

# WOLFEBORO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

December 14, 2010

## MINUTES

**Members Present:** Frank Giebutowski, Acting Chairman, Linda Murray, Selectman's Representative, Tony Triolo, Dave Tower, Mike Cooper, Mary DeVries, Denise Roy-Palmer, Members.

**Members Absent:** Gene Leone, Vice-Chairman, Bob Reid, Member.

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

**Guests Present:** Bob Ness, Deb Avery, NH DRED.

**Staff Present:** Rob Houseman, Director of Planning & Development, Lee Ann Keathley, Secretary.

*Acting Chairman Giebutowski opened the meeting at 8:06 AM.*

### **Consideration of Minutes**

November 9, 2010

**It was moved by Tony Triolo and seconded by Dave Tower to approve the November 9, 2010 Economic Development Committee minutes as submitted. All members voted in favor. The motion passed.**

### **Discussion Items**

#### ➤ **Deb Avery, NH DRED, Business Visitation & Retention Program**

Frank Giebutowski reviewed the history of the Economic Development Strategic Study; noting the intent at the completion of Phase I of the study was to come out with an economic strategy for the Town. He stated there has been a sharp decrease in food and accommodations and retail sectors; noting 170 jobs were lost from 2001-2008. He stated the Committee has postponed Phase II of the study.

Deb Avery recommended contacting the Department of Travel & Tourism to have Laurie Hartell meet with the Committee. She asked whether a survey of all the businesses have been done.

Frank Giebutowski replied no.

Tony Triolo stated a Business Visitation Program was done in the 1990's.

Deb Avery distributed a Business Visitation Program survey; noting the goal is to meet with a top management person of the business for one hour to complete the survey.

Frank Giebutowski questioned whether the Business Visitation Program is the most appropriate way to approach the issue if the issues are related to a specific industry. He questioned whether the survey should be customized.

Rob Houseman questioned the expectations of the results of the survey. He stated he is unsure if the survey brings a broader range of issues that obtain viability; noting the issue of a 2 night minimum stay at local establishments.

Mary DeVries stated the Chamber of Commerce has ongoing conversations with the businesses.

Jane Milligan stated the market is shrinking and has changed; noting such directly impacts hospitality.

Tony Triolo stated Wolfeboro is no longer a destination community.

Mary DeVries stated the numbers tracked by the Chamber of Commerce show that people want to be here however, keeping them here is another problem.

Rob Houseman recommended the reutilization of existing space / buildings prior to construction of new buildings. He recommended reinvestment in existing properties. He stated the Lake Motel is proposing reconstruction of the existing facility and conversion to year round use. He recommended working with the owner regarding issues of minimum night stay. He stated the need to take the data collected and use it as a tool to keep existing businesses here in addition to growing the market share.

Tony Triolo talked about Winter Carnival and the need for the local businesses to invest in growth as well.

Deb Avery questioned whether Wolfeboro is a Main Street community.

Rob Houseman replied no; noting that Kathy LaPlante visited the Town and asked if she could use Wolfeboro as a model for the program. He stated the study showed a huge drop in the public face and questioned how to understand what is happening in that portion of the market. He questioned what the EDC and community can do to recapture what has been lost.

Deb Avery questioned if there is collaboration between Brewster Academy and the local inns/hotels.

Mike Cooper stated Brewster Academy has tried to work with the Wolfeboro Inn regarding the minimum night stay issue and the response given to them has been "it's not part of the business plan."

Deb Avery questioned Brewster Academy's enrollment.

Mike Cooper replied 365 students; 285 boarding students and 70 nonboarding students. He stated the students are from 29 states and 22 foreign countries.

Deb Avery recommended a joint promotional program that included the department of tourism.

Rob Houseman stated the Town is a huge saturation point in the summer with traffic and events; noting the need to capture and retain that influx.

Linda Murray noted the Town has 91 nonprofit agencies that support the Town's quality of life.

Bob Ness stated traffic flow, or lack thereof, should be reviewed.

Deb Avery stated the Department of Employment Security has new programs that are aggressive and meet with companies to determine skill sets and assist with recruiting. She discussed the Return to Work program and recommended a representative from the department meet with the Committee. She questioned opportunity for hospitality programs through local colleges and schools.

Referencing the Business Visitation Program, Diane Levin questioned whether it would be more appropriate to do such through focus groups rather than individual meetings with business owners.

#### **Upcoming Tasks:**

- Discuss leadership roles
- Schedule a representative from the NH Department of Employment Security and Department of Travel & Tourism to meet with EDC
- Discuss strategy for focus groups
- Education component (Region 9 Vocational Center & other schools)

➤ **Granite State College**

Denise Roy-Palmer stated Granite State College is looking to do community outreach that would take place at WEDCO's office during the day; noting an evening location would be sought. She stated the objective and goal is to provide career development and coaching and would forward the email she received regarding such.

➤ **2011 Budget status**

Frank Giebutowski stated the request for \$3,000 for advertising was not removed from the budget.

**New Business**

Bob Ness questioned whether the Town should have Wi-Fi capability and if so, where should it be and who would provide it. He questioned a private / public partnership for such.

Tony Triolo stated such is available at some locations in town such as Market Grille, library and the Country Bookseller. He questioned what other communities do.

Rob Houseman stated Portsmouth has a mix of public and private partnerships. He stated there is a demand for such.

Denise Roy-Palmer stated Littleton also has it.

Mary DeVries stated the Information Booth informs people that it is available and directs them to the businesses that have it.

Deb Avery recommended contacting Carol Miller; noting stimulus money has been received for broadband and telecommunications.

**It was moved by Mike Cooper and seconded by Dave Tower to adjourn the December 14, 2010 EDC meeting. All members voted in favor.**

*There being no further business before the Committee, the meeting adjourned at 9:07 AM.*

Respectfully Submitted,

*Lee Ann Keathley*

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