

WOLFEBORO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE JOINT MEETING

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE COMMUNITY BETTERMENT COMMITTEE

**Monday, August 4, 2008
MINUTES**

Members Present: Frank Giebutowski, Acting Chairman, Gene Leone, Vice-Chairman, Tony Triolo, Denise Roy-Palmer, Bob Reid, Mary DeVries, Members.

Members Absent: Kristi Ginter, Selectmen's Representative, Mike Cooper, Dave Tower, Members.

Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Committee Members Present: Diane Levin, Chairman, Jane Milligan, Member.

Chamber of Commerce Community Betterment Members Present: Zach Tartar, Chairman, Mike Best, Todd O'Dowd, Members.

Board of Selectman Representative to the Chamber of Commerce: Linda Murray.

Staff Present: Lee Ann Keathley, Secretary.

Acting Chairman Giebutowski opened the meeting at 8:07 AM.

Discussion Item

- **Identify areas of common interest and find ways to jointly support economic development activities in the Town**

Frank Giebutowski stated the objectives of the Economic Base Chapter of the Master Plan are owned by either the Town's EDC or the Chamber of Commerce and recommended a joint effort to complete the tasks. He stated the Town's EDC developed a problem statement that speaks to the Committee's objectives in regard to the sequencing of events. He noted the Town Planner developed a RFP for a market study. He stated a firm understanding of the Town's strengths, weaknesses and opportunities in addition to the development of an implementation plan is necessary. He stated the Committee is seeking support from the BOS for the study and the Chamber of Commerce's Committees to promote and enhance economic development in the community.

Tony Triolo stated the Economic Base Chapter of the Master Plan recommended hiring an Economic Development Director (EDD) however, the BOS voted such down. He stated the Town is in need of economic development and a person to handle such. He stated there is a need to educate the BOS regarding the issue and noted the BOS are not convinced an EDD is needed therefore; both the BOS and voters need to be convinced of the necessity for such.

Bob Reid stated that when the Economic Base Chapter of the Master Plan was developed there was a negative net growth of business in the Town. He stated he agrees with the study however, stated that the study cannot be a means to an end rather, there has to be a commitment that once the areas are identified, things have to be done. He stated his fear is that the economic portion of the Master Plan will go away. He stated support is needed from the BOS, Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Committee.

Tony Triolo stated the jewel of the Town is the lake and recommended enhancement of the downtown area to attract people who want to move to Town and start a business.

Jane Milligan discussed the Main Street Program and noted that when a Town signs up for the project, the municipality and business community make a financial commitment towards the program. She stated it is a contractual system and the total rebuild of a community takes 15-20 years.

Bob Reid stated there is existing zoning to promote business and commented that an EDD would need to be a part of the Main Street Program.

Denise Roy-Palmer stated the Main Street Community Program in NH was a program through the NH Community Development Finance Authority and within the past year, the program no longer exists.

Mary DeVries stated a lot of the work being discussed has been the focus of the Chamber of Commerce's Committees and different Town committees. She stated in 1999/2000 the Town and Chamber of Commerce looked at the Main Street Program however, the Town was not eligible at the time. In regard to the Master Plan, she stated public voted to accept the Master Plan and an EDD was part of the recommendations of that Master Plan therefore, it is now the job of the Committees to implement those recommendations.

Linda Murray stated the RFP is well written, makes sense and fits with the Master Plan. In regard to the budget process, she stated justification for an EDD is necessary and she stated the study would provide such. She expressed concern regarding the Downtown; keeping retail businesses and having the area be vital. She expressed concern regarding costs associated with electric, fuel and principle and interest payments due to hit the operating budget.

Diane Levin stated the Chamber of Commerce EDC has developed a guide to doing business in Wolfeboro; a user friendly guide to maneuver through the process. She stated the draft would be delivered to Rob Houseman today for review and comment. She stated the Committee is developing a database of Downtown businesses that have come and gone. She stated a questionnaire / exit interview has been developed for businesses that close or leave Town.

Bob Reid stated the concept of the questionnaire / exit interview reinforces the idea that a professional is needed to conduct such.

Diane Levin stated that if the Town had an EDD, there would be a better understanding regarding the market of Wolfeboro.

Bob Reid questioned the cost of the study and stated such should be shared by the Town and the business community.

Linda Murray stated flow charts have been developed by the Planning & Development Department as well.

Zach Tarter stated the mission of the Community Betterment Committee is to find programs and enhance programs to align with the Downtown area and increase the feeling of the Downtown area. He reviewed his letter, dated 3/18/08, related to the Greater Downtown Wolfeboro Improvements Forum and goals of the Committee (see attached). He stated the Our Town project was delayed due to budgetary constraints and noted now is the time to act due to the ADA compliance issues. He stated the Committee is requesting a continuous design for the Downtown area.

Bob Reid stated the Town has been reactive rather than proactive because they had to be.

Zach Tarter stated that when the Town is reactive, that a continuous design plan be followed.

Linda Murray questioned what continuous design plan can the Town afford and commented that the voters need to vote for such.

Todd O'Dowd stated that fundamentally, the issue is always what can be afforded however; the way to afford it is to do it and noted examples such as Abenaki Ski Area and The Nick. He noted that sometimes there is not a commitment by the people in Town and stated that support from within is necessary. He stated that many committees are not going in one direction.

Tony Triolo stated the EDC and the Chamber of Commerce Committees have common goals; the hiring of an EDD and improvements to the Main Street corridor.

Gene Leone stated cooperation from Town government is necessary for the hiring of an EDD.

Linda Murray stated the Committee needs the support of the Budget Committee.

Zach Tarter stated that at the Greater Downtown Wolfeboro Improvements Forum and the online survey, the public was asked to let the Town know what they wanted. He stated the public responded with the following; Downtown Street Program, continuous design and the burying of utility wires.

Mary DeVries stated the need to educate people has been identified and one way to do such is by hiring a professional.

Jane Milligan stated that if improvements are desired and the business community supports such then the business community has to do something to prove that making the improvements to the Downtown area is important. She stated the individual businesses can make an effort to present their storefront in a pleasant manner; awnings, flower boxes, etc.

Frank Giebutowski expressed a need to communicate to the community.

Tony Triolo recommended a press release.

Linda Murray recommended advertising through Community TV. She recommended requesting a part time EDD.

Frank Giebutowski noted the following objectives; navigation system, publicize improvements to Downtown businesses by the business owners and communicate with both the BOS and Budget Committee.

Bob Reid recommended the Committees meet on a regular basis.

Linda Murray stated a placeholder number for the study would be placed in the budget; budgets to be reviewed by the Town Manager in September, reviewed by the BOS in October and reviewed by the Budget Committee in November and December. She recommended public input at the Budget Committee meeting.

Joint meeting scheduled for September 2008; date, time and location to be determined.

There being no further business before the Committee, the meeting adjourned at 9:14 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lee Ann Keathley