

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
APRIL 11, 2011

Present: Arthur Boufford, David Cairns, Eric Stanley, David Krisch, Greg Johnson, Steven Bittel and Gus Lerandeau. Also present was Town Administrator Beth Fox.

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

Cairns proposed to the group that he and Krisch swap their roles as chair and vice-chair with Krisch assuming the duties of chair and Cairns vice-chair. Cairns advised time constraints related precluded him from devoting sufficient energies to the chair role. Krisch advised he would be willing to switch roles. On motion of Eric Stanley, the committee approved Krisch assuming chairmanship and Cairns assuming the vice-chairman's position.

The committee welcomed Doug Hamshaw of Cheshire Horse who provided feedback to the group on the process of building the Swanzey business and the positives associated with doing business in our town.

Hamshaw advised that much of the permit process went smoothly but that problems had arisen when an "ad hoc" group raised concerns about frog habitat and vernal pools which resulting in holding up obtaining wetlands approval and the building process causing him to incur additional costs. Frustrating to him was that the concerns expressed and then investigated by the state were found to be related to other properties in the area not that which he was seeking to develop. He felt that an initial verification by the state of the "facts" would have been appropriate and resulted in a determination that investigation was not required. He suggested policy be promulgated for the town's boards and committees that distinguished board endorsed actions from those which might be promoted by an individual member or someone associated with the group.

He expressed concern that development approved on another lot on Whittemore Farm Road had resulted in heavy trucks damaging the road.

Mr. Hamshaw characterized Route 10 as a great opportunity for business advising that the location distance from Keene had been a concern to him when he made the decision to relocate Cheshire Horse but that it seems like the distance from Keene has actually been a plus. The store has become more of a destination for shoppers from 3 states – NH, VT and MA.

Stanley asked Hamshaw what EDAC can do to help existing businesses. Hamshaw replied that there are possible access issues with the traffic during commute times. Fox asked if the changes at the Matthews Road intersection helped. Hamshaw felt that they had. Bittel asked if he had observed traffic impacts which he would attribute to Market Basket and Hamshaw concurred that he felt vehicle trips were higher. Krisch asked Hamshaw what he thought of the general process of working with the Planning Board and beyond during his phases of development. Hamshaw replied that he was very pleased through the whole process considering Swanzey a haven from Keene and suggested that Swanzey keep it friendly. Fox asked where he promoted his business to be, Keene or Swanzey. Hamshaw replied Swanzey. Hamshaw further commented that he would be happy to speak with any potential businesses to tell them how pleased he is with his Swanzey location. Hamshaw also suggested that the Town use the internet and brochures to promote opportunities for businesses to relocate to Swanzey. He feels Route 10 has a great stretch of lots.

OLD BUSINESS

Cairns asked if a summary had been compiled with the data we had received back from the area businesses. Stanley advised he had some additional results he would get to staff to incorporate into the final list.

Krisch reported on his follow up with PSNH regarding the power outages and spikes reported by Warner Tool, Nanotech and Carlisle. He spoke with PSNH representative Krista Butterfield. She stated PSNH would be willing to put in some power monitors. Johnson had contacted Carle Beede of M V S Fulfillment Services at 209 Flat Roof Mill Rd. He too stated that he had experienced some power outages. Johnson felt this Committee should contact any and all industrial businesses to see if they are having problems. Krisch felt they should stay with the 3 they have for now. Stanley reported that power stability had been a concern at the MR HS/MS suggesting outreach to its facilities manager David LaPointe.

Cairns and Krisch suggested again that follow up letters should be sent to the businesses thanking them for returning the surveys advising they would collaborate on a draft.

NEW BUSINESS

Johnson informed the Committee that he would contact Bob Elliott of SWRPC EDAC to appear as a guest speaker at a group meeting.

Krisch volunteered to start to collect a "library" of other town's PR information used for economic development outreach.

Johnson informed the Committee that the Keene Motor Sports building was sold at auction and thought it would be a good idea if EDAC sent the new owner a welcoming letter or fruit basket.

Johnson expressed concern about the future of the school district and impacts that a poor school district may have on a community's economic development. He expressed concern that despite Swanzey's record of financially supporting the district's proposals other town's and their representatives did not. He also expressed concern that legislative initiatives aimed at collective bargaining rights and evergreen contract clauses would also negatively impact education. Stanley felt that greater involvement from Swanzey residents in the schools would help and that overstaffing was an issue which needed to be addressed. Improving credentials of staff was an aim of the board and that great strides had been made in the past few years to improve the district. His focus is spending wisely versus spending more. Cairn reviewed feedback received on a survey about education.

Johnson expressed his concern about the absence of the town's Code Enforcement Officer expressing his view that a full time position was required to service the community's development needs. Fox advised the town's CEO had resigned the previous week and arrangements had been made to cover the function in an interim basis while plans are developed for a permanent situation.

Motion by Lerandean to adjourn. Seconded by Cairns.

Meeting adjourned at 6:10

Submitted by,

Donna Munson
Recording Secretary