmen Public Meeting Minutes
Monday, July 24, 2017

Selectmen Present:

Paula Proulx, Chairman
Neil Johnson, Vice Chairman
Jim Horgan
Charlie King
Ann Titus

Economic Development Committee Members Present:

Randy Orvis, Chairman
Angela Hardin, Vice Chairman
Denise Roy-Palmer, Secretary
Elise Haig

Planning Board Members Present:

Martin Laferte, Vice Chairman
Stephen Henry
Bill Fisher, Secretary
Matt Stormann, Alternate

Others Present:

Arthur Capello, Town Administrator
Dan DeSantis, Town Planner
Rick Conway, Rec. Dept. Director
Penny Morin
Linda McElhinney
Michelle Elbert
Bobbie Stormann

1). Call to Order:

Chairman Proulx called the meeting to order at 6 p.m.

2). Pledge of Allegiance:

All present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

3). Joint Meeting with the Planning Board and Economic Development Committee:

Ms. Proulx advised the audience that there would be no public comment during this portion of meeting as this is a regular business meeting and not a workshop. She said it is an opportunity for the boards to get together for a “kick-off” meeting to discuss economic development in Town and not meant to come up with solutions to the issues. She then introduced the new Town Planner, Dan DeSantis to the committee members and the audience.

Mr. DeSantis said that he has been employed by the Town for about one month and has spent some time looking over the Master Plan and the downtown development plans from about 20 years ago. He said that economic development does not occur unless there is a commitment to follow through on a consensus plan. Review of those plans show the Town wants something to occur with significant impact he said.

Mr. DeSantis said there should be no conflict between the short term strategies while preparing for the long term plans. He said the most important project that could be implemented in the short term would be the downtown street improvements that were part of the 1998 plans. Much of the proposed improvements are still valid and funding assistance may be available. Other

projects that would enhance economic development downtown could include façade improvements and housing rehabilitation loans/funding assistance he said.

Mr. DeSantis also spoke about the importance of small businesses and noted that 92% of the businesses in the United States employ 5 people or less and that 90% of New Hampshire businesses are considered very small. He said an economic development plan must address these facts.

He recommended the Master Plan be updated, to review the planning and zoning process and to explore Form Based codes. For any economic development plan to work it should be developed from the bottom up with community consensus and support he said.

Chairman Proulx then opened the discussion to the board members.

EDC Chairman Randy Orvis said that at a previous Selectmen's meeting he asked the board to consider scheduling a joint meeting with the boards related to economic development to make sure that they were all "on the same page". He agreed that Form Based codes and more flexible zoning is needed and said he would like to see the downtown area as vibrant as it was 35 years ago.

He said that the Route 11 corridor is where the Town should look to increase the tax base but acknowledged there are several topographical and zoning impediments to development of the area. He said he hoped the Planning Board would consider Mr. DeSantis' recommendation to look at potential zoning changes.

EDC Vice Chairman Angela Hardin asked Mr. DeSantis if he had seen the presentation made by the UNH Cooperative Extension regarding their economic development programs at a previous EDC meeting or if he had any experience working with them in the past.

Mr. DeSantis said he did not have any experience with the UNH programs but would be open to working with them if it would help the Town meet its goals. He said one of the more important decisions to be made now is the future of the former Fire Station property. He said he would like to see a planning study done to determine the best use of the site and how it will impact the downtown. He added that the Master Plan should be updated as part of the Town's long term plans but we should not sit around waiting for it to be completed.

Planning Board member Stephen Henry said it may be easier to expand the existing businesses than to attract new business to Town. He suggested the Town look at what rules are obstacles to business expansion with the goal of increasing property values.

Selectman King said the change of use process for the village center should be streamlined for those uses that don't conflict with zoning or require a structural change to the building. He said there is a long lead time from the point where the business owner rents the space for the potential business use to where all of the reviews and approvals are completed and the business is allowed to operate. The business owner is paying for the space while waiting to get through the process he said. He added that a streamlined change of use process could also "spill over" into other zones.

Chairman Proulx asked how long the application process usually takes.

Mr. DeSantis said it depends on how well prepared the applicant is as it will take longer for

applicants who have not completed the application form or provided all of the necessary information to the Planning Dept. He said that right now the larger challenge is that not only is Farmington the fastest growing town in the county but the town is also experiencing “sprawl” which results in additional costs such as for longer response time for emergency vehicles. The Master Plan should include where we want to see growth and allow for more compact development he said.

Chairman Proulx then asked the participants what the next steps should be.

Mr. DeSantis said work to update the Master Plan should begin, discussions about economic development should continue with the community and a consensus should be reached about what can be done now such as downtown street improvements and what will happen with the old Fire Station property to “fire up” the people about the process.

Mr. King asked Mr. DeSantis to review the UNH Cooperative Extension economic development programs and determine if the town should pursue any of them.

Mr. DeSantis said he will thoroughly research the programs but noted that the \$2,500 cost for the programs will only go so far and it brings up questions about the commitment to a plan. He said it is sad that the 1998 downtown development design charrette has been ignored and suggested its failure may be due to acting on development plans in “fits and starts”. It has to be a sustained commitment he said.

Mr. Henry asked for the valuation of the retail property downtown.

Mr. DeSantis said improvement occurs not only from better business facades, sidewalks, curbs and trees but also by assisting entrepreneurs to develop their businesses. Small businesses can’t rely only on the formal banking structure for help he said.

Mr. Capello asked Mr. DeSantis to research the UNH economic development programs and potential funding sources for economic development projects.

Mr., DeSantis said he would provide the information to Selectmen in about a month from now.

4). Public Input:

Michelle Elbert told the board that the Town of Littleton and the City of Franklin have both used UNH Cooperative Extension economic development programs and suggested the Town Planner speak to their town/city leaders about their experiences with the programs.

5). Review of Minutes:

July 17, 2017- Public Meeting Minutes- No errors or omissions

Motion: (King, second Titus) to accept the minutes as written passed 4-0-1 (Horgan abstained).

Non-Public Meeting Minutes A-C – No errors or omissions

Motion: (Johnson, second Titus) to accept the minutes as written passed 4-0-1 (Horgan abstained).

Motion: (Johnson, second Titus) to unseal Non-Public Session B passed 5-0.

6). Update on Street Lights:

Mr. Capello reported that the Eversource Customer Service Representative for the district was on vacation and that he planned to discuss the non-functioning street lights with the representative

this week.

Chairman Proulx said there are 41 street lights in town and of those there are 11 lights not functioning and one light that has yet to be installed. She said that is 26% of the total number of lights that are non-functioning that the Town continues to pay for and asked if the company would pro-rate the bill.

Mr. Capello said that Eversource has pro-rated bills in the past and that he will discuss pro-rating the bill with the representative.

7). Review Abatement Information Request:

Mr. Capello said he worked with Welfare Director Erica Rogers to develop an intake form for persons applying for hardship abatement. He said the form is similar to one used by the Welfare Dept. but has been adapted for Town use. He asked the board if there were any items to be added or removed from the form.

Vice Chairman Johnson suggested applicants be required to submit copies of their 1040 Tax Return forms and Schedule D Investment form.

Mr. King asked if other area towns have Town Assistance forms.

Mr. Capello said the towns in the area do not have hardship abatement request forms so Farmington will be “on the cutting edge” in this area with the new form.

Chairman Proulx said it was scary to think that other towns do not require all the financial information needed to make a sound decision and to be consistent in making those decisions.

Mr. Johnson noted the section at the top of page 3 of the 4 page form entitled “Payee Information” and asked why the board should be concerned with this information.

Mr. Capello said this section is aimed at income such as foster parent income which is not taxed but is still considered income.

Mr. King added that this information would not show up on a person’s tax return.

Selectman Titus asked if it is legal to require a child’s name be included in the “Child Support Income” section on page 3 of the form.

Mr. Capello said the requirement is legal as the form is not asking for the child’s Social Security number and the information will be kept confidential.

Selectman Horgan said the child’s name may be needed to verify the information provided.

Mr. Capello said the board needs to vote to accept the form.

Mr. Horgan said the board could consider accepting the application but the policy for abatement requests needs fine tuning to provide guidance to the board about the situations when the board would approve abatement applications.

Mr. Capello said it would not be possible to include all of the possible situations when the board might approve abatement requests.

Chairman Proulx said she wanted a clear policy for how to handle abatements as this board knows what it meant to do but board members change and the next board may not know what this board meant to do in an attempt to stay consistent when making decisions about abatements.

Mr. King asked if Mr. Capello had contacted the state Dept. of Revenue Administration (DRA) for an opinion on the proposed form and to find out if there are any conflicts with state law.

Mr. Capello said he would contact NH DRA about the form. He said he will bring back a clean copy of the form and include a copy of the related state law for review.

8).Town Administrator's Business:

A). Call Intake Form- Mr. Capello provided the board with copies of the new form for use by the Planning and Codes Dept. to ensure consistent information to violators and dept. staff. The form asks the caller's name, the address they are calling about, reason for the call, if everything in the violation letter has been addressed, scheduling a property inspection and special instructions/questions for the Building Inspector.

Mr. King added the form could be used to document that all of the proper steps have been completed before beginning litigation.

Mr. Capello said the Town Attorney will also receive a copy of the form.

B). Excavation Permit Review- Selectmen reviewed a copy of a letter drafted by the Town Planner notifying a property owner of a possible encroachment onto her property by an excavation company and to request any documentation and maps the owner may have that were not recorded at the Registry of Deeds.

C). Kudos to the Assessing Clerk- Mr. Capello said he would like to take an opportunity to inform the board about the tremendous job being done by Assessing Clerk Kelly Heon filling in for Finance Administrator Pam Merrill while continuing to perform her own job duties. Chairman Proulx asked Mr. Capello to thank Ms. Heon for her efforts on behalf of the board.

9). Non-Public Session A:

Motion: (Johnson, second Titus) to enter non-public session under RSA 91-A: 3 II (c) Reputation passed 5-0 by a roll call vote (Proulx, Johnson, Horgan, King, Titus-yes) at 7:05 p.m.

Motion: (King, second Titus) to come out of non-public session passed 5-0 at 7:22 p.m.

10). Non-Public Session B:

Motion: (King, second Horgan) to enter non-public session under RSA 91-A: 3 II (c) Reputation passed 5-0 by a roll call vote (Proulx, Johnson, Horgan, King, Titus- yes) at 7:22 p.m.

Motion: (King, second Johnson) to come out of non-public session passed 5-0 at 7:30 p.m.

Motion: (King, second Titus) to seal the minutes passed 5-0.

11). Next Meeting: Monday, July 31, 2017

12). Adjournment:

Motion: (Johnson, second Titus) to adjourn the meeting passed 5-0 at 7:30 p.m.

Respectively submitted

Kathleen Magoon, Recording Secretary

Paula Proulx, Chairman

Neil Johnson, Vice Chairman

Jim Horgan

Charlie King

Ann Titus