

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AD-HOC COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, September 18, 2018

1:00 PM

Conference Room 2nd Floor

Members Present:

Mitchell Greenwald, Chair
Gary Lamoureux, Councilor
George Hansel, Councilor
Kendall Lane, Mayor
Timothy Murphy, SWRPC
Phil Suter, Chamber of Commerce
Jack Dugan, MEDC
Joseph Walier, Walier Chevrolet
Jordan Benik, People's Linen
George Foskett, BHG Masiello Real Estate
Bill Hutwelker, Swanzey Selectman
Keith Thibault, SCS
Rebecca Hamilton, Machina Arts
Elizabeth Dragon, City Manager

Staff Present:

Med Kopczynski,

Members Not Present:

Chris McIntosh, Clark-Mortenson Ins.
Dominic Perkins, Savings Bank of Walpole

1. Introduction of Members

Chair Greenwald called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM with introductions.

2. Review Previous Plan (brief overview)

Mr. Kopczynski offered to provide copies of the previous plan to the new members. He explained objectives in the plan were called Action Items and provided an update on where we are with each of them.

1. Business Advocacy and Response Team (BART) – This team has been set up outside of the regular City government structure to provide flexibility. Currently Councilor Greenwald is the team contact (exterior) and the interior staff portion of the team consists of Rhett Lamb, Rebecca Landry, the City Manager, and Mr. Kopczynski. The purpose of the Team is to help someone walk through the system.
2. The report talked about efforts to be made in Building, Health, and Planning. Along

those lines there have been a lot of organizational changes on the 4th floor that are still in progress. We also need to work on connectivity within City Departments. Mr. Kopczynski outlined the reorganization of the 4th floor. They are working on the permitting and plan review processes.

3. Land Use Code update- The CMP, Council goals, and this report put a lot of emphasis on working with the regulations. We are part way through redeveloping the Land Use regulations in their totality and there is still quite a bit of work to do on this process. Mr. Kopczynski referred to the document for the specifics.
4. Development incentives- not a lot of room there in New Hampshire.
 - Adoption of 79-E which the City did and is now working on an expansion of the district.
 - New market tax credits- this has been utilized successfully and Jack Dugan has become the expert here.
 - Community Development Activity Fund (CDAF) program has been utilized most recently for the new MoCo Arts building. This is something we want to utilize more often.
 - Historic tax credits- Tax laws just passed by the Federal government have changed that program; the 10% part of that program is gone. Additionally this is not an easy program to acquire.
 - Research and development tax credits and job training are state funded.
5. Incentives not in report-
 - Free Trade Zone- requires application to the federal government
 - Foreign Trade Zone. The potential is there we just have to figure out how to use it. Keene does not have one; the potential is there.
 - Opportunity Zone- census track south of Marlboro and everything south of Route 101.
6. Economic vitality- Mr. Kopczynski reported we have been working on the Downtown Coordinator with MEDC. The purpose of the Downtown Coordinator is to coordinate some of the disparate groups in the downtown. We are also in the process of hiring a new Parking Management Officer who will be expected to be much more involved in the give and take of the public relations.
7. Broadband- There has been some success here.
 - SB-170 passed which allows municipalities to bond for Broadband.
 - We wanted to be a member of Next Century City which we have done.
 - We have been creating Partnerships with MEDC, the Chamber, and Hannah Grimes.
 - We are creating a Dig Once policy and we did a Broadband study.
 - We are trying to focus on this with the outreach we are doing for Economic Development.
 - We are almost ready to produce the Economic Opportunities packet.
 - We will be looking at branding Keene.
 - We have been proactive working with state to make sure we are well represented.
8. We have done property inventories. One of the things the report pointed out was Economic Planning. The last Economic Development Plan took place in 1993; there are some elements of it in the Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP). The City Manager has

suggested taking a look at it for re-adoption. The Capital Improvements Program (CIP) has been reorganized to make it clear which of the projects are related to Economic Development which was one of the goals of the report.

9. Grants- We have been working with millions of dollars in grants that are related to and in support of Economic Development.

Mr. Kopczynski concluded his overview by noting in addition to the report the City Manager appointed an Economic Development Initiatives and Special Projects person (Mr. Kopczynski). We also did a parking asset inventory which is on the website with supporting documents. The City Manager with consent of the City Council also rebranded the Airport Development and Marketing Committee.

Comments and Discussion

The City Manager commented Mr. Kopczynski did a good job of summarizing the work that has been done since the report was adopted a year ago. She continued many of the initiatives have been ongoing for a period of time. It is very satisfying to cross things off the list which we have done a lot of. Referring to Mr. Kopczynski's comments the City Manager said we are looking at Parking as an asset and how we manage that asset. The Parking Manager position is not a new job it is a revised job description. In conclusion the City Manager said she looks forward to working with this group. She also noted the BART group has been pretty active and successful internally working with potential developers to overcome any hurdles they may have.

Chair Greenwald commented it is gratifying to see things really happening. He added this Committee is definitely about participation. At this point Chair Greenwald read the Committee Charge.

To take an inventory of economic development efforts in Keene and the Monadnock region and provide guidance and encourage collaboration and planning for comprehensive economic development efforts.

Following that Chair Greenwald said he would like the Committee to pick out specific goals as the meetings continue. Things the Committee is seeing as the needs to bring more employment, quality jobs that pay living wages will drive this community in the future. City Councilors continually hear the tax rates are too high and the reality is the public wants the services. So if we are not cutting the services than we need more jobs, more employers, and more homeowners.

Chair Greenwald asked if an inventory of potential sites existed. The City Manager replied we have done somewhat of an effort to locate sites within Keene and put them on the Choose Keene website. Mr. Kopczynski added we also tied it to Cybor and a couple of the other links. Mr. Kopczynski also noted we took a look at any properties the City owns that were suitable for any potential development. Continuing he noted there may be one or two suitable for potential development but the City is not holding onto big tracts of land. He further explained on the Choose Keene website we have links to specific real estate that we know about. Chair Greenwald asked if Mr. Kopczynski could have something for the Committee to look at. Mr. Kopczynski replied in the affirmative. Mr. Foskett commented there is land out there that is

just not for sale. Mayor Lane commented we should not lose sight of the fact that what is available in Keene is fairly limited so we may want to look at what is available in the region. The Mayor continued the employment opportunities in Keene are a short list at this point and we need to be concerned with other communities making economic development efforts.

Chair Greenwald said this lead to his next thought which was communication between Keene and surrounding towns. Mr. Hutwelker commented we are very fortunate that our Town Administrator, Michael Bradley, and the City Manager have a solid relationship.

Mr. Foskett commented the City really has not grown like the County; he compared the populations from 1970 and today. He also noted the population grows to about 60,000 during the day. Mr. Foskett wondered if there is anything that can be done legislatively to rectify the limited population. Mr. Foskett also addressed the tremendous growth spurt Keene had in the 1980's. He also mentioned actions taken by the Planning Board regarding required lot size (60 foot) to curb growth. Continuing he noted now we are having difficulty finding locations for low-income or workforce housing. He asked if the appropriate body should perhaps look at going back to a 50-foot lot because there are a lot of them out there. Mr. Foskett also suggested looking at the density for multi-family as that also doubled back in the 1980's. Mr. Foskett also addressed the report noting it is full of acronyms and suggested a list of acronyms was needed.

Mayor Lane said Mr. Foskett's comments were not out of line. He noted the work being done on the rewriting of the Land Use Code adding as this work is finished, looking at the Land Use Codes for issues relating to development or discouragement of housing are a step that needs to be taken. Mayor Lane agreed Keene's population has not moved since 1980 and provided an explanation. Chair Greenwald commented we are looking at those issues now.

Councilor Hansel noted during the first round of this Committee we sort of identified the low-hanging fruit, and those barriers to development. As we go on in time we are starting to check things off. Continuing Councilor Hansel said he sees the lion's share of the work being on the cultural side; how are we going to keep people here. Finding the logistics is easier to do but finding the workforce is harder to conceptualize for Councilor Hansel. Chair Greenwald and Mayor Lane agreed we now have housing going on. Chair Greenwald added we need the cultural and social reasons to live here. Mayor Lane also noted our housing stock is old and a lot of it is in decline. Councilor Hansel shared there are things going on at the state level that we can hopefully implement. Chair Greenwald noted somewhere in our conversation has to be the educated workforce. Ms. Hamilton addressed Keene being a hub noting part of it is attracting people who live and work in Keene. Companies like Badger are looking to hire people throughout the region but they all have Keene as the cultural and economic hub. Mr. Benik noted he is on the same page as Ms. Hamilton; there needs to be a reason to be here. Mr. Benik added the shopping vibe does not exist here today- the kids are all on the same page- on the internet. He continued it is difficult to find people to come and work here; culture is a huge aspect of we need to work on. Following up on this the Mayor commented he and the City Manager have visited a lot of businesses here in Keene. The consistent theme they hear is that the businesses want to expand but they cannot do it without a workforce. The Mayor continued today the economic development is more related to how do you keep the businesses you have and help them to stay and grow in Keene.

Mr. Walier referred to previous discussions about making this regional. He added we still need to address Concord knowing that Keene is part of New Hampshire. Mr. Murphy agreed with Mr. Walier's comments noting in 1.0 we did talk about a regional view and hopes this is still on the Committee's screen. The City Manager noted the relationship with Swanzey due to the Airport and agreed we do need to look at the region and understand what everyone is doing. The City Manager said she does want to coordinate with the communities around Keene and find ways to partner with them. She noted a challenge is a lot of the smaller communities do not have people working on economic development or a point of contact to share information. The City Manager made note of the diverse representation on this Committee and the goal of communication. She also noted working hard on building a relationship with the state.

Mr. Suter suggested a way for the Committee to frame the workforce piece going forward. He suggested it has two elements; supply and demand. Mr. Suter indicated we often focus on the supply side. He asked what are we doing to increase our attractiveness and added we need to focus on both sides. Mr. Suter addressed branding the region noting conversations with the City Manager. He explained several other Chambers are working together on an Alliance model. There will be a meeting next week to discuss the branding piece and they hope to roll out the initial thinking in October to the stakeholders. Mr. Suter said there are some funds available for the tourism side. He continued the mechanics of any kind of campaign are very similar so the two elements will be integrated are tourism and workforce.

Mr. Thibault expressed his thoughts based on comments made. He thinks the Mayor is right we were in a unique situation over the last five years between dedicated housing for students, the old Middle School project, and the Colony Mill. He also agreed with Mr. Foskett that there are hundreds and hundreds of cars that come and go daily in Keene. He indicated they are concentrated within a limited number of employers and suggested beginning a conversation with those employers about what is in front of us now. The concern he is hearing on the street is that either one of those projects may have a problem being absorbed into the market. Mr. Thibault suggested perhaps a short-term goal would be to work with those employers to develop a campaign around the fact we do have housing going up right now. Mr. Thibault also mentioned finding ways to incentivize, understanding the demographics and the millennial population wants and needs. His final suggestion was to perhaps condominiumize some of the larger single-family homes.

Mr. Kopczynski referred to conversations he and Ms. Kessler have been having with people in the region and noted the interesting finding of commonality in these discussions. Mr. Kopczynski agrees with the Mayor that retention is an important part of this conversation. In speaking with industry people Mr. Kopczynski said they recognize it is easier to retain people and that recruiting is very expensive. He agrees with Mr. Thibault in that there needs to be a shift in focus including into the real estate market and realtors themselves- how they market Keene and where they take people to try and sell houses. Taking them to Chesterfield defeats this whole effort. Mr. Kopczynski noted the Land Use Code has nothing to do with condominiums. Mr. Kopczynski also noted the finding of how little all levels of local businesses know what is taking place in the City. He cited Marlboro Street as an example and suggested we somehow have to connect with all levels of people in these businesses.

Mayor Lane followed up on Mr. Thibault's comments about incentivizing people who already work in local industry. He pointed out the 4,000 college students who mostly leave when they graduate, and asked how we incentivize them to stay here. Mayor Lane suggested we are not taking advantage of them as a workforce. He mentioned Dr. Treadwell's interest in being part of this Committee if appointed President at KSC. Mr. Benik addressed helping employees learn about new housing opportunities in Keene noting he would like to educate his employees. Mr. Benik said bringing the information to them is a value.

Chair Greenwald said he is trying to pick out specific goals to be working on in the future during this discussion. He asked Committee members to point out issues as they see them. Councilor Hansel indicated a valuable use of this Committee is as a clearing house for new ideas. In broadening the spectrum of economic development perhaps we come up with a community events fund to help nonprofits. He suggested paying the licensing fees for cultural events downtown. Ms. Hamilton agreed with Councilor Hansel's suggestion and noted there are many people working to support this in the community. Councilor Hansel shared his recent experience at the new Food Truck. After this Mr. Thibault said this is what he was getting at with understanding the demographics – what drives people today. Mayor Lane suggested perhaps bringing speakers in to discuss the culture and things that would attract people to want to live here- less about bringing in businesses and more about making this a place people want to be.

Chair Greenwald asked Mr. Dugan the status of the Coordinator. Mr. Dugan replied the City is the downtown Coordinator. He continued we will advertise this fall and then bring someone on.

Mr. Murphy indicated he was onboard with the cultural aspects discussions and also wanted to put a plug in for the infrastructure shortcomings. He continued we have no robust form of transit which he feels is one of the cultural elements we are lacking even though it is infrastructure. If the Committee is serious about having the housing discussion Mr. Murphy suggested bringing in some folks to talk about it. He also recommended not forgetting the incentives highlighted in the report. Chair Greenwald suggested when Hillside opens there will be a lot of houses for sale. Mayor Lane asked if there would be a market for them. Chair Greenwald agreed the housing flux market would be a good discussion topic. Mr. Murphy asked the relationship between the new housing units and Hillside Village coming on- what is the dynamic there and with the Code rewrite.

Chair Greenwald asked if there was anything else members would like to see the Committee work on. Ms. Hamilton indicated she would like to see the community work on supporting a living wage. She suggested if Keene could become a leader there it would really help. Mayor Lane noted there is lots of underemployment.

3. Previous Plan- Status – Discussed in item 2.

4. Marketing/ How/Where/Why

Chair Greenwald suggested we need to come up with marketing strategies. He agreed with Mr. Kopczynski this should be a specific meeting topic. Speakers are welcome and any suggestions should be forwarded to Mr. Kopczynski.

5. Potential Other Members

Mayor Lane indicated other businesses interested in having someone as part of this Committee and he is happy to appoint them. He continued we also need cultural people. Committee members were encouraged to share their suggestions.

6. Potential Guests & Speakers

Chair Greenwald recommended sharing speaker suggestions via email to Mr. Kopczynski. Mr. Kopczynski suggested more speakers sharing cultural opportunities rather than people having dealings with the fourth floor. Mayor Lane suggested the having someone come from Walldogs to talk about the impact that will have on the City.

Mr. Benik raised the idea of a fund match situation noting the skate park as an example. Councilor Hansel noted it is important to get new ideas into the report. The City Manager pointed out we do that sort of thing already. She explained the Parks & Recreation Director is already working with the skate park people. Mayor Lane shared the Ice Arena as another example of City involvement with a private group. Ms. Hamilton suggested a line item for community cultural events.

The City Manager asked if the plan is to come up with things we will focus on and then come up with a report of where we want to focus our attention. Then bring in speakers so we can understand what we currently have available in our community and where there might be gaps. Chair Greenwald agreed. The City Manager continued so today we are just getting our themes for what we will be working on. Chair Greenwald noted the discussions would be reviewed to determine the topics (Chair Greenwald, the City Manager, and Mr. Kopczynski).

Mr. Walier said accolades should go to Mr. Kopczynski and Ms. Kessler for their work in the community.

The City Manager recommended all suggestions be forwarded to Mr. Kopczynski. She also noted she would bring Rebecca Landry in when the Committee starts talking about the marketing piece.

7. Future Meetings/Length and Frequency

Committee members agreed to meet on the third Tuesday of each month, at 1:00 PM, in the 2nd floor Conference Room. Meetings will last from one hour to one and a half hours. Additional meetings may be added as the need arises.

8. Adjournment - There being no further business before the Committee Chair Greenwald adjourned the meeting at 2:19 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Mary Lou Sheats Hall

September 19, 2018