

City of Keene
New Hampshire

AD-HOC COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, November 20, 2018

1:00 PM

Conference Room 2nd Floor

Members Present:

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

Staff Present:

Med Kopczynski, Economic Development,
Initiatives, and Special Projects Director
Rhett Lamb, ACM/Planning Director
Rebecca Landry, ACM/IT Director
Marri Brunner, Planning Technician

Members Not Present:

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

1. Call to Order- Roll Call

Chair Greenwald called the meeting to order at 1:02 PM and welcomed everyone to the meeting. Chair Greenwald read the Charter for the new members present.

2. Approval of Minutes- October 24, 2018

Mayor Lane made a motion to approve the minutes of October 24, 2018. Mr. Walier seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

3. ACM Rebecca Landry- Development Package

Chair Greenwald recognized Rebecca Landry, Assistant City Manager /IT Director. Ms. Landry began by explaining the first part of the Comprehensive Economic Development Committee Project was an Economic Action Plan for the City Council. She stated that one of the items in the plan was to create a development packet. Copies of this packet were then distributed to the Committee.

Ms. Landry stated the packets were intended to provide helpful information. In addition, they are available to those interested in possibly developing, purchasing or redeveloping property in the City. Ms. Landry stated this began with a website called choosekeene.com. The website informs people about development opportunities, education, workforce, housing, the community profile and culture. Ms. Landry added that the website lists Mr. Kopczynski's email and phone number as a contact.

Ms. Landry referred to the packet and explained that the left side of the packet is a condensed version of the website. On the right side of the packet the information is more fluid. Information can be added or removed as things change. She noted that the City Council just expanded the 79E District and adding a flier to the packet explaining the 79E District would be beneficial. In addition, she stated by keeping up to date information it shows that the Council is making actions on a regular basis.

In addition, Ms. Landry noted that Mr. Kopczynski business card is missing from the packet but will be added tomorrow.

The Committee commended Ms. Landry's work. Mr. Kopczynski noted how this work shows the talents of Ms. Landry.

Mr. Walier asked who would be sending out these packets. Ms. Landry responded that Mr. Kopczynski will have them available by request.

Ms. Landry also noted that one of the biggest challenges they faced when developing the packet were identifying available properties.

Chair Greenwald welcomed comment from the Committee.

Mr. Suter stated the Chamber of Commerce would be happy to take several packets to distribute to their membership.

Ms. Landry also noted that the Choose Keene Facebook Page is another resource to be used.

4. Introduce Wendy Walker –Parking Operations Manager

Mr. Kopczynski stated there is a clear linkage between parking and how the City provides parking services. He noted this was a connection that will become stronger and more visible over the next year.

Mr. Kopczynski stated that Ms. Walker brings a wealth of experience in management and government to the City. He stated that what Ms. Walker will demonstrate is how to merge parking more concretely with the economic development efforts and ideas.

Ms. Kopczynski then introduced Ms. Walker.

Ms. Walker stated that she is excited to be here and excited to be working with so many teams and departments. She stated there is a lot of opportunity to change the perspective and understanding of the importance of parking in the City of Keene.

The Mayor asked Ms. Walker to speak to her background and what she is bringing to the job. Ms. Walker responded that she grew up in the area and has been a lifetime shopper in Keene. She stated that parking here in the City has never been an issue for her. After graduating college from UNH she moved to Washington, DC and worked in government consulting. Most recently she was working for an international development organization.

Chair Greenwald asked if she was working on any specific projects at this time. Ms. Walker responded that she was currently working on the City's parking rate change. She noted that there was a lot of logistics with this change, a lot of managerial and day to day operations that have to be updated. This also includes putting together an outreach plan and communication to help residents and visitors with the upcoming parking rate changes.

The Committee welcomed Ms. Walker to the City and wished her success in her new role.

With no further comment, the Committee moved to the next topic.

5. Request City Council Create an Arts and Culture Committee

Chair Greenwald stated that one of things discussed at the previous meeting was arts and culture. One of the suggestions was to request the Mayor appoint an arts and culture committee. The focus of the committee would be on the promotion and coordination of arts in the community. Chair Greenwald asked for comment from the Committee about this idea.

The Mayor suggested the Committee explore what groups already exist in the area. First, he suggested the Committee take a look at what resources already exist to assure no duplication. He noted that once the City sets up a committee there are minute takers and a whole level of bureaucracy that has to be handled. The Mayor noted that this may get in the way of what has to be achieved.

Chair Greenwald stated the discussion was that there are separate committees, which are doing their jobs well but could form their own committee to coordinate the efforts.

Councilor Hansel stated there have been arts related meetings that are occurring such as Arts Alive and Machina Arts. He thinks one of the important things to do is define what the Committee is going to do. Councilor Hansel stated that he does not think the City needs an arts committee because the capacity is there with Arts Alive. He reiterated stated that the Committees needs to very clear about what that Committee would do and how it would relate to the City's business.

Mr. Walier noted there a lot of little groups that are already among their own venue touting what they want to do. He suggested bringing in one representative from each of these groups to form a committee. Mayor Lane stated that Arts Alive tends to provide an umbrella type of organization within Keene as well as Peterborough. He stated that what would be most useful for this Committee is to have representatives from Machina Arts and Arts Alive attend a

meeting. The Mayor stated that these groups can talk about what is going on and whether they see an area that is not being fulfilled. He reiterated that he did not want to create a committee that is not needed.

Councilor Lamoureux noted these groups are starting to come together to come up with a scope of work and how to move forward. He stated that it may be worthwhile to let these groups keep up the momentum without the Committee stepping in to put regulation on this by forming a Committee.

Chair Greenwald stated that based on these comments there will be no letter sent to the City Council at this time. Chair Greenwald and Mr. Kopczynski will approach the different art groups to see if they can be of assistance. The Mayor suggested contacting Councilor Jacobs due to his experience with the arts groups. Mr. Kopczynski will invite Councilor Jacobs and Arts Alive to a Committee meeting to discuss their initiatives and needs.

Mr. Benik suggested streamlining the permit process on the City's website for artists or anyone who wants to hold a street fair, festival or even to install a sculpture. He noted that this was an easy way to get this stuff going. Mr. Benik explained that the artistic mind is usually not a bureaucratic mind. He stated that one of the things a potential committee could be good at is to make it easier to understand the permit process. Mr. Benik stated the process should be translated so people can understand how to go about having an event.

Mr. Murphy suggested the idea of forming a committee is something that stays on the screen. However, the Committee should let the current process run its course.

6. Discussion:1993 Economic Development Plan-Updates and Elements

Chair Greenwald stated this plan does need updating by percentages and factual information. Mr. Kopczynski invited Rhett Lamb and Marri Brunner to the meeting, in anticipation of the Committee making this a mission to update the background statistics.

Mr. Lamb stated this plan along with the Land Use Plan turned into some amazing changes for the City of Keene. The goals set in the plan were fairly general. However, these plans turned into plans for capital investment, rezoning, utility extensions and road constructions. Mr. Lamb noted that this plan ultimately produced the Black River Corporate Park.

He noted that setting forth ideas on a plan like this is a great idea. Mr. Lamb explained with the commitment that comes from a plan like this and steps that follow setup a wheel change that produces economic development.

Mr. Kopczynski stated that the work of this Committee is the outgrowth of the prior Committee that worked on the Economic Development Committee Action Plan, which came out with a number of initiatives. Most of which, the City was in the process of achieving. Mr. Kopczynski stated that having the Committee focus on reissuing this report in modern context builds upon that effort, the master plan and everything that has taken place in between. He said that it also builds on the areas that the City Council and this Committee thinks are important to concentrate on from the standpoint of economic development. He noted there are other topics in this report that are just as important and there is a need to figure out what those are so the Committee can

work on these topics. In addition, he noted there are other statements in this plan that get to the other sectors including arts, tourism, residential and housing.

The Mayor added that when talking about industrial development, having land available to support industrial development is important. In addition, having high speed internet available to support the industrial development is also now important.

Mr. Murphy stated that the plan from 1993 is fairly basic and simple with some quantified goals. However, he stated that he thinks the Committee can do better. For example, some things have changed since that time. He noted that broadband was not talked about in the document nor is transit. Mr. Murphy noted there are a lot of the references to the quality of life, recreation and housing but no focus on any of those. He said he is having a hard time imaging an updated plan, without giving serious consideration to similar metrics for some of those that are simply mentioned but not really expanded upon.

The City Manager added that both plans have a purpose. She stated that the Economic Development Plan is sort of a master plan when it comes to economic development. The City Manager stated that she likes the idea of updating this plan because it needs to be updated. She added that it is also perfect time to do so.

Mr. Lamb added that it is going to take a broader constituency than just the City to fix the broadband issue or affordable housing. He said the City is better off achieving goals if sticking to what the City is able to achieve.

Chair Greenwald asked Mr. Kopczynski to talk about the vehicles that produce these goals.

Mr. Kopczynski stated that the mechanism for now is asking the Committee to acknowledge that the goal of the Committee is to take this plan, develop it and update it. Once the plan has been updated it will be submitted to the City Council. Mr. Kopczynski stated that the plan itself needs to be updated in its form, topics need to be expanded and agreed upon. He stated that as staff goes back to take a look at where the City is with the Economic Development Action Plan and the Master Plan they will come back with a list of topics the Committee would discuss. The Committee would then decide which ones should be part of the update itself. He noted that workforce housing has a role, broadband, quality of housing, the airport and other topics that should be included in the plan. He stated that downtown as a subject should probably belong in the plan but is up to the Committee.

Councilor Hansel stated that one of things the Committee needs to keep in mind is that the Committee does not want to recreate the master plan with this process. He explained that economic development brings in all of these different areas and can also get into housing or transportation.

Councilor Hansel added that what kind development the Committee would be focusing needs to be determined first.

Mr. Murphy stated what the challenge will be is the fact that they are all related and where to draw those lines. Mayor Lane stated that the biggest challenge is that there is not a sustainable

workforce in Keene. He noted that there are a lot of jobs but that there is not a sustainable workforce to fill these jobs. The Mayor stated that creating a sustainable workforce is a significant challenge. He noted that if this is not dealt with nothing else matters.

Chair Greenwald stated that following along with this goal, there needs to be a deadline. After a brief discussion, the Committee agreed to a July deadline.

Chair Greenwald asked for further comment.

The City Manager stated that one of the topics for the future topic list is to hear from someone in regards to statistical information. She stated that she attended a presentation at the NHMA conference recently and the speaker talked about who was moving into the state. She is aware there is a lot of conversation about millennials and keeping millennials. However, she reported that NH is really good at bringing in young families. She noted that here in Keene there is such a great educational system and recreational assets. The City Manager stated that it is important to take a look at who is coming here, where the market is and where it is coming from. She suggested having someone come in to discuss these areas.

Mr. Benik stated that he does not know a single family that is not going out of town for a long weekend at least every two months. He noted the places people are going are to Boston, Manchester, Portsmouth or Burlington. He said these people are going there to eat at a bunch of restaurants or to see a show or to visit a museum. Mr. Benik stated there is almost a misbranding with the arts and culture here in the City where it seems stuffy. He stated that the idea is to make this a more appealing place to live so people do not feel the need to go far outside of their home to find activities. He noted that he is seeing little things such as the business growth emerging on Emerald Street. Mr. Benik stated that sometimes there is a sense that the City is based on all the history of Keene, which is great. He explained that the City is now in a time to move forward and should put some heat into now.

Mr. Benik stated the goal with this Committee should perhaps look at some of these limitations of the City and how to make it easier for small business owners. He also noted the businesses in the Hannah Grimes incubator program should be looked at in order to get these businesses help.

7. Specific Topic-Energy, Use and Supply

Chair Greenwald welcomed Paul Hausmann, a senior account executive with Eversource Energy.

Mr. Hausmann began by stating that when he looked at the Choose Keene packet he thought it would best to discuss Hillside Village. He stated that Hillside Village approached Eversource about servicing this project. He added that this project was a long distance to bring prepaid power in at increased pole heights. Mr. Hausmann stated that he was able to come up with an estimate for the amount of kilowatt hours. He noted this would save enough funds to offset the construction of the line extensions for this project. The cost of the lines extensions for this project was in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Mr. Hausmann stated that when the project was in the planning stages he brought in a consultant to look at all of the designs to determine what Eversource could add for incentive. He noted that the incentive total amount is approximately \$124,000.

Mr. Hausmann stated that Eversource has energy efficiency programs for all classes of customers. The large accounts have consultants take a look at the account in order to offer ways to be more energy efficient and to offer incentives. The smaller accounts have prescriptive rebates.

Chair Greenwald asked if there is anything that can be done to reduce the overall cost of electricity. Mr. Hausmann responded that the best way is to be energy efficient. Chair Greenwald asked if this is communicated to the customers. Mr. Houseman replied that he does with all of his the large accounts.

Councilor Hansel asked if there are any rebates in NH that would not be available to businesses that are in MA or VT. Mr. Hausmann responded that each state is slightly different. Mr. Hansel asked if there are any advantages for someone moving to NH such as a business that may want to relocate to NH from MA. Mr. Hausmann responded that he could not answer that question because he was unaware of the rebate levels in the surrounding states.

Mr. Kopczynski stated the City did utilize the rebate system with the Library and Keene Ice. He asked what could be done for the citizens in the City from the standpoint of fostering energy efficiency. Mr. Hausmann stated that he has a catalog on NH Saves that has energy efficiency options and for higher use customers they have an auditing system. The audit system inputs all wood, oil or electricity and will then tell if someone qualifies for an audit. The audit then leads toward the joints between the foundation and the concrete. He noted that the audit was not just electrical counts.

Mr. Kopczynski asked if someone that is a homeowner should be steered to energy star options. Mr. Hausmann responded in the affirmative and if they are a high use customer he would steer them to auditing.

Mr. Murphy referred to the question asked earlier by Councilor Hansel about certain energy efficient incentives to make NH competitive. Mr. Murphy asked if there was a way to baseline what could be worked on. He explained this was to understand if based on those metrics there is a visible way to promote the advantages from other energy companies. Mr. Hausmann replied he could look at the incentive levels and report back to the Committee. Councilor Hansel asked if there way to show the true cost of energy story because the only story right now is that NH has the highest electric rates in the country. Mr. Hausmann stated that he will report his findings back to the Committee.

With no further comment, Chair Greenwald welcomed the next guest speakers.

Steve Rokes introduced himself as Operations Manager with Liberty Utilities. Bill Clark introduced himself as Director of Business Development for Liberty Utilities and Huck Montgomery Manager introduced himself as Manager of Government and Community Affairs with Liberty Utilities.

Chair Greenwald asked if Liberty has any new projects in the works.

Mr. Clark reported that Liberty just finished a rate case here in NH that was a big win for the Keene division. The win resulted in a significant decrease in distribution for residents of Keene.

Mr. Clark reported that the other part of the win is that Keene is now eligible for energy efficiency programs with Liberty Utilities. He noted weatherization; heating systems upgrades are now eligible for those rebates. Mr. Kopczynski asked if Mr. Clark could get specific information on these rates changes to include in the packet. Mr. Clark responded in the affirmative. He noted that there was a 20% reduction in overall energy bills for Keene customers.

Mr. Kopczynski asked what analysis Liberty conducted for customers. Mr. Clark responded that there are two programs one is residential and the other is commercial. He explained with a residential analysis there are two different options. First, is the weatherization audit where a draft test will be conducted. Secondly, there are prescriptive rebates on the gas side if someone was to go buy a new furnace that is 95% efficient. The customer would go to their website and fill out the rebate form and receive \$400. Mr. Clark noted that he will get specifics about these rates and programs and report back to the Committee.

Mr. Clark stated that with the energy efficient programs being new to Keene, other territories hold open houses to promote these programs. He noted that this is usually done multiple times a year. Chair Greenwald stated that the City has air gas. Mr. Clark replied that the City is a propane air system that is in the process of being converted to natural gas.

Mayor Lane stated that Liberty is looking at the landfill in Bethlehem for the potential generation of natural gas. Mr. Montgomery explained they take the landfill gas which has other constituents and separate out the methane, which is the renewable natural gas that is extracted from the landfill gas.

Mayor Lane asked how that is going to affect the cost. Mr. Clark stated that they are going before the Public Utilities Commission now and have a prehearing next week on that docket. He said in the proposal it is actually the least cost option for an incremental gas supply. Mr. Clark stated the reason is because Mr. Montgomery did a lot on work thermal renewable energy and bio methane now qualifies in the state of NH as a thermal renewal energy credit. He added that renewable natural gas is less costly than the supply of the regular natural gas.

Mayor Lane asked for the lifespan of the Bethlehem landfill. Mr. Clark replied that there are two projections. The first projection is with the landfill reaching capacity in three years, which is expected to last 17 years. The second projection depends on getting permit extensions in order to accept more waste, which would be 12 to 20 years.

Mayor Lane stated as they are looking to convert Keene systems from propane to fully natural gas, he asked if that would require a new docking system. Mr. Clark responded in the affirmative. He noted they have a temporary CNG skid at the end of Production Avenue. The

plan is to eventually have a permanent natural gas plant in the City. Mr. Clark reported they did get the final recommendation from the safety division and will be converting at the marketplace in the spring. However, they are currently in search for a permanent location.

Mayor Lane referenced the disaster that happened in Lawrence, Massachusetts stating the need to make sure the system in Keene is made safe. He asked how old the pipeline is here in the City. Mr. Clark responded there is about 30 miles of underground pipe and a large percentage has been converted to the high density plastic over the last 15 to 20 years.

Mr. Rokes added that there are 8 miles of cast iron left in the system which can operate with natural gas. He explained that as a system is converted to natural gas they expect the majority of cast iron to be converted to the new plastic polyethylene before converting to natural gas.

Ms. Landry noted that some municipalities have successful broadband and the ones that have been successful have state support or partnerships with the utility companies.

Chair Greenwald noted that the packet needs to include energy efficiency and awareness for incoming businesses.

8. Future Topics-

- a.) Communications, Coordination between organizations, towns, etc.
- b.) Financial Resources-Available for existing or potential businesses
- c.) Land Use
- d.) Workforce
- e.) Child Care-Housing
- f.) Infrastructure
- g.) Vision and Investment Plan
- h.) Branding and Marketing

9. Next Meeting Date – December 18, 2018

10. Adjournment

There being no further business Chair Greenwald adjourned the meeting at 2:24 PM.