

WOLFEBORO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

April 6, 1994

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PRESENT: Chairman Shirley Ganem, Bill Wiebe, Bob Grott, Bob Garland, Andy Milligan, Paul Kimball, Tony Triolo, Barbara Jackson; Town Manager Paul J. Skowron

GUEST: Verne Crosier

Chairman Shirley Ganem called the meeting to order at 7:34 a.m. in the Planning Office Conference Room.

She turned the meeting over to Bill Wiebe, who had invited Verne Crosier of the Office of Economic Initiatives to come back to the EDC to talk about a follow-up program to the Community Renaissance Program which the State is now offering. They will do "community counseling," to help a town develop its business strategy plan, and go forward with it. Wiebe had sent Crosier a copy of Wolfeboro's vision statement, and he felt the next step for Wolfeboro was to develop a business plan and get it down on paper, just as an individual business would.

In response to the Town Manager's questions about his office, Crosier explained that the Office of Economic Initiatives is associated with the Whittemore School of Economics at UNH. It is funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce and distributed through land grant colleges to provide economic development assistance to communities in the state. He wouldn't name communities his office has been working with because of confidentiality. There is tremendous competition for economic development between them, and his office is trying to discourage such rivalries.

Regional associations of groups of communities working together for economic development seem to work very well, Crosier said. Andy Milligan questioned how this meshed with Community Block Grants, which are available only to communities, not to regions. Crosier responded that the Department of Commerce is working to change that, and is adamant about wanting to work for regional growth.

Crosier's office aims to encourage each community or region to "grow its own" economic vitality, not steal businesses from somewhere else.

The group discussed its hope of building a quality of life in Wolfeboro that encourages people and businesses to want to live and work here. How to get Town residents to agree with the vision statement and go forward with it seemed to be the biggest obstacle.

Ganem asked if the Planning Board's work on the Master Plan would be in collision with the EDC's vision plan. Economic vitality, she said, should drive a town and make it sparkle. Crosier responded that the Planning Board and the EDC should meet regularly. The Planning Board seems to feel they are in charge of planning and don't want to give up any of their prerogatives. EDC should be the WHAT needs to be done long range. The Planning Board should deal with the HOW through planning and zoning. What the Town needs is a linking project—it should not be working on little

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separate islands.

Crosier suggested that EDC's first project should be to build a bridge to the Planning Board. He can send EDC materials to help write a business plan and advise, but EDC must write the plan.

Even the best business plan won't succeed if the Planning Board is unfriendly, Crosier continued. The Selectmen can be coordinators, but not leaders in this project. He told the group to build the bridge, and he would come back in a month to help resolve any difficulties.

Wiebe recalled the list of organizations in town that do planning. The EDC should coordinate all these various functions. Town Manager Skowron agreed that everyone needs to get together and find some common ground and resolve their differences. Just to meet isn't good enough. They need to be working on a common agenda. Perhaps the building of a business plan could be the common ground.

A "Master Plan" is often seen as a solution to all problems. Crosier said that every Master Plan required a business plan. The Department of Commerce is looking for a fully fleshed out statement, not just a few pages.

Bill Wiebe, who is the town's new representative to the Lakes Region Planning Commission, said that developing an over-all economic plan for the Lakes Region was one of its main goals. Referring to the local scene, he suggested that a number of meetings will be required to get people to change their views. Changing views requires compromises—it's not just a one-way proposition. What's needed is a public relations effort that produces feedback as good as the Charrette had.

The Town Manager asked if the Chamber of Commerce had approved the Economic Strategic Plan, and Milligan responded that it hasn't been presented to them. Skowron said that all groups need to be vested in this. The Planning Board needs to buy into the plan too.

The Chamber of Commerce meets the first Thursday of every month at 7:30 a.m. for a breakfast meeting at the Wolfeboro Inn. Paul Kimball moved that the EDC meet with the Chamber May 5 to talk about the Economic Strategic Plan. Bob Grott seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

The Chairman recommended that the next step should be for the Selectmen to set up a meeting with the Planning Board and the EDC. Crosier suggested asking the Municipal Association to provide a facilitator for the meeting.

Crosier told the group about the town of Charlestown NH, which had been split over economic development vs. the beauty of the town. They worked for 10 years and succeeded in having both by creating business parks which are not visible when you drive through town. They have developed two business parks, and are about to start on a third. A retired insurance

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executive, Howard Mortenson, led this effort. Sue Elder works with him. Crosier provided her number (543-1296) and suggested that perhaps the two of them might share their experience with the EDC.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Barbara Jackson reported that the Data Base Committee had met with the assessor's office and had gotten a list of unimproved lots in commercially zoned areas.

The Cross Country Ski Association has been talking with a group interested in a Bi-athlon Center. They would like to have a low-velocity shooting range, and dorm space for a training camp. The land bank has said that they do not want this on their property.

Paul Kimball said that his committee was meeting tomorrow to develop the leaflet to help new businesses that are interested in coming to town. He has been talking with engineers, Dave Senecal, etc. This is aimed to help prospective applicants (as an ombudsman) to get started.

NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Barbara Jackson said that John Catalano would like to help the EDC as a member. The Chairman said that Richard Gaudreau, manager of First NH Bank, is also interested. (Then maybe meetings could go back to their board room.)

Andy Milligan moved that Richard Gaudreau be accepted as a member of the Economic Development Committee. B. Grott second the motion and it carried.

Members would like to add Catalano too, but he neither lives nor has his business in Wolfeboro. Maybe he could be an ex-officio member, or marketing specialist.

S. Ganem said she would like to have Ginny Janik as a member, because she represents a whole point of view that the EDC never hears from—the silent majority who never speak. Shirley and Paul Kimball will both speak with Ginny.

Andy Milligan reported that Phoenix Custom Molding wants the Business Development Corp to assist them in getting a Community Development Block Grant. They presently employ 50, and would like to add 50-75 jobs.

The meeting was adjourned at 9 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Erik H. Arntander*

The next EDC meeting will be at 7:30 a.m. on April 20 at

First NH Bank!

