

WOLFEBORO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
March 17, 1993

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MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Shirley Ganem; Barbara Jackson, Joan Lovering, Bob Murphy, Andy Milligan, Tony Triolo, Paul Kimball, Sharon Severy, Mike Toomey, Tim Sullivan; Amanda Simpson, ex officio

ABSENT: Eric Piper, Bob Grott, Bob Garland

GUEST: Spencer Jackson

As members gathered for the meeting, main topic of conversation was the sudden closing of the Lakeview Inn.

Chairman Shirley Ganem called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m. in the First NH Bank Conference Room and called on Spencer Jackson, who had come to discuss the Abenaki Cross-Country Ski Trails, which apparently are in sorry shape this season. In good snow years in the dim past, the trails were maintained and groomed by the Cross Country Ski Association, and were a very popular attraction for tourists. Some of the trails cross private property, and arrangements with the landowners seem to have broken down. Jackson had prepared a letter to the Selectmen, describing the problems and recommending solutions.

On a motion by Tim Sullivan, seconded by Bob Murphy, the EDC voted to send Jackson's letter to the Town Manager and Selectmen in the hope of getting the Abenaki Ski Trails back in shape quickly.

Shirley Ganem read a letter from Bob Grott, saying that he felt it was inappropriate for the mailing that had gone out about the C-3 zoning to say it was supported by the EDC. He had not participated in any such vote. Other Board members recalled that a vote had been taken, but Grott had left the meeting. There were abstentions and the vote was not unanimous.

Amanda Simpson reported that the Postmaster had called her, wondering why something that looked like a Town mailing had been metered at Brewster using the Chamber's bulk rate. The sender was not identified, and the perception was that the Town had mailed it.

MILLIGAN ON THE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

At the last meeting the Board had approved the proposed by-laws, and they are scheduled for review at the April 7 Selectmen's Meeting. Andy recommends talking with the Selectmen individually. He'll talk with Paul Hatch, and Paul Kimball will talk with Ken MacDonald.

Andy reported that the Lakeview Inn's doors were closed, and its 32 employees laid off. According to reports, a financial arm of First NH Bank broke off negotiations which were in progress and called the note. This action was really criticized, since in the past the FDIC forgave a \$2,000,000 debt for the Wolfeboro Inn.

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Milligan expressed frustration with the EDC's lack of progress in three years of meetings. Wakefield has been getting a lot of positive press on their economic development. Laconia recently has gone to great efforts to save an existing business, and is spending \$6,000,000 jointly with Gilford to develop an industrial park. This is competition for us.

Mike Toomey reported that to keep Allen Rogers from moving his business to New York, Laconia is relocating him in the industrial park, and has applied for a block grant to convert the big mill building he is vacating to a cultural auditorium to seat about 1,500 people.

Continuing in this downbeat mood, Tony Triolo said that after last week's vote, what business would want to locate in a town that voted down an airport and a commercial zone.

Shirley Ganem tried to pick up the mood by suggesting that instead of being half empty, perhaps the glass was half full. The Lakeview Inn has closed, but the Back Bay Boathouse has opened up. And Michelle Gerasin has kept the Lakeview going longer than any other owner in recent years. We need to present an industrial-commercial-business plan to the Selectmen and sell it to the public. The people at Town Meeting were not the usual people that you see downtown. They were a block of people there for specific reasons.

Sharon Severy continued that the people who need to be sold are the people who live here. For the airport, it was not appropriate to have the users as the proponents of the airport. It made it seem like a toy for the users. Their presentation turned people off. If you want to win any of these battles, you have to look at it as if you're selling a can of peas.

Our marketing plan needs to be directed at the people who live in town, not just at business people or to attract outside business. We need to convince the people who live in town that Wolfeboro needs to grow somehow. Murphy responded that part of the marketing plan was to help existing businesses, but that got voted down.

All agreed that there was no leadership in Town that coordinates and brings people together. Amanda Simpson continued that the Selectmen need to provide leadership. The Town needs to have a goal-setting session and have a list of projects that the Town is going to do, not just some committee or group of volunteers. It's for Town staff too. Economic Development is a Town project. The water bond issue is a Town project. The airport is a Town project. These projects are all owned by the Town. There's got to be some uniformity or leadership. These are team efforts and we've got to talk the same language.

This is a department-oriented town. We need to be a project-oriented town. What are we going to do about this?

The Economic Development Committee was formed by a group of people who wanted to promote economic development. It should also involve people who

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have reservations about it. The same with the airport study committee. Committees are formed from advocates. We need a mix, including some neutral and anti people.

Ganem pointed out that nearly 1/3 of the people in Wolfeboro are not registered to vote. These are the people that these decisions would affect the most.

There are so many issues that this Town is facing. The Selectmen need to pick priority plans and unite to promote them.

The discussion got back to maintaining and assisting existing business. If our business development corporation were up and running, that's the group that might be able to help existing businesses with financing, etc.

Mike Toomey volunteered that "band-aid financing doesn't work. There are too many contingencies. It comes off in the first rain." He pointed out that the trickle-down economy is at work here too. The people who are out of work from Wolfeboro Products went out to lunch at the Lakeview, and bought their sports gear from North Country Scuba.

Local businesses are having trouble competing, because Wolfeboro consumers are now driven by value. A box of computer paper that costs \$12 at Pace sells for \$40 at the Stationery Shop. There's not a business in this community that can afford to operate on the same level as a business in any community that's larger than this. They can't compete on price. They can't compete on selection. 50% of the grocery money in this town is spent outside of town. 70% of the women's clothing is bought outside of this town.

Joan Lovering countered that we shouldn't beat ourselves up so. She had received a survey from a group in Meredith--the North Country Resource Conservation and Development--about Community Leadership needs, and their results showed that "public involvement is not adequate; organization lacks long-term vision; town boards' lack of cooperation with other organizations." Our problems really are not unique, if that's any comfort.

A great deal of frustration and self-criticism was expressed. Shirley Ganem said that if she becomes Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, she plans to get together representatives from every department in town, and all the various committees, and set up priorities for the next 2-3-4 years.

Tim Sullivan declared that we need goals and deadlines, or nothing ever gets down in this Town.

What is our product to sell, and who are we selling it to? Before we can market it to outsiders, we have to sell it to the people of the Town.

The secretary interrupted at this point to add her two cents. A partial

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report for the business visitation has been received, and as fragmented and messed up as it was, the one thing that stood out was that everybody loved the area, the lake, the scenic beauty of the area, the people, the size of the town. This is the reason everybody is here, business people and residents.

Members responded that Wolfeboro can't survive on the quality of life. Wolfeboro used to have manufacturers of pipes, blankets, baby underwear, shoes. Now we have a 10-week a year economic base. We need a year-round economy, and non-retail business.

Amanda wanted to make a good news announcement in the midst of all this self-flagellation: we have the go-ahead to start development plans for the Town business park site. Funding has been approved to start site assessment work on the 26-acre site on 109A.

LAND BANK CHARRETTE

Joan Lovering reported on the Planning Board meeting she had attended the evening before. The Board is going through a learning experience, on how the application process works--a quick planning course which she was observing.

Don Hughes had passed out copies of minutes of a meeting of the Land Bank, which described their plans to hold a Charrette to develop a plan for the C-3 area and some additional property nearby. He had asked Joan to talk with the EDC about the plans with the hope that they would be supportive of the project. Hughes plans to present this at the Selectmen's meeting this afternoon.

The Planner explained that the Land Bank owns 120 acres in that area. They have received a \$3,500 planning grant to look at their land, and want to develop it in the way that the community needs it. In the planning they would like to include the land over to Back Bay, the rest of the C-3 area and up to North Main Street. A Charrette is an intensive planning session--continuing for several days to a week or more--involving a team of experts, the landowners, and the community to work out plans for developing an area. The Land Bank hopes for co-sponsorship with the Town, and many other community groups.

Barbara Jackson was concerned that this might short-circuit the work the Route 28 Committee was doing, and they might be put on hold. She was assured that was not the case.

It was now almost 9:30 a.m., and the meeting was adjourned. The next meeting will be on March 31.

Respectfully submitted,

*Rosemary Artander*  
Secretary