

**City of Keene**  
**New Hampshire**

**AD-HOC COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**  
**COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

**Tuesday, October 16, 2018**

**1:00 PM**

**Conference Room 2nd Floor**

**Members Present:**

Mitchell Greenwald, Chair  
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  
Keith Thibault, SCS  
Elizabeth Dragon, City Manager  
Chris McIntosh, Clark-Mortenson  
Dominic Perkins

**Staff Present:**

Medard Kopczynski,

**Members Not Present:**

Gary Lamoureux, Councilor  
George Hansel, Councilor  
Kendall Lane, Mayor  
Rebecca Hamilton, Machina Arts  
Bill Hutwelker, Swanzey Selectman

**1. Call to Order- Roll Call**

Chair Greenwald called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM welcoming Carl Jacobs and Jessica Gelter as guest speakers. Chair Greenwald read the Charter for the new members present.

**2. Approval of Minutes- September 18, 2019**

Mr. Foskett motioned to approve the minutes of September 18, 2018 with the change denoting Mr. Perkins was not present at the previous meeting. Mr. Suter seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

**3. Statement of Goals- Develop goals list**

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Chair Greenwald began by asking why are we here and what do we want to do. Specific goals suggested by Committee members are listed below.

- a. Meet with other economic development groups such as:
  - the Swanzey Economic Development group
  - the Tri-Town group
  - the Southwest Region Economic Development Advisory Committee
  - the Chamber of Commerce
  - Hanna Grimes
  - SWRPC
  - Young Professionals Network
- b. Review and update the 1993 Keene Economic Development Plan.
- c. Hold a half day workshop focused on creative place-making and how to amass rural wealth (education/ Chuck Fluharty).
- d. Design and promote an Arts and Culture Council.

Mr. Thibault and Mr. Murphy briefly discussed the Tri-State group inspired by the closing of Vermont Yankee.

Mr. Foskett initiated a conversation regarding the east-west highway (focus on infrastructure). Chair Greenwald indicated this should be included under the future goals topics.

Mr. Thibault shared his experience attending a Sullivan County Creative Place-making Workshop facilitated by Chuck Fluharty. He suggested the Committee hold a half day workshop as a goal. Chair Greenwald asked how that would turn into a deliverable goal. Mr. Thibault explained holding the workshop would be a one-time thing. He noted Mr. Fluharty quoting “culture trumps everything” adding whatever we are doing comes down to culture; what we want ourselves to look like and be perceived from away.

During the discussion Mr. Kopczynski referred to previous difficulties with the City Council Goal setting process determining what a goal was. He recommended choosing goals that were clear, achievable, and measurable. Mr. Kopczynski continued some of what we have talked about are activities that might support the development of the goal. Councilor Jacobs clarified his understanding of a goal and objective. Mr. Dugan commented the 1993 plan was directed by Council and asked if Council approval would be needed to update it. Mr. Murphy asked if initiatives like the Marlboro Street project fit into the 1993 plan. Mr. Murphy also asked if the Committee should be saying review the plan and see if it is something we can work with. The City Manager also noted the City has its Economic Development Action Plan that was talked about at the previous meeting; it was adopted in 2017 by City Council. The City Manager suggested asking for Council’s opinion on the issue. Mr. Benik suggested doing the work and approaching Council with something more complete. The discussion continued with Mr. Kopczynski commenting the Economic Development Action Plan had a number of easy checkoffs; the Committee is now in deeper water as far as what it is going to do. It is reasonable to assume the Committee will create some sort of plan out of these meetings; a document that is adoptable or identifiable or reviewable by City Council. Mr. Dugan commented on the documents prior to the 1993 plan noting they were just a bunch of statistical data gathering dust. Mr. Dugan hopes this Committee would develop a plain language plan with specific goals, action items, and objectives. Mr. Murphy referred to the City Manager’s comments and suggested

working off the work the Committee has already done. He noted the priorities in that document suggesting they might serve as a way to focus the Committee's priorities. With the Committee agreeing they should all read the previous documents, Mr. Kopczynski agreed to make sure everyone gets a copy. He also suggested that priorities could be specific topics to discuss. Mr. Benik suggested the Committee could meet with someone relative to each priority on the list.

4. **Specific topic- Cultural Attractions-** Invited guests - Carl Jacobs, Jessica Gelter
  - a. **Outcome- What sort of attractions would benefit Keene?**
  - b. **Outcome- Who would organize and manage this effort?**
  - c. **Outcome- Where are the financial resources?**

Chair Greenwald said one of the main topics seems to be the culture of the community and mentioned the recent Connect event. He shared his recent visit to Saratoga and its similarities to Keene. Chair Greenwald continued we should be aspiring to be what Saratoga is. The culture and pride of community there is what the Connect event seemed to focus on.

Councilor Jacobs began by saying when we talk about culture we talk about a lot of different things. We talk about the arts and ambiance in addition to workplace cultures. He indicated he does not exactly like the phrase cultural attractions. Continuing he said we do want to attract people; arts and culture do attract people who come for one thing and spend money on another. Councilor Jacobs mentioned a study conducted that shows the arts generating about 16 million dollars in the Monadnock region; commenting this is certainly something to be enhanced. He also pointed out some people come and end up staying. Councilor Jacobs said he is seeing more and more young people returning to live in Keene. People also come or return to work for companies that value creativity which is a part of the arts and a reason why people stay. The arts are a huge part of developing our workforce and this is not something new for Keene or the region. Creative problem solving has been a part of our culture for hundreds of years. Councilor Jacobs also noted collaboration is very unique to New Hampshire; individualism is valued here. Keene is a welcoming, diverse community.

Chair Greenwald asked how do we encourage more and communicate this is going on. Councilor Jacobs replied one of the things the City has done is work on an Arts policy which took the City and its constituents over a year to develop. Continuing he shared that arts are not mentioned in the Zoning code which may be something of interest to this Committee. He mentioned the practice in some communities that say one percent of the project value is to be set aside for some sort of cultural value to the community. This is an interesting idea and some communities do it and make it work. Another idea is for the City to say it will commit to a certain value of all our projects that have a cultural benefit to the community; this would be an interesting notion.

Ms. Gelter commented Councilor Jacobs has gone over a lot of great things that are going on; there is a great movement going on for the City to have an easier way to say yes to artists. She mentioned the Arts Thrive online resource that is a great rubric to see if your community is supports the arts and artists. Where we are is we are able to say yes; but we are not yet able to say come. Ms. Gelter said it would be wonderful to take the next step after yes; and see if there is a group or committee that can create more of a vision and investment plan for this sector. In

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response to Chair Greenwald Ms. Gelter noted Arts Alive has a calendar of events as well as does Discover Monadnock. Councilor Jacobs added there are many calendars out there that people love. He talked about regionalism and the reluctance Arts Alive met when they first arrived. Getting back to the calendars he noted there are technological difficulties. One of the strengths of our region is we have all these silos and pride; which is also one of the weaknesses when it comes to things like marketing issues. Councilor Jacobs continued if there was a group to address the calendar issues that would be great. He suggested the goal of addressing the knowledge question of what is going on and to make it accessible. Chair Greenwald commented this would tie back into the marketing, branding, and communicating. The City Manager reported on work done by Arts Alive to promote the quality of the arts (branding), as well as the fact they are here. She continued we are at the point now of how do we take this to the next step and continue this Monadnock Region arts brand, and communicate it beyond our region. Ms. Gelter explained Arts Alive's work with their calendar noting it is totally exportable but we do not have the capacity to really get it out there. Mr. Benik discussed online marketing methods such as Google. Ms. Gelter said we have a Google grant for advertising but no one to manage it. Councilor Jacobs commented the next step of getting the message out requires resources. Mr. Benik suggested having QR codes on posters that people could utilize. He also suggested Ms. Gelter contact Paragon Digital Marketing.

Mr. Kopczyński clarified there are two points:

- There is no central place or entity- this has always been the problem with marketing and branding; who gets to do that.
- There is a lot more to culture than just hanging art. There is a huge cultural fabric we are not even delving into. This is one of the negativities we see with the Land Use Code update right now. How do you get people interested, how do you sell it so people are getting the full cultural mélange.

After Mr. Benik shared his experience obtaining a venue for a concert Mr. Murphy said this is consistent with our Business Response Team and their job of providing information.

Throwing out another cultural idea Chair Greenwald mentioned Jumanji and suggested an outreach for movie sites. Councilor Jacobs commented there are people working on that; he mentioned people who work on the Film Festival. Chair Greenwald continued we are back to the funding issue. Councilor Jacobs went on to say it comes back to saying yes; sometimes people are reluctant. If you have a policy in place people are reluctant to give permission because there is nothing in place to say they can or cannot. Mr. Murphy clarified in many cases we are competing with neighboring communities. He continued if we establish the policies we make it easy for people to come in. Mr. Benik noted the use of geolocation. Councilor Jacobs made note of the Walldogs event next June as an opportunity to show people what Keene is capable of. Councilor Jacobs also shared the process of going to the ZBA and gaining their approval for this event. Mr. Murphy asked if the Committee would consider taking a look at the City's regulations to see if they are arts friendly.

- If there are things in our regulations making it harder we should do something about it.
- Are our regulations not only friendly but encouraging to attract?

The City Manager said she has gone through the ordinances and tagged a few dozen to be talked about with the arts community which has not happened yet. Mr. Kopczynski outlined things that are Council's decision to make. He continued sometimes art and signage cross, sometimes Historic District regulations cross and all of this will be worked out to some extent. The bottom line is there are some aspects that will take some creativity from the standpoint of City Council beyond just writing regulations. He also pointed out regulations can be positive or negative. Continuing Mr. Kopczynski said the other balance of that is trying to define art; something we do not want to get into; which is why he sticks to the word culture. The City Manager said we did talk about having an Arts Commission so that it is not the Airport Director or Public Works trying to define art. Councilor Jacobs suggested an Arts Commission could do other things such as marketing. He suggested the Commission would also do work relative to the policy.

Mr. Walier asked about the Monadnock Arts Council. Councilor Jacobs replied it is gone.

Chair Greenwald suggested an Arts Council as part of the goals statement – to design and promote an Arts Council. The suggestion was made to change that to Arts and Culture Council. Committee members posed no objection to the suggestion.

Mr. McIntosh shared his neighborhood culture experiences and noted his question of how do you get more cars into downtown Keene. He is very interested in seeing this topic elaborated on. Mr. McIntosh suggested the successful cities have more people and fewer vehicles in their downtowns. He is also interested in seeing this as a long-term goal for the City. Continuing he said this would also help with emissions. The City Manager added it would also help with creating spaces for events and arts, etc. Mr. Benik shared the idea of nurturing neighborhood cultures, for example neighborhood restaurants.

Mr. Foskett said one of the reasons downtown is so crowded is because when we put the bypass in we did not put an on/off ramp to the hospital. He was told the feds paid to build the bypass system and nobody thought of that. Mr. Foskett continued we do need an entrance. Chair Greenwald indicated this would fall under miscellaneous ideas.

Mr. Suter asked if creating an Arts Commission is a goal or objective. Relative to the Arts Commission Councilor Jacobs suggested not forgetting the place of arts in industry.

## **5. Future Topics-**

### **a. Communications, Coordination**

### **b. Financial Resources- Available for existing or potential businesses-**

Chair Greenwald commented this is looking for money for businesses

### **c. Workforce Development- work childcare into it. Energy costs, infrastructure.**

Chair Greenwald noted childcare needed to be worked into this conversation. Other topics raised were energy costs, and infrastructure. Mr. Murphy also suggested housing as it was discussed previously.

### **d. Branding and Marketing**

Mr. Walier commented taxes are always a hot topic. He asked if there was a way to create a value to the taxes; and what do we really provide to our citizens (provide a list). Chair Greenwald said the City makes a strong attempt at this during the budget process. After

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explaining the budget breakdown the City Manager commented we can always do better. Mr. Kopczynski advised he would send out copies of the Budget sheet.

Mr. Suter pointed out another topic frequently raised is the difference in the daytime versus nighttime populations. Mr. Kopczynski asked for clarification on the nighttime population. Mr. Suter replied the 23,000.

Chair Greenwald asked if the Committee wanted to jump on the branding and marketing topic or pick another one.

Mr. Walier asked if there were any likely prospects wanting to come to Keene. The City Manager replied we talk to people when they come in. We do have property owners who want to do stores or developments and we work with them. Mr. Kopczynski confirmed we talk to people weekly. He explained the strength of our outreach is going to be start-up businesses and retention. Ms. Gelter asked if data is collected when people call as to why Keene. Referring to the tax rate he noted no big concern from manufacturers. Companies are interested in the proximity to the College, Airport, and sewer/water, etc. The City Manager also noted the need to push education for young families.

Regarding future topics Mr. Benik recommended adding infrastructure. He also recommended discussion of branding and marketing after the review of the 1993 plan. Chair Greenwald and other members agreed with Mr. Benin's recommendation.

Mr. Perkins reported he often hears Keene is like Ashville, North Carolina and asked if we have ever reached out to a city that is like Ashville. Chair Greenwald liked the idea of having a culturally parallel sister city. He also discussed the downfalls of an east/west highway in his way of thinking. Discussion ensued regarding keeping Route 9 safe during the winter months to open up a direct route to the interstate.

Mr. McIntosh raised the topic of workforce development noting he thinks Keene has a leg-up due to having the Cheshire Career Center, Antioch, the Community College, Keene State, and local groups working specifically on this issue. He also made note of the re-focus on trade skills.

**6. Next Meeting Date** – November 20, 2018

**7. Adjournment**- There being no further business Chair Greenwald adjourned the meeting at 2:26 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Mary Lou Sheats- Hall  
October 24, 2018

Edited by: MK Kopczynski  
October 25, 2018