

MINUTES

HOOKSETT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE HOOKSETT TOWN HALL HOOKSETT, NEW HAMPSHIRE Wednesday, September 9, 2009

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, Jo Ann Duffy, Paul Loiselle, Mike Reed, Carol Granfield (Town Administrator)

Excused: Fred Bishop, Steve Korzyniowski, Keith Moon

Also Present: Jack Munn (SNHPC), John Gryval (Planning Board Chair)

Chairman Sirak welcomed everyone back. The committee will have a lot of work ahead of them. There are a lot of concerns regarding potential loss of jobs at General Electric. This issue is currently being worked on.

Approval of Minutes:

*P. Loiselle moved to approve the minutes of June 10, 2009. Motion seconded by C. Ahlquist. **Motion carried unanimously.***

High School Study Update

Dr. Charles P. Littlefield, SAU Superintendent gave an update of the High School Study. The High School Study was a follow up on the study done on K-8 enrollment and the future needs for High School facility. It appears the Town has sufficient facilities for Grades K-8. The school board would like to do a similar analysis for Grades 9-12 to determine Hooksett's need to operate its own High School as opposed to continuing with the tuition agreement with Manchester. Due to budget issues and Bedford students pulling out of West High School, Manchester has eliminated some programs and may have to rearrange the districts. They may also close West high School. This concerns not only Hooksett parents but also all property owners, as it affects the value of their properties. They are in the process of securing a site for the High School donated by Manchester Sand & Gravel. This is not the only option they are exploring. They are also exploring possibly leasing West High School should Manchester decide to close it. Another option is to partner with other communities, i.e., Bow, Auburn, etc. Hooksett may also stay in Manchester, if situation in Manchester gets better. Studies show Hooksett's High School population would stay stable. Hooksett pays about \$10,000 per student for tuition. All things considered, Dr. Littlefield stated Hooksett could be 5 years away from not having a High School. The first step would be to inform the community and get its support.

Town Entrance

C. Granfield is in the process of simplifying the process to adopt a specific location and getting inputs from residents. A press release will be sent out.

Resignation of Allison Smith

The committee accepts Allison Smith's resignation with regrets. Chairman Sirak suggested forming a sub-committee of 2 members to look for a new member to be recommended to the Council to be appointed.

Ambassador's Program

Ambassador's Program Chair F. Bishop submitted a status report on the program. Among the top reasons for business to relocate to Hooksett include its central location, access to interstate highway and its populated areas. The Town still has to address the permit approval process issues the developers are complaining about.

J. Duffy made a presentation of the planning process. For the most part, developers get their permits after one or two meetings, which is quick compared to other towns. Developers are told the project would go as fast and as good as their engineers are. The 99 Restaurant was demolished and rebuilt. That was approved in one meeting because they had a good engineer who knew what was expected and abided by the rules. There are some that's been on the agenda for some time because of issues but for the most part things are moving quickly. After approval, an appeal can be filed through the Superior Court.

P. Loiselle stated he visited 3 businesses in Town and all have nothing but praises for the Police and Fire departments. C. Ahlquist added that the Fire Department responded efficiently to an incident at JP Noonan when one of the trucks exploded.

SNHPC Services

J. Munn informed the committee that the Town has 2 contracts with SNHPC. The Town Council approved an amended to the agreement adopted in June. Funds were moved from the GIS Tax Mapping to do some extended work for the Economic Development Committee. Additional area on Route 3 to Exit 9 was added to the Economic Revitalization Tax Credit Zone. The Town Administrator and the Town Planner are working on finalizing the application to be submitted to DRED.

J. Duffy brought up SNHPC's Land Use Update for 2008. Since 2000, Hooksett, Londonderry and Manchester have led the region in non-residential development. Overall, Hooksett has led the region with 1,732,690 square feet of development. In 2008, Hooksett led the region in commercial development with a total of 377,152 square feet or 48%. Last year, there was 300,000 square feet commercial increase in Hooksett. Manchester was the second highest with 170,000 square feet. Next was Bedford with 36,000 square feet. New Boston had the largest residential increase and Hooksett ranked fourth. The downside is that new developments are mostly retail. Hooksett does not have high tech business.

Coordination with Planning Board

John Gryval, Planning Board Chair stated he has attended one of the meetings and have been reading the minutes. It seems the Planning Board has been taking a hit on matters that are not their fault.

Chairman Sirak stated the EDC is not pointing finger at the PB.

J. Gryval explained that in order to expedite the permit process, the PB has a checklist that they give to all developers to follow. The developers are not completing the checklist and come to the hearing unprepared. The PB cannot approve a subdivision, a site plan, etc. until all criteria are met. J. Gryval added he's always been against conditional approval but there are times when the board has to make them. They have plans that are conditionally approved for some time and the conditions still has not been met. Developers should make sure they comply with all conditions or the plans will not get signed. Developers have the option to apply for a waiver. The PB has been getting all the blame when it's really not their fault. All the developers have to do is to comply with the regulations. The Town started a mandatory TRC (Technical Review Committee) meeting in 2007. The meeting is attended by Police, Fire and water departments where the applicants are informed what they need to comply with to get approval.

Chairman Sirak explained that the hit the PB have been getting does not come from the EDC but from some developers, who sometimes gave inaccurate, incomplete information or exaggerated claims. The board realizes what the PB is doing and the challenges it faces.

Other Business

- Chairman Sirak and C. Granfield met with the Union Leader mainly for introduction.
- The Chair and C. Granfield will meet with the Palazzi property owners to talk about possible development at Exit 11.
- They also met with the Town of Bedford. Bedford and Hooksett are working on similar projects.
- C. Granfield presented the Welcome & Services Directory that was put together for quick reference.

Chamber of Commerce

T. Barrett visited the Cocci Computer. They are still interested in hosting a Chamber of Commerce event.

Town Facility Study Update

M. Reed, Facility Study Chair updated the board on recent activities. Responses to the questionnaire were compiled from all departments with regard to facilities' issues. Next step for the board would be to review the facilities. They have set up a schedule to tour the facilities over the next 3 Wednesdays, Safety Center on September 16th, Highway and Transfer on September 23rd and the Town Hall on September 30th. They will gather information and put together a report to be presented to the Council. The report will include current needs, projected future needs, usage and recommendations.

J. Duffy stated the Safety Center, old Town Hall, Transfer Station and (probably) Highway were included in the study done for the impact fees. The report included the projected square footage needed based on population. This report will be sent out to all committee members.

Economic Summit Annual Event

Chairman Sirak commented if the Town gets more activities on Exit 10, it may be a good time to host a Saturday Economic Summit to layout all that are taking place.

J. Duffy had a meeting with DOT last week. The second tenant has signed and will go to the Planning Board to start discussion.

C. Granfield suggested holding a forum with developers and will have representatives from the Town present to answer questions.

Exit 6/7 Update

C. Granfield informed the board of the request to put Exit 6/7 back on the 10-year DOT plan to help with traffic congestion. Exit 6 will be redone and Exit 7 will be relocated further down on Front Street.

Economic Development Committee member

T. Barrett and P. Loiselle will present potential candidates to the board to be recommended for the Council's appointment. Chairman Sirak suggested finding an individual who could head the Chamber of Commerce.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Evelyn F. Horn
Administrative Assistant