

Town of Swanzey
Economic Development Advisory Committee
June 8, 2009 meeting

*Minutes are not final until reviewed and approved by the Committee.
Review and approval of minutes generally takes place at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Committee.*

Attendance Art Boufford, David Cairns, Bill Hutwelker, Greg Johnson, Gus Leraneau, Mary Ryan, Eric Stanley. Town Administrator Beth Fox also was present.

Call to order Chairman Johnson called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

PROGRAM West Swanzey Water Company, fire suppression water supply Johnson said that he had invited Fire Chief Skantze to the EDAC meeting to discuss the fire suppression capacity of facilities of the private West Swanzey Water Company. When it became apparent that Skantze would not be attending the meeting, the group agreed to discuss the water company facilities in his absence.

According to his conversations with Skantze, Johnson said, many of the water company's hydrants are dry, and some pipes are broken. As Realtors, Johnson and Boufford said that the presence of hydrants has led them to represent that nearby properties are served by a water supply capable of fire suppression.

Fox advised the group that the primary purpose of the West Swanzey Water Company is the provision of drinking water, and said that State officials regulate the water company for this purpose. She said that the company has productive wells and a large water supply, but lacks storage capacity to maintain flows throughout its hydrant network sufficient to serve as the single supply when firefighting. Because of the town's rural nature and the need to bring water to the scene, Fox said, all Swanzey stations respond to structure fire calls. Those present noted that The Cheshire Horse is served by a private well, and Haley Heights apartment buildings have sprinkler systems. The group agreed that the provision of Town water in West Swanzey could make the list of long-term goals for Swanzey.

NEW BUSINESS Discussion of highlights of letter to be delivered to Selectmen at the July meeting Committee members discussed their approach to preparing comments for the Board of Selectmen. Boufford, Cairns and Hutwelker submitted written conclusions and recommendations for inclusion in the report. Those present decided to prepare a set of bullet points; on behalf of the Committee, Hutwelker agreed to prepare a draft that would outline the philosophical foundation of the Committee's approach and lay out likely activities for the next year, including a requested budget. Hutwelker said he will send members a first draft, solicit comments, and distribute the corrected draft to EDAC members, for the planned discussion with the Board of Selectmen at a Selectmen's meeting in July. Fox said she will plan to schedule the group for 6:30 on July 15.

Noting that subsequent items will require a commitment of time and/or finances, Hutwelker said that much of the year's work had focused on the first paragraph of the Selectmen's charge to the Committee: "Provide input and advice on matters relating to the Town's economic development opportunities and to develop strategies and recommendations of initiatives to promote the Town as a place to start or grow a business."

The group observed that the second paragraph of the Committee's charge is a larger job than might have originally been anticipated, and is something that the group needs to work on. This element of the charge calls for the EDAC to "Inventory existing businesses in the community surveying those businesses seeking ways the town can support and encourage existing businesses to 'grow;' and recommend strategies to attract additional businesses and economic activity."

Committee members discussed objectives and likely future activities.

Website Allocate funding to create a website, with a link from the Town website, for commercial and industrial development. There was broad consensus that the website is a top priority. The site might be developed by a Swanzey provider -- who could be located via a notice in the Town newsletter (Fox advised the group that the next edition is scheduled for mailing in early summer) or on the Town website -- and might include a list of available business properties and contact information, as well as information about Swanzey's permit process.

Town newsletter Enhance the applicability of *Swanzey Uncovered* as a tool for economic development. Johnson said that it is imperative for the newsletter to have a section on economic development. Fox advised the group to submit materials to her for inclusion.

Zoning districts, and changes to the development review process Those present discussed the initial discussions of a Planning Board workgroup that is reviewing the zoning along Route 10 in the vicinity of the Yale-Toumey Forest. Fox advised the Committee that any changes to zoning go through a public hearing process, and then to the voters for a decision by the community as a whole. Johnson encouraged EDAC members to attend the workgroup sessions; the next session will begin at 4:00 on Tuesday, June 23.

Ryan recommended a more streamlined process for review of applications for new businesses (eg, review permitted uses, with desired economic development in mind, to potentially reduce the frequency of ZBA involvement).

Lerandeau said that the Planning Board has a good reputation for reviewing applications in a timely fashion, and discouraged the EDAC from recommending specific zoning changes; rather, the group might ask, in a generalized letter, that the Planning Board take a look at zoning.

Specific locations for promoting economic development Stanley said that, in his opinion, the major highways of Route 10, Route 12, and Route 32 south to Town Hall generally should be developed, leaving other areas to be kept green.

Johnson said that the time has come for a Swanzey "downtown," a town center that includes, among other things, a place where community members can walk. Boufford said that he moved to Swanzey to be in the country, and thinks of Keene as the place to go to for business; in his opinion, Swanzey should not try to compete with Keene or attempt to be a smaller version of Keene. Ryan predicted that community consensus would support a focal area with more sidewalks. She advised the group to think long term, and consider where the town should be in 25 years. Lerandeau advised the group to ask the opinion of the Board of Selectmen regarding a town center.

Desired businesses Needed businesses mentioned included a bank, dry cleaner, general store, and small, independent businesses like the Chrysalis Gallery and Art Center.

Involvement with the Keene Chamber of Commerce Members agreed that a Swanzey chamber of commerce is premature, and considered a Town membership in the Keene chamber.

Consideration of minutes Proposed correction to minutes of May 11, 2009: **Attendance** David Cairns (left at 5:45 ~~6:45~~).

Motion to approve by Boufford, second by Ryan. All in favor.

Next meeting 6:30 on July 15, 2009 (with the Board of Selectmen) at Swanzev Town Hall. The group agreed to not meet in August.

Completion of terms The terms of Boufford and Johnson expire September 24, 2009.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Boufford. Second by Cairns. The meeting adjourned at 6:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Victoria Reck Barlow
Recording Secretary