

Official
As of 02/09/09

HOOKSETT PLANNING BOARD WORKSHOP
MEETING MINUTES
HOOKSETT MUNICIPAL BUILDING
Monday, December 8, 2008

CALLED TO ORDER

Chair J. Gryval called the meeting to order at 7:07pm

ATTENDANCE

Chairman J. Gryval, Vice-Chair J. McHugh, D. Marshall, M. Sorel, R. Duhaime, D. Dreffs, B. Ehlers, Town Council Rep. P. Rueppel, R. Guay, and D. Hemeon.

Excused: Town Administrator.

Absent: Y. Nahikian.

Town Planner, Jo Ann Duffy representing the Town of Hooksett

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF 12/01/08

Continued to December 15, 2008.

Economic Development Planning

Jo Ann Duffy, Town Planner: Introduced presenters (Matt Monahan, Central Regional Planning Commission – CRPC, and Edward Vien, Pittsfield Selectman), and provided overview of tonight’s workshop. About a year ago, the Council formed the Economic Development Committee (EDC). The EDC is a subcommittee of the Council. The EDC meets monthly in Manchester at the Chamber of Commerce. The beginning process was learning what is going on in the Town. They invited Dick Marshall, previous Chair of the Planning Board. We also had Sid Baines, President of SNHU, and David Campbell, Attorney for Manchester Sand & Gravel speak. Since, we have taken on actual work. We contracted with Southern NH Planning Commission (SNHPC) for \$22,000 to put together an overview of all the businesses in Town, where they are located, number of employees, and mapping in our GIS system. There have been 3 focus group sessions. They invited business owners to identify their likes and dislikes. Fred Bishop, Ambassador of this program, along with other members of the EDC, will go out to these businesses one-on-one for feedback. Recently, the Council adopted a mission statement for the EDC. This coming year, the Development handbook will be created to help people who want to do business in this Town. It will show the steps, and contacts. Business owners stated there were too many places to go to get information.

M. Monahan: Distributed and outline of the slideshow to the Planning Board. Commenced slideshow . . . What Hooksett has done so far, what is economic development, how does a Town do economic development, and what is the process, etc. (refer to outline for details).

Focus groups are a great way to get the vision of the business community, and what the issues are they face everyday.

M. Monahan: What is Economic Development? Comments from audience:

- balanced growth
- target areas
- manage tax base
- retaining business we already have and attracting new business

E. Vien: Economic development is a state of mind.

M. Monahan: Pittsfield had a round table with Congressman Hoades, local business owners, DRED, and State and Federal agencies. Globe Manufacturing description of economic development “People want to bring a business to a community in which they want to live.” Globe is Pittsfield largest employer.

Joanne McHugh, Planning Board: This Town spent a great deal of time a couple of years ago on a Master Plan. Any consideration to bring the plan out and incorporate it into the Economic Development Plan (EDP)? I see the Master Plan over here, and I see EDP over there. There needs to be someplace the two could join. Even though you want to remain a small community, you can still do that with an EDP. What about the Master Plan? A great deal of work went into it.

M. Monahan: Pittsfield EDP rolled the Master Plan into it. The statutory basis for zoning is the Master Plan. You are right. You need to join them.

J. McHugh: Did they bring back some of the people involved in those chapters?

E. Vien: We are updating our Master Plan this year. Our EDC has a member who was also involved in the Master Plan.

J. McHugh: You recommend our EDC get our Master plan and use it.

M. Monahan: The membership you have on the EDC, should be members from broad areas of the community and on other Boards/Commission. You build the membership into this process.

Paul Loiselle, Town Council: We have a member who was involved with our Master Plan and also on our EDC. Several questions on this subject have come up.

Sid Baines, Sewer Commission: Planning is great, but there needs to be affordable housing for the workforce. The median housing here is \$305,000. This is steep to just start out.

M. Monahan: Referred back to Globe’s statement.

J. Duffy: SNHPC will make suggestions for rewriting the EDC section of the Master Plan. This will come to the Planning Board in the very near future for changes.

M. Monahan: It is a process. If your Master Plan is new and you are creating an EDP, then you role it in. Then the next Master Plan may be updated with a new EDP, and back and forth. Referred back to slideshow . . . How does a community “do” economic development?

E. Vien: The more information you can get out to your community, the more educated the community will be. It is a lot easier to deal with an educated person.

J. Duffy: How many people are on the Pittsfield EDC?

E. Vien: 7 active.

M. Monahan: Expand your volunteer base; list of recommendations to get a group of volunteers. Broad backgrounds and inclusion are important.

Dale Hemeon, Planning Board: To the Town Council; the next Town Administrator you hire, should have the EDC as part of his/her job description.

E. Vien: Our Town Administrator goes to our EDC meetings whenever possible.

D. Hemeon: In Hooksett, you go to meetings and see the same people. Good staff is the key to all of this. We have 13,000 people in this Town, and yet it is hard to see new faces.

E. Vien: If you can pinpoint a project within the EDC (i.e. websites), that may get more inclusion from the community (they don't have to deal with the full EDC, just something they are interested in).

M. Monahan: Committee members manage the EDC. When you are on all the Boards, you can share information. Pittsfield meetings set time for EDC is 1 hour and has focused agenda of 2-3 items.

Pat Rueppel, Town Council: How long have you had the EDC in Pittsfield?

E. Vien: 10-15 yrs, but they have come and gone. The last 3 yrs have really gone well since we hired CRPC.

J. McHugh: Do you see an issue or a problem with the EDC making recommendations, then the Boards or community are going in another direction or not wanting the EDC?

E. Vien: Pittsfield has \$100,000 for EDC. People in our Town were educated that if we do not do something, nothing is going to change. We started our pyramid and we are moving slow, so we don't have to back up.

M. Monahan: Maybe it is preventive in a way. You are pulling their concerns into the process.

J. McHugh: EDC has a certain section of the Town zoning changes to expand the tax base. Is it the ZBA or just the citizens that don't want it? How do you get beyond that?

E. Vien: In Pittsfield, it was motivation. Our tax rate is very high. People are tired of it. EDC money is coming from taxpayers, or we don't do the program. Taxpayers voted for us to have the \$100,000 EDC.

Craig Ahlquist: How are you spending \$100,000?

M. Monahan: Town Meeting gave the EDC a lot of leeway how they are going to spend it.

E. Vien: Voters also gave selectmen the authority to buy and sell property without having to go to the next Town Meeting in March. We explained to voters why we needed it and they approved it.

Fred Bishop, EDC: Have you looked at hiring a Director for your EDC?

E. Vien: We have Matt Monahan.

J. Duffy: What is your timeframe to use \$100,000?

E. Vien: It is an expendable trust. RSA 79E tax incentive program for downtown areas.

Craig Ahlquist: What is your population, budget?

E. Vien: Pittsfield population is 4,500, school budget 8.2 million.

J. Duffy: Voters must have had faith in your group without an exact plan/how you were going to spend it.

M. Monahan: Referred back to slideshow . . . meetings need to be:

- well publicized
- have a plan and be focused
- transparent on how you are going about it
- don't be afraid of deliberation

E. Vien: We have to have answers as soon as questions are asked. We brought Wi-Fi into downtown Pittsfield. We lost all traffic when Rte 28 went in. Show people outside of Pittsfield we are looking to the future.

J. Duffy: I drove across country last year and trying to get e-mail from different places. It was hard to get access.

D. Hemeon: You have a traditional Town meeting?

E. Vien: 150 attended and voted.

J. McHugh: Do you have a Conservation Commission?

E. Vien: Yes.

J. McHugh: And this is \$100,000 is over and above the conservation money to purchase land? This is a high trust factor from the community.

M. Sorel: Is money raised all at once from taxation?

J. McHugh: What did they have before the vote?

P. Rueppel: What is your tax rate?

E. Vien: People in Pittsfield are tired of their high tax rate of \$26.00.

M. Monahan: Think outside the box (i.e. Pittsfield Wi-Fi).

Roger Duhaime: We live here, and we want to bring business to make quality of life the same.

E. Vien: Definitely, we do not want to bring in anything obnoxious into our community.

M. Monahan: Community character drives the EDC.

E. Vien: For your EDC, don't be afraid to use other people. Our Wi-Fi had a ribbon cutting ceremony and we had the Governor cut the ribbon. Someone told me any publicity is good publicity. No, you can have some publicity that can hurt you. We try very hard. If you see us in the paper, we want you to see good things.

M. Monahan: Have events, i.e. Pittsfield had USAC (smaller cars than NASCAR) to draw people into Pittsfield. We had one car at the Dunkin Donuts on Rte 28 and spread the other vehicles throughout Town. The State has a research and development tax credit. Globe does research and development as a business, so they can apply. That told Globe that we are looking out for them. You can find out more on the R&D tax credit through the DRED website. The State appropriated for 5 yrs out.

J. McHugh: How has this affected the residential, has this increased?

E. Vien: We have a growth ordinance, but we are so far from reaching it. We have over 600 apartments in Pittsfield. Not enough work for all of them.

M. Monahan: Referred back to slideshow . . . your EDP should be 1) comprehensive - retain what you have and use community character as an asset, 2) recommendations, and 3) incorporate community vision.

E. Vien: When you have a central person like Matt, you have to be honest with him. When you get to the Town and community level, it is a people issue. The outsider, like Matt, may not have an interest in the Town. We don't always agree with Matt.

M. Monahan: There is good "open" debate.

E. Vien: I am the Chair for our EDC. At the end of each EDC Meeting, I ask the members what they want on the next agenda. I am only there to guide things. The EDC members are the ones who need to create the agenda.

P. Rueppel: Jo Ann, I would like to suggest the packet from Bill Sirak at the last Council to be forward to tonight's presenters.

P. Loiselle: Yes, and it is also going to the Planning Board and to ZBA.

P. Rueppel: You will also copy for the Planning Board.

M. Monahan: Referred to slideshow . . . SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats).

Bob Ehlers: What are some threats?

M. Monahan: Rte 28 is a limited access highway. Only a certain number of curb cuts. Problem, can't get curb cuts from DOT, but still could have business on Rte 28 and have their entrance off the side road that intersects with Rte 28.

E. Vien: I look at a threat as who is going to complain. I am sure you can think of 3 or 4 people in your community who complain. I will spend a little more time on these individuals to educate them before a public meeting or a hearing.

M. Monahan: Getting enough members from any committee is challenging. Planning Commissions have a lot of data.

E. Vien: At our School Board Meeting, I stated they make up 2/3 of our taxes. We needed someone from the School Board on the EDC to help us find ways to broaden our tax base. You have to ask for members or you won't know who is available.

Daryl Dreffs: Does your EDC include members of surrounding Towns, or is it Pittsfield only?

M. Monahan: We asked if anyone in the CRPC area wanted help and Pittsfield said yes.

E. Vien: Pittsfield also, Capital Regional Development Corporation, Director working with us off and on. Make sure money is well spent.

M. Monahan: Infrastructure is an example where you could work with another community in partnership.

E. Vien: Double your money when you can. Our Wi-Fi was matched by the State 50/50 and this is a selling point.

M. Monahan: You need to know how to find funding. Foundations are out there with money and they don't know what to do with it. Think specifically what you want to use the money for and it will be easier to find the money. There are community development block grants out there for infrastructure.

M. Monahan: Ed's brother is the Sewer guy in Pittsfield and he gave a presentation of the sewer infrastructure to the EDC.

J. McHugh: Have you been in a situation to give advice/recommendations for change on regulations that are in place?

M. Monahan: I refer to the Master Plan.

J. McHugh: My perspective used to be that each landowner should have 3-5 acres of land. Now we should be building individual communities and not using up all the land. How far do you go with these communities?

M. Monahan: Pittsfield Master Plan has a smart growth. If two houses are on the same road and they are a mile apart from each other, this is more costly for infrastructure than if these houses were ½ mile apart.

E. Vien: Pittsfield is now talking about a 2-acre or 5-acre minimum. The cost comes from maintaining and servicing the lot.

J. McHugh: How did you bring it back to the voters about zoning or advise them on smart growth?

M. Monahan: Pittsfield has a dense downtown. On Rte 28, a vacant lot is a good commercial site, however there are not a lot of utilities. How do we capitalize on our assets? This gets back to the SWOT analysis. What assets do you have and how can you best use them?

E. Vien: Mention a cluster development in Pittsfield, and this opens up a bee's nest.

Ray Guay: You have to educate the community.

Roger Duhaime: How did you word your Warrant Article?

M. Monahan: Pull people into to your Boards/Commissions.

E. Vien: I try to anticipate the taxpayer's question, so that I have the answer.

M. Monahan: How do the site plan regulations impact the process?

E. Vien: Pittsfield was anti-business. Now when someone calls, we have a main contact and he/she gets right on it. Be flexible for your customers. Don't make them wait. Competition is good. We worked with six other Towns (about 100 people) for our insurance, and got a 13 % decrease.

M. Monahan: Example, being close to Manchester, maybe there is a way to capitalize from them on public transportation.

P. Rueppel: To Counselor Loiselle, where are we with the website?

J. Duffy: I can answer that. I met with the website contact last week and he has the list.

P. Loiselle: Our web will be as direct as possible to make it simple.

Mike Sorel: So many different Boards are here tonight. The gateways to Hooksett are shameful (Exits 9 & 10 mowed once this year). Rte 3 & 28 is deplorable. North on Rte 3 into Hooksett, the "Welcome to Hooksett" sign is mowed, but you can't see the sidewalk. This is the entrance to Hooksett and what people see. First impressions are the strongest impressions made, and the longest lasting. This is sensitive to me. The entrance at Rte 3A is maintained. Someone coming into our Town for the first time going up Rte 3 at Exit 9 or Exit 10 . . . it is shameful.

M. Monahan: Gateways are a component of the EDP. Maybe there is a parcel along the corridor that can be enhanced.

M. Sorel: I went to Berlin, NH years ago. I asked "what do you do about the sulfur smell?". I think we look at these gateways and we don't actually see how horrible they are.

E. Vien: The first thing coming into Pittsfield from Laconia you see is a caved in Quonset hut. It is State owned and they said they cannot clean it up until 2010. We sent another letter to the State saying this was a safety issue. Now the State wants to clean it up a lot sooner.

M. Monahan: This site could be flipped and used as a future benefit (i.e. park). Create a list of parcels in your Town. Through the REP program, the Planning Commission can work for 30 hours on a zoning ordinance. Think beyond new developments to maximize zoning.

E. Vien: How do you market a community?

P. Loiselle: \$100,000, did this have very specific conditions? What was the cause to spend money that was approved by the voters?

E. Vien: The Board of Selectman vote on it with a public hearing with input from the Planning Board.

P. Loiselle: Dick Marshall has said again and again that we have to get the citizens of Hooksett to invest in Hooksett. You had a meeting with 150 people at your annual Town meeting. That is a good turnout.

Dick Marshall, Planning Board: I am approaching 37 years on the Planning Board. Like Mike's comment, all those years, if the community is going to be successful, you have to invest. Example, Littleton put in infrastructure first, then searched out businesses. This Town, we wait for the business, then add the infrastructure. You need to plan in advance to invest for the future. I am hoping the EDC recommendations bring that point out to invest for the future.

E. Vien: My brother is the Wastewater Treatment Superintendent for Pittsfield. He asks "what are you going to put there"?. You need to know, because it impacts the use. Zoning goes hand-in-hand with sewer to plan for the future.

M. Monahan: Then top it with community character.

J. Gryval: Excellent idea, however this has been shot down every time.

J. McHugh: It is a leap of faith. If you want development, you need to attract them.

M. Monahan: Build coalition; social capital. At Town meetings, that is when you have to put the chips in.

E. Vien: When times are slow, that is when to react and build.

Roger Duhaime: Do you have any success stories?

E. Vien: Getting the \$100,000, giving authority to the selectman to buy and sell property without going back to a Town meeting, and the pyramid. Also, Aminico business came into Pittsfield. They turn vegetable oil into fuel.

M. Monahan: Another project we are working on is talking with YMCA (satellite of Concord). The contact we originally had left, now we are talking to the national YMCA. Press can be bad; what sells the paper is horrible stories. We are working together with other Boards and this can be a challenge.

Roger Duhaime: You sold your plan to Pittsfield, we need to sell ours to our community.

OTHER BUSINESS

Developer Letter

J. McHugh: Letter to developers? Jo Ann, just e-mail revisions to the Board.

J. Duffy: Ok, I also gave copy to Carol Granfield, the interim Administrator.

ZBA Joint Meeting

J. Gryval: Do we have a date for the joint meeting with the ZBA?

J. Duffy: Tentatively, January 26, 2009.

ZBA Business Process

Roger Duhaime: Business does not work like government (i.e. Severino Trucking). This type of process needs to go quicker.

J. Gryval: You received the same information we did.

J. Duffy: You received the information back in September. The letter after that from Stantec addressed the same thing. I believe none of the miscommunication should have happened. There should have been a verbal explanation to the ZBA, not just a letter dropped off.

Roger Duhaime: They want to use their land.

J. Gryval: Good subject to bring to joint meeting with ZBA.

Reimbursement to Planning Board Members

J. Duffy: Members need to see Liz Dionne and the Finance Department.

CIP Committee - Continued to December 12, 2008

Rob Duhaime: Mr. Chair, the CIP Committee is continued to December 12th, so that we can provide data to Planning Board on 12/15/08.

SNHU Pedestrian Signal

J. Duffy: We have been back and forth with Bob Vachon, SNHU Facilities Director. When they came to the Planning Board Meeting, I believe you were all under the agreement that SNHU would maintain the signal. Do you just want a letter from Bob Vachon or do you want Bart to review?

Board consensus: Have Bart review.

*M. Sorel motioned to adjourn at 9:25pm. Seconded by R. Duhaime.
Vote unanimously in favor.*

ADJOURNMENT

Chair J. Gryval declared the meeting adjourned at 9:25pm. The next Planning Board Meeting is scheduled for Monday, December 15, 2008 at 35 Main Street, Hooksett, NH Town Hall Chambers (room 105).

Respectfully submitted,

Donna J. Fitzpatrick
Planning Coordinator