

UNOFFICIAL

HOOKSETT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, October 8, 2008

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman W. Sirak called the meeting to order at 12:00 pm.

PRESENT: Chairman William Sirak, Craig Ahlquist, Tom Barrett, Alden Beauchemin, Fred Bishop, Allison Smith, Jo Ann Duffy (Town Planner), Paul Loiselle (Council Representative), David Jodoin (Town Administrator), Jack Munn (SNHPC)

EXCUSED: Robert Corallino & Steve Korzyniowski

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

P. Loiselle moved to approve the September 10, 2008. Motion seconded by F. Bishop. **Motion carried.**

Web Site Update

D. Jodoin met with the web design company, Varuna Design. The Town was able to get a grant for the Economic Development website. Varuna will be sending out a questionnaire to be filled out to help build the profile and set up the web pages. D. Jodoin suggested for the board members to visit the website before going live. They are hoping to finish the website by the end of November. It will be presented to the board at that time.

Chairman W. Sirak: How about coordinating this with the website being planned with SNHPC?

D. Jodoin: I met with them last week. Londonderry is also going on-line sometime in November. The Londonderry website that they showed was a little frustrating. You have to click on a number of different pages to get into the Economic Development page. On the Hooksett website, on the main page there will be a banner that says, "Click here for Economic Development Opportunities".

J. Munn: We're doing this under the name "Metro Website". The next meeting will be in November, when Londonderry goes on-line to see if it's working out. Other communities' websites will be modeled after Londonderry.

D. Jodoin: One good thing about the Londonderry website was the GIS system, which is much more advanced than what Hooksett has. I'm not even sure if we have the money or how much something like that would cost to set up.

J. Munn: Under the CTAP Coordinated Programs, if there's two or more communities in CTAP coming together, they can apply under this program and get \$10,000 a piece.

Discussion on the matter ensued.

Chairman W. Sirak suggested presenting both websites to the Council in December.

Development of Ambassadors Program Update

F. Bishop reported on the status of the Ambassador's Program. In response to Jack Munn's request to wait until the Focus Group meetings have been completed, Fred is moving ahead more slowly on the Ambassador program. During the past month, he obtained property codes for the property listing of Hooksett. Properties have been sorted by code to identify large non-residential property owners for the ambassadors to include in their visits. These large property owners will be added to the business list already developed. Fred plans to use information from the focus group meetings to develop a discussion outline for the Ambassadors to utilize in their meetings. Future steps will include (1) grouping Hooksett Businesses and/or large property owners into three segments (high, medium, and low priority), (2) prioritizing visits, (3) recruiting teams of two, each consisting of one HEDC member and one Town Department Head to participate in the visits, (4) scheduling the visits, and (5) summarizing information from the meetings. In general, Fred would like to see each team to complete a minimum of one visit per month beginning in December. Fred asked Dave Jodoin about contacting Town Department Heads about playing a role with the ambassador visits. Dave will discuss this with the Department Heads and get back to Fred.

"Old Town Hall" Study Committee Update

A. Smith: I toured the old Town Hall with the Building Inspector, Peter Rowell and Mike Fitzpatrick, a construction engineer with REI Service Corporation in Manchester. There are a lot of good things about the building as well as issues that need to be addressed. The source of power does not need to be changed but will have to be re-wired. The building is shifting in a couple of places. It will need an interior ("gut") rehab to be used as residential or commercial. I'll have a better idea of the "gut" costs once I have the square footage of the building. It will depend on how it will be used. The next step is the probate court process. My understanding of the laws in NH is that, restrictions on the building may have gone away legally after a certain period of time from when the trust was established. We believe this to be the case. The issue will be family members that may come out of the woodwork and decide to make a claim against the building. David Hess will get back to me on that. We need to decide whether or not to have a structural engineer look at the building or whether to leave that to any potential buyer. The downside in leaving it to the buyer is that we won't know the issues going in and trying to sell it. There would be some costs associated with that. I also put a call into NeighborWorks to find out how many affordable housing units could be in the building.

D. Jodoin: I think the Heritage Commission and Historical Society would push to leave it as it is and give it to one of those committees.

Chairman W. Sirak: The ideal situation is to get them involved as soon as possible working from inside out. My concern is the price tag on that will be very significant.

The board discussed possible uses for the building.

The general agreement is to return the building to tax rolls for public/quasi-public use.

P. Loiselle: I think the Council would be supportive as long as the historic value of the building is preserved.

D. Jodoin: I think it has to have both options. Use the first floor for Historical Society, Heritage Commission and other Town activities and the second floor for income generating purposes to help subsidize maintenance costs.

Route 3 Flooding and Highway Improvements Update

Chairman W. Sirak: This is a great example of from behind the scenes work that's taking place for the last several months in terms of setting the stage for things to happen. Beginning with meeting with realtors, the Planning Board, Merchants Motors and owners of K-Mart Plaza as well as DOT. It was a good "clearing the air" kind of thing. As a result, Jo Ann (Duffy) provided outstanding leadership and coordination to enable some things to happen.

J. Duffy: We had a good meeting with RK Plaza, Merchants Motors, DOT, DES, Senator Ted Gatsas, our engineers and lawyers. Initially, the meeting was to discuss access and it turned into the flooding issue. Sen. Gatsas said at the meeting that the DOT project couldn't move forward until the Benton Road drainage issue is taken care of. We had received word, informally, from the State that they will not expedite the Town's wetlands permit and that it will go through the normal chain, which could take up to 60 days. This brings us into the winter, which is too late for the project to be done. Dale Hemeon (Highway Manager), Al Dionne (Emergency Management Director), Stantec and myself went to DES and met with the Wetlands Bureau. They determined that it did not fit the expedited review requirements. They suggested sending a letter to the commissioner explaining the Town could potentially lose the earmark funding. A letter has been sent and we're waiting to hear from the Senator. In the meantime, the Town still needs to obtain an easement from Merchants Motors. Merchants are being very cooperative. They would like to get it done before winter in case we have a bad spring.

D. Jodoin: The other problem is that we're short on the deadline for the FEMA grant. Sen. Gatsas is trying to stall them on their end. We could lose the money if nothing is done by December.

Discussion on the matter ensued.

D. Jodoin will contact Ray Wieczorek to help expedite the process. The Town will try to get something addressed this fall to avoid further flooding issues in the spring.

J. Duffy mentioned Wal-Mart is set to start construction at the new location off Route 3A and planning to open in the Spring/Summer of 2009. The Wal-Mart Plaza at Route 3 is up for sale. Possible re-use options for the plaza were discussed.

Other Updates

- A. Exit 11 Cabela's – Cabela's are looking into reducing the size of the building. The bond will expire next year in June 2009. If the bond expires, the Town will have to go back to the voters and get 60% approval.

- B. Focus Group Update Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission – The first Focus Group meeting will be held on Monday, October 13th, at 3:30 pm at Merchants Motors Board Room. Reminders as well as “thank you” notes will be sent out to all (18) businesses that agreed to attend. The next meetings are scheduled on October 27th and November 3rd.

- C. There will be a Dedication/Ribbon Cutting ceremony for the new Biking/Hiking Trail on Saturday, October 25th. Invitations will be mailed out.

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, November 5th, 2008

The meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by,

Evelyn F. Horn
Transcriber