

MINUTES

**HOOKSETT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
HOOKSETT TOWN HALL
HOOKSETT, NEW HAMPSHIRE
Wednesday, September 14, 2011**

Call to Order: Acting Chair Sirak called the meeting to order at 12:00 pm.

Present: William Gillett, John Gryval, Matt Mercier, Mark Sanborn, David Scarpetti and William Sirak

Staff: Dean E. Shankle, Jr. (Town Administrator), Jo Ann Duffy (Town Planner)

Also Present: John Munn (SNHPC), Steve Heavener (CRDC), Sid Baines (Sewer Commission)

Chair Sirak introduced the new Town Administrator Dr. Dean E. Shankle, Jr. and the newest member of the Board, William Gillett.

Approval of Minutes

The June 8, 2011 minutes were approved.

Economic Development Plan

The plan was presented to the board.

Acting Chair Sirak encouraged everyone to review the plan, particularly the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis found towards the end of the report.

The plan includes some information on the Town's tax base, average income, quality of public schools, etc. It's a valuable document that presents Hooksett in a favorable fashion.

The Town has contracted with SNHPC to do specific projects with regards to potential future developments on Exits 10 and 11. Additional infrastructure work will have to be done in the area. The board has been communicating with the sewer department on this issue.

Jack Munn stated the plan is an update of the economic development chapter in the Master Plan. This plan will have to be reviewed, endorsed and accepted by the community prior to working on Exits 10 and 11. He encouraged the Town to get the plan approved and adopted as quickly as possible. There was one major revision to the original plan. He has received comments from this board. The plan enumerates key advantages of Hooksett. The Town's overall tax rate declined by 17% since 2001. Its property taxes are second lowest in the nation. The number of jobs increased by 50% between 1999 and 2008. The Town's unemployment rate is below the state, regional and national average. The Town's schools scored 12% above the state average in Math and 18% above the state average in Reading. Money Magazine ranked Hooksett as one of the top 100 towns to live in the country.

Chair Sirak added 25% of tax base comes from businesses, which is only rivaled by the City of Manchester at 34%. Additional growth can come from future developments on Exits 10 and 11. Because of its locations, it will not be very intrusive.

J. Munn stated the Town could develop a goal to reach a certain ratio of commercial/industrial and residential within a 5-10 year period. This will give the Town a target as projects are reviewed, growth is evaluated and budgeting for municipal services.

Some data are from 2008. Chair Sirak asked if more recent data are available.

J. Munn stated the information can easily be updated using the MS-1 report. This is something the Town Planner can do every year.

Chair Sirak mentioned on page 58 of the plan is a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis. This is a great starting point on overall vision and direction for Hooksett that focuses on Economic Development. Under weaknesses there is a negative reputation among some developers. Chair Sirak commented the Town has come a long way on this issue.

D. Shankle added the Town needs to work on the whole process, possibly getting an intern to look at the present structure and to see what the Town can do to streamline the process. He will make sure that the staff is treating everyone appropriately and moving things along as quickly as possible. There are things worth looking at. Making sure regulations are in line with what the Town is trying to accomplish.

J. Munn stated the Planning Board has made some strides in doing that. The Planning Board, a year ago, has started the process of looking at the regulations. Clear procedures and expedited regulations can be added as a short term strategy and as part of the overall comprehensive economic development strategy.

Chair Sirak suggested making those changes and bringing it back to the board for review.

The changes will be provided to the Town Planner to be shared with the board.

J. Munn added SNHPC will be introducing the Certified Sites Program to all Planning Boards in the region starting in November. This program will help in putting together expedited procedures and regulations to be incorporated with economic development. The Planning Boards originally designated areas within their communities that are being supported as the central areas of economic development. As projects come forward for those areas, it will be an expedited review process.

Chair Sirak stated this is an exciting concept for the Town to have targeted sites pre-certified that when a developer presents a proposal, everything would be pre-approved.

Exit 11 Update

The Town has a separate contract with SNHPC in anticipation of additional infrastructure for Exits 10 and 11. If the Town considers using of a TIF, that will have to go to the voters next spring. The Town is reaching out to land owners in the area.

SNHPC is currently gathering a list of all tax map parcel numbers. The list will be given to the Town Planner and the Assessor's office to print out information about the properties, i.e., owners, values, sizes, etc. SNHPC will also be conducting interviews, both personal and via telephone. Public workshops will be scheduled in November. Public opinions will be gathered as to what type of development residents are envisioning for the area. Transportation and infrastructures will also be reviewed. All these information will be put together and presented as a plan to this board and the Planning Board for approval. It will also be presented to the Council.

Capital Regional Development Council

Steve Heavener stated CRDC is authorized to provide direct services to communities in the Merrimack County. They provide 3 levels of services, mostly direct business lending. They also do real estate development in concert with the towns. The third service they provide is economic development consulting. They provide economic development consulting services to towns that do not have economic development officers. They will be working closely with SNHPC with the TIF plan, once the Town determines to proceed with a TIF and a TIF district is defined.

Chair Sirak stated what is being done at this time is introducing a concept, laying the groundwork and doing the research using both resources from SNHPC and CDRC. Public forums will be held and the Town Council will be advised.

Economic Revitalization Tax Incentive Program

J. Munn explained this is a State program where property owners from (5) defined zones could apply for tax credit through DRED (Department of Resources and Economic Development) for improvements done on the properties.

Sewer Commission Update

Sid Baines, Sewer Commissioner clarified some information printed in the newspapers. The Sewer Department has expended just a little over \$800,000 for sewer disks clean-up and not \$1.4 million as reported. This leaves a balance of \$190,000 in the Sewer reserves fund. The Sewer Commission has reserves fund for unexpected expenses that comes up.

Chair Sirak asked how much of these costs can be recouped from the insurance company.

S. Baines explained Penta Corporation, Kreuger, Graves Engineering and the sewer attorneys met yesterday to discuss who is going to pay for what. If they do not come up with an agreement, the issue will be brought to court.

S. Baines stated the plant has a capacity of 2.2 million gallons per day. Currently, there is 750,000-800,000 gallons per day. There is plenty of capacity for additional development. The issue is extending the pipes that would connect to the plant. The department would work on

getting estimated costs to be presented to the board by March of next year. Assuming the voters approve a TIF District in May, sewer connection could be expected by 2013-2014.

Old Town Hall Area Potential Development

The EDC originally looked at the preservation of the old Town Hall, possible use and costs to renovate. The property was donated to the Town with a provision to keep it as a Town property. If the land is used for private and/or commercial purposes, the Town would have to go to probate court to amend the deed.

Chair Sirak stated the Town should look at more than preservation of the Town Hall and consider the whole area which has access to the river. The property has magnificent views. The building has tin ceilings. He suggested looking at this property not just from a preservation point of view but the whole area. Possibly obtaining a planning grant from an organization called Plan New Hampshire for a public charette. Bringing together some knowledgeable are developers and having a discussion on options.

He asked the board if this was something they would like to take on. The Town Council had a committee looking at this but they haven't been active in a while. Board consensus was to take on the project. The Town Council will be advised.

Town Planner Report

J. Duffy informed the board of the following:

1. Market Basket is scheduled to open next Wednesday. It will be a “soft” opening with no advertisements.
2. McDonald's renovation has started. They demolished the existing building. The new building will be opening end of October beginning of November.
3. PSNH received an approval for a project on Legends Drive behind the Safety Center.
4. A carwash was approved for the old Ice Cream Depot on Hooksett Road.
5. Heritage Credit Union got an approval a month ago but they are not moving forward right away.
6. ZBA approved a special exception for a mortgage company to be allowed on an industrial zone at the By-Pass. The project will be presented to the Planning Board.
7. White Birch Brewing has moved into the old Auto Wholesalers building on Hooksett Road next door to where the Heritage Credit Union would be located. This company is an up and coming microbrewery that has expanded quite a bit in the last year.
8. She shared some information on the assessed values in Town over the last five years. There was an increase of \$10 million in 2010. For 2011, to date the increase is about \$2 million.
9. She shared an article on the Business Review written by Dan Scanlon about retail market in the area and how it continues to grow despite of the recession. Hooksett was mentioned.

Meeting Schedule

The board will meet every second Wednesday of the month at noontime. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 12, 2011.

November 9, 2011

December 14, 2011

January 11, 2012

March 14, 2012

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by,

Evelyn F. Horn

Administrative Assistant