

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
Regular Meeting
Town Hall
16 School Street
Allenstown, New Hampshire 03275
September 12, 2018

The September 12, 2018 meeting of the Economic Development Committee was called to order by Chairman Mike Frascinella at 6:31 p.m. He called for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

Mike Frascinella, Thomas Kaempfer, Chad Pelissier, Jeffrey Venegas (arrived late)

Allenstown staff: Derik Goodine, Town Administrator

Others present: Deb Avery, Mike Bergeron

Chair Frascinella stated that he added an item to the agenda. The rustic cabins at Bear Brook are being renovated. This is the old 4H camp. It is on Bear Hill Pond and is a very large facility which has been vacant for years.

Old Business

- **Business Plan: Review the latest outline for the Allenstown Business Plan with Deb Avery of the NH Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau.**

Chair Frascinella introduced Deb Avery and Mike Bergeron from the NH Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau, who agreed to attend this meeting in order to give the EDC guidance on their business plan. He stated that Allenstown has acres and acres of town-owned land and about 100 commercial properties, many of which are not in use. He said that a huge property is for sale at the corner of Granite Street and Route 3.

Mr. Bergeron asked if this land has water, sewer and gas.

Chair Frascinella said that it did, and that the goal is to get more businesses in town in order to offset high property taxes.

Mr. Bergeron asked if they were looking for retail development,

Chair Frascinella responded that they were. He said that Allenstown voters approved a business tax exemption in March which gives a 50% property tax reduction for the first two years. He said that the Committee has a draft business plan which was prepared by Mr. Kaempfer.

Mr. Kaempfer stated that Mr. Bergeron and Ms. Avery were invited to advise the Committee as to what they should do with the plan and how to market it.

Chair Frascinella mentioned the Plourde Sand & Gravel property in Hooksett from which gravel is slowly being removed and homes are being put in. These, he said, are natural customers for Allenstown businesses.

Mr. Bergeron said that their presentation is a broad overview, focusing on retention and recruitment. He said that he and Ms. Avery work in the NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs, formerly DRED. He stated that his role is to do on-site business recruitment in New Hampshire.

Ms. Avery stated that she works in Belknap and Merrimack Counties as an advocate for businesses and also spends about 50% of her time working with the Government Contracting Department. She said that there are not a lot of new companies in the State, but the existing ones are growing. She mentioned the charrette done a couple of years ago. She said that a lot of small communities are looking to increase their tax base and are in a competitive mode. She referred to the Bow Economic Development Group with whom she works. Ms. Avery recommended establishing a business visitation program; she can provide a template for such a program. The idea is to send an ambassador from the town for a non-confrontational visit. She said that local businesses can be featured on the Town website or in the Town newsletter. Press releases to the Concord Monitor and the Union Leader about positive business activities should be pursued.

Mr. Bergeron said that they should have an ambitious volunteer program with the goal of establishing good relationships with existing businesses. Ambassadors visiting businesses should have something tangible to say. They need to know their customer base really well and be on top of what's going on with these companies. Establishing a positive relationship with these local businesses enables the Town to ask them what they like or do not like about Allenstown. These businesses need to be retained, along with recruitment of new ones. In fact, having a good relationship with the existing businesses can be helpful in recruitment because of the testimonials they might offer to give. Mr. Bergeron went on, saying that awards for companies doing good things has a positive effect.

Ms. Avery acknowledged that some businesses which are not doing well need serious business advice. She said that the Small Business Development Center is a great organization for giving businesses help in looking outside of the box and being creative. She said the Town should keep in touch with their companies on a regular basis.

Mr. Bergeron stated that the key to success is having good relationships with businesses before they get disgruntled. Representatives of the Town need to have a good attitude and patience, focusing on assets and strengths. He said that the world of business is changing because of social media. Companies have no receptionists, no structure; Everything is done via social media.

Mr. Pelissier said that 52% of Allenstown is Bear Brook State Park.

Mr. Bergeron said that should start with a new way of looking at the Town and decide what should be the first impressions. What about the signage as you enter Allenstown? He said that vacant buildings should be highlighted, not vacant land, because no one has time to start from scratch. He said they should do more of what Chairman Frascinella did with his letter to the editor. When businesses go to the website to see what is available, they should not see empty buildings, cemeteries, elderly people and large snow drifts. The goal is to make an emotional connection. It should be attractive but not ridiculously fake. The first impression on social media is important. Mr. Bergeron shared some award-

winning examples of great websites. He said that Allenstown's location between Concord and Manchester is important. People have short attention spans, so lists should have no more than six bullets. He added that nobody cares about the history of the Town. Mr. Bergeron said that the website should show available retail, office and industrial spaces, using graphics and aerial views. It should focus on vacant buildings that can be found easily on the site. Town officials need to know existing businesses really well and establish relationships with them so they might be used as testimonials. He said that roads should be highlighted because people know your town from your roads, especially if they do not know the area. The Town's Economic Revitalization Zone should be clearly defined and they should find a better way to show it. He suggested putting available properties on the State website. He continued, saying that the Town should have one key contact, probably the Town Administrator. Phone numbers, email addresses, and pictures of the members of the Select Board and the Planning Board must be available and those members must know existing businesses and available properties well. Potential new businesses have to be able to reach someone. If the various boards, committees and Town officials do not get along, that is bad. The customer service attitude must be positive; Town employees must be nice to people. The window at the Town Clerk's office is not good for customer service.

Mr. Pelissier said that they have been trying to get rid of it for a while now, for that reason.

Mr. Bergeron said that the website needs to tell good stories about the community. He said that graduate students might be used to update the website.

Mr. Kaempfer said that it looks like they need to take a step back from the business plan and get to know existing companies and businesses. They need to find out how these existing businesses can be helped.

Mr. Bergeron said that the Town's first impression must be better. He said that the State could go with them to make presentations. He suggested a ribbon cutting ceremony with the Governor in attendance and lots of pictures for social media. The new Vault Motor Storage facility would be a good candidate for that.

Mr. Goodine stated that they should identify gaps which now exist in terms of categories of businesses. He mentioned China Mills, where they are seeking Brownfield funding for redevelopment of that facility.

Mr. Venegas said it seems they need to build a foundation with those businesses already located in Allenstown because it will not be beneficial to bring in new ones if the existing ones leave. He added that they need to get dollars in the budget.

Mr. Bergeron said that he would send the Committee a pdf file of his presentation.

Chair Frascinella thanked Ms. Avery and Mr. Bergeron for their presentation and said that it has provided a lot of great ideas. He said that they should have the best possible signage on the Town borders.

Mr. Venegas said they need to welcome new businesses as they come before the Planning Board or other Town entities.

Mr. Kaempfer said that we need to be well-prepared prior to visiting businesses and suggested visiting a small business first.

Chair Frascinella asked who could help them with the Economic Revitalization Zone.

Mr. Pelissier said they should contact Matt Monahan at the Central NH Regional Planning Commission.

- **Review any feedback Jeff Venegas has received from Kris Raymond, School Board Chair, regarding the EDC proposal to use the ARD field as a primary site. Review the latest version of the skating rink proposal.**
- **Skate Board Park: Review the findings of Tom Kaempfer from contacts with two skate park vendors and the findings of Mike Frascinella from contacts with Parks & Recreation directors in Concord and Londonderry.**

Mr. Venegas reported on the skating rink and skate board park plans. He said that Kris Raymond, the School Board Chair, is willing to arrange a meeting with the principal of ARD and the Superintendent. They could walk the property to discuss placement of the skating rink. He said that Ms. Raymond is in favor of the skate board park as well, the suggested location being the parking lot behind the vacant building which was the convent.

Mr. Frascinella said that he learned that the Londonderry skate board park is constructed of wood and metal. Some others use concrete. The Concord park is old and there are plans to replace it.

Mr. Kaempfer contacted two vendors and learned that skate park equipment costs about \$45 per square foot, and therefore could cost \$100,000 for even a small park. The vendors told him these are typically funded mostly by fundraising and grants.

Mr. Venegas said they should check out the equipment from the previous skate board park.

Mr. Pelissier said that it was stored at the Highway Department.

- **Online Business Directory: The directory went live in mid-August but businesses have been slow to join. Discuss other ways to motivate businesses to join the Directory.**

Chair Frascinella said that he has dropped off fliers in an attempt to encourage businesses to register for the directory. He added that signs are needed as well. He said that people seem to be too busy to fill out the form.

Mr. Venegas observed that they may not see the value.

- **Registered Businesses: Discuss whether any changes are to be made to the spreadsheet of registered businesses.**

This item was postponed until the next meeting.

New Business

- **2019 Budget**

Mr. Pelissier suggested encumbering the \$600 in the current EDC budget for making new signs for the Town borders.

Chair Frascinella said they needed quotes for the cost of the signs.

Mr. Goodine said they should establish a capital reserve fund – an expendable trust – which would allow the Committee to initiate projects.

Review Previous Meeting Minutes

On motion of Mr. Kaempfer, duly seconded by Mr. Pelissier, it was unanimously voted to approve the minutes of the August 8, 2018 meeting minutes.

On motion of Mr. Kaempfer, duly seconded by Mr. Pelissier, it was unanimously voted to approve the minutes of the August 29, 2018 meeting minutes.

Schedule the next meeting

Chair Frascinella set the date for the next meeting for September 26, 2018.

On motion of Mr. Pelissier, duly seconded by Mr. Kaempfer, it was voted to adjourn at 8:52 p.m.

**SIGNATURE PAGE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER 12, 2018**



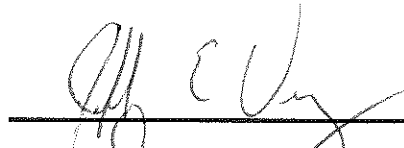
Michael Frascinella, Chairman

Date signed 10/10/18




Chad Pelissier, Member

Date signed 10/10/18



Jeffrey Venegas, Member

Date signed 10/10/18



Thomas Kaempfer, Member

Date signed 10/10/18

Ryan Carter, BOS Ex-Officio Member

Date signed _____

Sandra McKenney, BOS Ex-Officio Alternate Member

Date signed _____