

Town of Swanzev
Economic Development Advisory Committee
November 10, 2008 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: Arthur Boufford, David Cairns, Bill Hutwelker, Greg Johnson, Gus Lerandeau, Mary E. Ryan, Eric Stanley. Town Administrator Beth Fox also was present until 5:30.

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

Consideration of minutes: Motion by Lerandeau to approve the minutes of the October 7, 2008 organization meeting. Second by Hutwelker. All in favor.

Ryan noted that discussion at the October 7 meeting included consideration of the anticipated duration of Committee existence. Members' appointments are for one, two, or three years, and the group expects to continue its work beyond expiration of the first three-year terms. However, members had suggested that at some future point it might become possible to meet on an as-needed basis rather than monthly.

Old business

EDAC contact information By e-mail, members received final member contact information.

Zoning proposals for Town Meeting 2009 Fox reviewed proposed amendments to the Swanzev Zoning Ordinance currently under discussion by the Planning Board, in anticipation of public hearings in December. (The period for submitting petitioned changes to the Ordinance expires on December 10.)

Fox said that the Planning Board has proposed re-zoning from Business Zoning District to Industrial Park District the area on the western edge of the Industrial Park district adjacent to Route 32, as well as the area in the vicinity of the intersection of Wilson Pond Road and Safford Drive. Affected would be Zoning Ordinance Section II.A. and Tax Map 19, Lots 97, 97-2, 98, 99, 100, 101, and 102.

Fox also reported some neighborhood interest in re-zoning Massey Hill Road and a portion of Westport Village (near the Slate Covered Bridge) from Business Zoning District to Residential Zoning District. Fox explained that the current zoning ordinance does not encourage residential uses in the Business district.

Fox encouraged EDAC members to attend and testify at the Planning Board's public hearings. Members agreed that insufficient time remains in 2008 to propose additional amendments to the zoning ordinance, and agreed to consider preparing recommendations for amendments in 2009.

Budget 2009 Fox said that the week of December 10 - December 15 is the deadline for submitting budget proposals to the Board of Selectmen. She encouraged the group to anticipate projects that would require financing (for example, mass mailings, or attendance at a trade show) and submit a request. Regarding establishment of an EDAC presence on the Internet, Fox said that creating an EDAC website and address could cost on the order of \$1,000. She

welcomed the Committee to make free use of the Town's website, and members agreed to do so until it is possible to develop an EDAC site. Bouffard recommended developing a mailing piece for responding to requests for information.

Until more detailed consideration can take place at the December meeting, Committee members agreed to request \$5,000 in funding for 2009 EDAC activities.

New Business

Establish parameters for types of business and residential development

Overview of Zoning Ordinance Committee members discussed areas in town where they had personally experienced real estate challenges created by Swanzey's zoning (including the Bardwell Farm property, and the parcels adjacent to the Industrial Park), and considered potential development of the Keene Municipal Airport land. Fox said that the airport is in the Business District, but development of airport land is contingent on leasing the land from the City of Keene, which is most interested in proposals that enhance aviation use. Fox said that the City maintains a master plan for the airport, which indicates potential development sites. She suggested inviting representatives from the Airport Advisory Committee (in addition to Swanzey AAC representative Lerandean) to attend a future EDAC meeting to discuss options. Lerandean recommended that EDAC members attend some of the Airport Advisory Committee meetings, and encouraged EDAC dialogue with the Keene city council and mayor.

Swanzey land use patterns Ryan raised the issue of Swanzey's lack of a town center. Reviewing the zoning map, she said that she observes a surplus of land zoned for residential use, and no opportunities for many types of businesses. Citing the inconvenience of going to Keene for banking or to a pharmacy, she suggested creation of business clusters inside the Route 10-Route 12 area. Ryan said that her personal experience has shown her that this kind of business development could be accomplished in a way that maintains the Town's rural character. She said that corporate recruiters need to be able to offer a living situation where day-to-day life is logistically manageable. She also mentioned day care permitting requirements as a potential impediment to business development.

Members discussed challenges provoked by the Town's lack of geographical or cultural center, and concurred on the likelihood of some persistence of the historic village settlement pattern. Fox noted that Swanzey businesses have developed in areas with good highway access and/or good utility access.

Committee scope After discussion, Committee members agreed to limit the scope of work to commercial, industrial, and business development, excluding residential development unless it is part of a mixed-use proposal. As justified by the effect on the Town's tax base, Hutwelker suggested the group take a stand against loss of commercial land to residential development. Group members agreed that the Town has provided for its fair share of workforce housing.

Keeping informed In response to group interest, Johnson will ask Carbonneau to add EDAC members to her distribution list for ZBA and Planning Board agendas and minutes.

Promoting the community Members observed that more businesses are re-locating from Keene to Swanzey, and stressed the need to make the transition easy; in the future, it may be appropriate to establish a Chamber of Commerce. Members discussed the influence of local school quality on business decisions regarding re-location. Boufford noted that Realtors promote attributes of the larger community, beyond Town borders.

Town Planner report By e-mail, members received a summary of 2008 economic activity in Swanzey prepared by Town Planner Carbonneau. Committee members agreed to ask Carbonneau to notify Johnson and Lerandeau when she receives requests for information from business interests.

To encourage citizens to frequent local businesses, and to demonstrate a culture of community support of local business, Committee members recommended creating a guide to businesses in Swanzey. The mailing piece also could list potential sites for new businesses. Johnson will contact Fox to determine whether such a list already exists.

Committee education Johnson and Lerandeau have conferred regarding an approach towards gathering information, and recommend informal discussions over the next three to four months with members of local boards and commissions. On December 8, beginning at 5:00, Johnson has invited Cindy Harrington (NH Department of Resources and Economic Development recruiter) and James Robb (NH-DREC representative for southwest NH) to attend the EDAC meeting. A guest from SWRPC also may attend.

Committee members also expressed interest in meeting with

- Town water and sewer commissioners, to help in understanding the extent of service areas and locations of hookups
- CEO Weston, to discuss requirements of converting existing structures to business use
- Keene Municipal Airport director Mattern and the Keene city manager
- Swanzey Open Space Committee members, to discuss a possible forum on where development should be encouraged, natural resource and planning maps, and OSC efforts to promote Swanzey.

Constructing an inventory of available land suitable for either commercial or industrial development Johnson reported that his associate is helping him assemble an inventory of available land, including land potentially for sale. He also plans to develop an inventory of existing buildings -- like the Homestead Woolen Mill -- that may have available rental space. Johnson hopes to have the inventories prepared in time for the December meeting.

Other business

SWPPC meeting Lerandeau encourage Committee members to attend the November 18 meeting of Southwest Region Planning Commission. DOT Commissioner George Campbell will be the featured speaker.

Materials On November 10 Johnson distributed by e-mail the

- June 2007 annual report of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Southwest New Hampshire, prepared by Southwest Region Planning Commission with the support of the Economic Development Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, and other partners.
- June 30, 2008 annual report of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Southwest New Hampshire

Next meeting: 5:00 on December 8, 2008 at Swanzey Town Hall. Johnson said he will e-mail meeting materials two to three days prior to the meeting, and structure the meetings to be completed by 6:30.

Adjournment: Motion to adjourn by Hutwelker; second by Cairns. The meeting adjourned at 6:20.

Respectfully submitted,

Victoria Reck Barlow
Recording Secretary