

MINUTES OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING - EXECUTIVE CONFERENCE ROOM

JANUARY 14, 2014 – 3:40 P.M.

Committee Members Present: Councilor Jonathan McCallion, Chair
Councilors Dale Sprague and David Witham

Administration/staff Present: City Manager Bob Belmore, Director of Planning & CD
Dave Sharples, ED Manager Christine Soutter

Chairman McCallion called the meeting to order at 3:40 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES.

Councilor Witham moved to approve the minutes of the 11/4/13 meeting. Motion seconded by Councilor McCallion. Motion carried 3-0.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT YEAR IN REVIEW.

ED Manager Soutter indicated the City continues to see economic growth and has few vacancies. There are new and expanding businesses as follows:

- The City welcomed Hampshire Pewter, Central Fence & Deck, Aaron's, Dress Barn, American Ambulance.
- Label Tech and Integrated Design & Mfg., both located on Interstate Drive, completed expansions.
- W-D Hospital began construction of an ambulatory surgical center located in front of The Works.
- Eyesight Ophthalmic will be expanding into Somersworth in the spring of 2014.

City Manager Belmore said he has asked ED Manager Soutter to help create a better image for the City. One way to do that is with a business newsletter. He also asked her to complete a report every year in December. He also asked her to start doing outreach on recruiting businesses. Recruitment of businesses takes a lot of time. They are trying to build more robust business recruitment and business retention.

Councilor Witham said he would be interested in any recommendation that would come from staff that would heighten our use on High Street.

Councilor Sprague asked what our plan is for the downtown, how to help landlords get businesses in. He would like to focus on the rail and doing something with the Plaza. Soutter indicated people are attracted to a business if it is unique. There has to be a lot of activity, a lot going on. The web site is also important. Our webmaster tracks hits on our web site. She is

working with the NH Division of Economic Development to create a business recruitment plan and strategy.

Manager Belmore stated that economic development should be a team approach.

EDC GOALS FOR NEXT YEAR.

Councilor Witham said his focus is image and he feels we need to continue to chip away at that.

Councilor Witham left the meeting at 4:20 p.m. due to a work commitment.

Councilor McCallion feels that we need G.E. to come to the plate and we can talk about some things we can work together on that will benefit the community.

Councilor Sprague said his goals are to do something with the Plaza, and also to have rail come in. He would like to find a way to clean up properties also. He would like to get together with Dover and do something with Willand Pond, perhaps bring the park back to a place that people from both towns can enjoy. He also wondered what is happening with the Hilltop School Building. Belmore said we are waiting for the architect's report. Soutter commented that having that building as a cultural center would draw businesses to our community.

Soutter noted upcoming events and goals:

- The City will be hosting a business before hours with the Somersworth Chamber on 1/24/14. Highlights from the past year and upcoming projects will be discussed.
- Their department will have a UNH Intern that will begin in January and work with her on recruitment research and a possible social media plan implementation.
- A meeting with recruitment team from DRED will take place in January to plan a strategy to better poise the City for new business.
- Goodwill Industries and a spec development coming to the former Star Lumber on High Street.

ADJOURNMENT.

Motion by Councilor Sprague to adjourn. Motion seconded by Councilor McCallion. Motion passed 2-0. The meeting adjourned at 4:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane M. DuBois, City Clerk