

Official
As of 03/26/13

MINUTES

HOOKSETT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE IS HOSTING & FACILITATING A WORKSHOP MEETING

“UNIFY OUR VISION OF BUSINESS FRIENDLINESS”

JOINT <u>WORKSHOP MEETING</u> WITH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE, TOWN COUNCIL, PLANNING BOARD, ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT, CONSERVATION COMMISSION, AND DEPARTMENT HEADS/STAFF

**HOOKSETT TOWN LIBRARY – Hebert Media Room
31 Mount Saint Mary’s Way, Hooksett, NH**

**Wednesday, February 20, 2013
5:30 PM**

Call to Order:

Chair Matt Mercier called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

Attendance – Economic Development Committee

Chair Matt Mercier, David Scarpetti, Bill Gillett, Craig Ahlquist, and William King.

Attendance – Town Council

Chair James Sullivan, Vincent F. Lembo, Jr., Nancy Comai, and Leslie Boswak.

Attendance – Planning Board

Chair John J. Gryval, Jr., Vice-Chair Richard Marshall, Donald Winterton,
David Rogers, Frank Kotowski

Attendance – Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA)

Jackie Roy,

Attendance – Conservation Commission

John Turbyne.

Attendance – Sewer Commission

Sid Baines and Superintendent, Bruce Kudrick.

Attendance – Manchester Water Works

Water Distribution Administrator, Guy Chabot.

Attendance – Town Staff

Town Administrator, Dr. Dean E. Shankle, Jr., DPW Director, Leo Lessard, Project Coordinator, Katie Rosengren, Town Planner, Jo Ann Duffy, Recycle & Transfer Superintendent, Diane Boyce, Planning Coordinator, Donna Fitzpatrick

Attendance – Others

Richard Boisvert,

HEDC (Hooksett Economic Development Committee) – INTRODUCTION BY MATT MERCIER, HEDC CHAIR

M. Mercier: EDC has a three (3) prong approach: 1) recruit new businesses, 2) work with existing businesses for their concerns, questions or needs via the Ambassador Program with large and small businesses, and 3) unify the vision of all committees in Town for business friendliness. Each committee should ask “Do you see yourself as business friendly?” I am not sure if we all agree what business friendly is. This meeting is intended as a working meeting and I would discourage public input. In a month or two we will have a public meeting to discuss what is great and not great with the Hooksett process. Here tonight is Michael Bergeron, DRED.

PRESENTATION - MICHAEL BERGERON, DRED (NH Department of Resources and Economic Development)

M. Bergeron: I am here tonight to present the Retention and Recruitment of businesses in Town. With me tonight is Deb Avery, Belknap and Merrimack County and Steve Heavener, CRDC. **POWERPOINT PRESENTATION AVAILABLE IN THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPT. AT TOWN HALL, 35 MAIN STREET.** DRED covers many areas to include: 1) Economic Development, 2) Forests & Lands, 3) Parks & Recreation, 4) Travel & Tourism Development, and 5) Design, Development & Maintenance. Provided overview of economy in Manchester, Nashua, Keene and Lebanon. The majority (41%) of State of NH expenses goes to Health and Social Services. We get revenue from business, tourism and real estate vs. Massachusetts’ majority in revenue is income tax. Manufacturing is going up now, but it really dropped in 2010. Trucking tonnage is going up. Consumers have not recently bought anything new, therefore there is a pent up demand for goods. Housing is on its way up. Foreclosures are going down. Inventory is dropping. The stock market is going up. There have been several recessions since WWII. 10,000 people showed up to a job fair at SNHU. A lot of people are not being counted in the unemployment rate of 8 million and they are still looking for jobs. 8.8 million people are on disability. We have a \$16 trillion debt. Entitlements are \$2.4 trillion and made up for 62% of the nationwide budget last year. Taxes are going up for incomes \$400,000+. Health insurance costs are going up. Gold purchases are up. European countries are not as concerned with the Euro debt, because they are not connecting entitlements with high unemployment. A lot of things

can drag the economy down. The way you did business 2-3 years ago, everything has changed. You don't spend a lot of time getting the big business in Town, but cultivate relationships with the existing businesses. Hooksett EDC is doing a great job with this. Relationships are primary and everything else is secondary. 80% of growth will come from within the Town of Hooksett and not from the outside. Deb Avery can work with your community for a refreshed list of companies you think you need to meet with and having a plan to meet with them. You should celebrate the success of businesses by having something hosted by the Town. Also work with your Chamber of Commerce. Statewide key targeted areas are advanced manufacturing companies, biotechnology/ medical device industries, and financial services & insurance companies. Marketing tactics are to network; 20 leads/5 prospects = 1 business. Take leads from the website. Build relationships with DRED and CIBOR. Leads to Hooksett will be 70% between MA, ME, Quebec, VT, NJ, and NY. These states will ask themselves "how can we save and hire people with having our business in NH?" Hooksett is close to highways and airports. NH has the 7th lowest tax burden in the U.S. Business friendly = single point of contact in Town who is professional and dresses professionally to make a good first impression and be good at organizing meetings. Dean and Jo Ann have done a really good job for meetings with a first impression. The Town is well served already for presenting. A recent Hooksett prospect was impressed with the business friendliness. Town Council and EDC have to work together to attract companies to Hooksett. Confidentiality is very important. Speed = success.

Ways a town can be eliminated today is:

- business owner can't find the right building or it's not at the right price.
- Water & sewer infrastructure is not available or it is too expensive in hook-up fees.
- permitting process is slow.
- Bad attitude (i.e. PB and ZBA don't get along). You should smile.
- Poor customer service (i.e. two (2) voicemails are too much. Taxpayers are your customers.
- Boards and committees = make sure there are quorums.
- Culture within Hooksett and within Town Hall and Boards – how the tax payers and first time visitors see it.
- Town individual traits. E-mails can be a crutch.
- Bosses and sharing information = keep communication open.
- Is Town Hall easy to find? December 2012 I came to Town Hall at night and your sign is not lit and hard to find. I parked out front then saw a note on the door to park in the back.
- Regulations = peak of market towns loved to delay things, now that has changed. Government rule is for public safety and welfare. In 2012 there were 22,087 government regulations. Help customers get through the process (i.e. zoning).
- Bad press release. Hooksett should have a positive press release. How do travelers on I-93 see Hooksett?
- Gateway signs. Hooksett gateway signs should be beautified.
- Hooksett Website = 80% of leads, greens reds and blues colors on website are good. Quality of Hooksett images should be the first impression (i.e. cemetery came up first when I logged into your website, there should be a better image).

EDC top tool bar and EDC home page should have bullets vs. paragraph. Why Hooksett – what does “GOOD THINKING” mean? Citizen request tracker? On website list Board names, phone #s. Mobile social media, hire consultant. Website key land sites (i.e. MSG Petersbrook).

L. Boswak: Could you please share tonight’s presentation for Board members who could not make it?

M. Bergeron: Yes, Donna and I already discussed me sending her the presentation to further distribute.

M. Mercier: As the EDC goes forward with Mike Bergeron & Deb Avery at DRED, and Dean and Staff, we will identify what are we doing well and what are we not doing well for some areas of improvement. There needs to be attitude and website changes. We need to work to be helpful and not get caught up in the process.

S. Baines: When I call the Town Hall during the day, I get an answering machine. How can I get a live body?

J. Turbyne: Attitude is more important than sewer and water. We don’t have a lot of money to invest in infrastructure unless you have a developer to pay for it. Cabela’s would have been a great site for the SNHPC “Ready Set Go!”.

M. Bergeron: Choose one or two best sites in Hooksett. Encourage developers to get preliminary approvals. Show what is potentially there based on the market and have a few spec drawings (i.e. Palazzi site driveway access).

F. Kotowski: How about pre-approved sites for specific uses?

M. Bergeron: How do you control who owns the land? The private sector has to spend money.

F. Kotowski: TIF districts are an example.

M. Bergeron: Yes, but when you don’t have control of the land you have to have a motivated private sector.

S. Baines: Bow has invested a substantial amount of money in its community.

S. Heavener: Bow took a long time to get where they are. They just got a \$20 million liquor warehouse project. If you don’t have municipal water, most projects won’t wait a year or two for the infrastructure. Build it and they will come. Towns that are prepared or perceived to be prepared are where Mike (DRED) will take them. You need to invest to get a return.

C. Ahlquist: I was the past chair of the EDC. Bow was willing to invest in its community, and they also recognized the leadership in their town (i.e. Mr. Grappone). I am not certain we have that recognizable leadership in Hooksett . METRO – Access Greater Manchester, the theory is rising the tide raises the boat. There are thirteen (13) towns in the SNHPC region. They have undertaken the gold and bronze certifications.

J. Duffy: SNHPC is coming in to the March 4, 2013 Planning Board meeting to present the “Ready Set Go!” program.

C. Ahlquist: SNHPC contracted with Hooksett for exit 11 and there is the Economic Development plan to update our section of the Master Plan. SNHPC did a mini-project of what would happen at exit 11 via surveys, etc. I stopped the SNHPC process, because we were not making decisions without proper information. Local residents of exit 11 wanted the area to remain a green space vs. development. SNHPC would like to finish their work and contract with Steve @ CRDC for a TIF district at exit 11. I would ask Town leaders to reengage exit 11.

S. Baines: Exit 10 is still vital with 65 acres of potential development.

C. Ahlquist: At the State level they receive business taxes, etc. At the Town level we receive real estate taxes to fund everything.

M. Mercier: I would like to thank everyone for attending tonight and for Mike Bergeron for his presentation. We will gather our notes from tonight’s meeting and schedule an public meeting in the near future to discuss what is and is not working in Hooksett.

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

M. Mercier declared the meeting adjourned at 6:45pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

Donna J. Fitzpatrick
Planning Coordinator