

Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire
Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC)
Meeting Minutes – February 11, 2013

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

Call to Order: The regular meeting of the Swanzey Economic Development Advisory Committee was called to order at 5:02 p.m. by Chairman Steven Bittel. Committee Members Present: Chairman Steven Bittel, Amy Bush, Greg Johnson, David Cairns, Lynn Rust.

Absent: Arthur Boufford, Guy Pronesti

Others Present: Town Planner Sara Carbonneau, Stuart Arnett of Arnett Development Group, LLC, resident Donald Skiba, Planning Board member June Fuerderer, Town Administrator Shane O'Keefe, TIF District property owner/developer and RDDAB member Bob Furlone, Planning Board Chair and RDDAB member Glenn Page, and Selectman Kenneth P. Colby, Jr.

Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes: Minutes of January 14, 2013 were considered. Rust **moved** to accept the minutes, seconded by Bush, all were in favor. ***Motion passed.***

Presentation by Stu Arnett: Arnett first covered Economy Development Basics:

1. Continuum of progressive governmental involvement: Do No Harm, Advocate Convener, Participant (e.g., applying for grants or establishing TIF Districts), Aggressive Co-Developer, Developer/Leader. Arnett asked the committee “where does the Town want to be on that continuum.”
2. Core Competencies – Communities need to prioritize their competencies in order to focus objectives.
3. “Think, Get, Do” – Arnett suggested that the Town needs to take time to research and think about objectives, obtain financial resources and community support, and do all this before action is undertaken.

Bush noted that Swanzey is interested in maintaining historical nature of the Town, the buildings and the culture associated with its history.

Arnett asked the group gathered what outcome is desired for the TIF District. Bittel said that much has already been accomplished. He provided a brief history for the district stating it was started in 1999 and expanded in 2003. He said approximately \$5.7 million in building has been completed and that the total property value has increased by \$6.5 million. He said that there is \$2.8 million remaining of the original \$3.3 million TIF bond authorization of which an estimated \$2 million is targeted for the extension of Safford Drive. The remainder could be used to bring roads and utilities to individual project sites.

Bittel said he felt that the Town’s Tax Increment District is in the middle of the continuum as presented

by Arnett. Bittel suggested that the Town needs to do a better job of branding/marketing of the District. In particular he reviewed the District's strengths that are not being uniformly promoted:

- Availability of municipal water and sewer.
- New availability of enhanced broadband via FastRoads.
- Established industrial/business zoning.
- Developable land for sale.
- RDZ credits and bonding availability.
- Availability of up to \$500,000 in development-direct TIF funding.
- Multiple state road access with the completion of Safford Drive, and easy access to Rts. 12, 101 and 9.

Arnett said a typical goal is to achieve revenue at least equal to the cost of development of the property and asked if the District's tax increments were in surplus to existing debt service. Bittel responded that 2012 receipts were in excess of \$100,000 greater than current debt service. Accumulated net tax increments were approximately \$500,000 at December 31, 2012, and that with only modest growth, the current year increments could easily service the entire authorized TIF debt.

Arnett asked about the number of acres in the TIF District. Carbonneau estimated that there is 350 acres in the district with 150 acres zoned as industrial park and the rest in the business district. Arnett asked how much is currently developed and Carbonneau offered that it is about 10%. Bittel said there are wetlands in the district. Arnett wanted to know how much of the land is useable. The Fairgrounds property is part of the TIF district and might not be available for further development.

Arnett asked about job creation. Bush said she would like to see more people involved in Town businesses instead of going to Keene. She also suggested it would nice to be an employer.

Arnett asked Carbonneau about the Master Plan for this area and whether or not it is detailed. She responded that the Master Plan is not very specific for the area.

Arnett asked what kind of deal is offered to potential developers. Carbonneau said she would refer them to the real estate agents who are offering the property. Therefore, the Town has established contact with real estate agents to market the property and expects to use a phased in process.

Arnett asked if someone could shop via the Internet and find Swanzey value. Bittel said there is virtually no Internet presence.

Cairns asked if marketing parcels available for development be the real estate responsibility or the Town's. Arnett responded that at a minimum there should be a cross reference between the web sites. Bittel pointed out that an expenditure of \$2 million for the Safford Drive extension should be supported by a significant effort to better market further District development to enhance tax increments that will repay the related debt.

Johnson said that the Realtors can only do so much. Johnson spoke about the EDAC struggling to market the Town and mentioned the book put out by Public Service of New Hampshire in which the Town of

Swanzey was not mentioned. He said he thought that this part of the State is neglected and does not get much help from DRED. Johnson also spoke to the issue of being an advisory committee and not having any authority.

Arnett spoke about the next step. Information gaps needs to be addressed. Johnson asked which town in the State has been most successful at our Town size. Arnett used Derry, NH as an example. He said that the Town of Derry convened a meeting with owners of property in the Town's then recently established TIF District. He said they were brought together to discuss ways to focus on a creating additional value within the District, which they were ultimately able to achieve by focusing on the nearby exits for Interstate 93. These exits enabled the accessibility of skilled workers/customers from a variety of cities and towns in the area to work/shop at District businesses.

Arnett suggested that the better the Town can package the District's value proposition including specific site data, firm asking prices, reliable assessment protocols, reasonable permitting, etc. The better the package, Arnett suggested the more attention you will get from State Agencies and developers.

Rust said he would move to pursue the Derry approach to marketing the Industrial Park, then, owing to prior commitments, left the meeting. Bittel mentioned that EDAC's next meeting will take up a specific action plan, including coordination with other Town committees and boards, to be presented to the Board of Selectmen.

Carbonneau said that job creation is important and should be one of the goals.

Page mentioned the continuing issue of establishing a firm water supply contract with the City of Keene. Furlone indicated that an established source of water is essential for any larger scale development.

Furlone asked about how much of the 350 acres is available without completing the Safford Drive extension. Page said most of the land that is developable is in the Fair Grounds. Land going into conservation in the area is wetlands. Arnett pointed out that these are questions that the Town should be able to answer.

Carbonneau said that MEDCARE Properties has approximately 70 acres, and the Fair Grounds about 75 acres. Bittel mentioned that the Collier property is also available and is undergoing survey work for a subdivision plan. Arnett said it would be "wonderful" to have lots, but suggested that sometimes the most innovative planning occurs when areas larger than single plots are considered. He said, for example, wetlands might be considered for the whole area instead of parcel by parcel, which actually costs less and incurs less hassles in the long run.

Furlone said developers ask a few questions at the start of their search for land: how much land is there to develop and where there is the water and sewer. Water issues need to be resolved so that there is plenty of pressure for sprinklers. Arnett asked if there is a way to build a tank up there to create water pressure. He said the Town can utilize a shared wetland area, or offer a density bonus to developers by looking at the entire district. This is the kind of focus that the EDAC and other Town boards/committees should have in order to promote the TIF District.

Bittel thanked Arnett for his time and much appreciated information. Participants agreed through offering applause.

Motion to adjourn by Cairns, seconded by Bush, with all in favor. **Motion passed.** Adjournment at 6:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Beverly Bernard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Beverly Bernard, Recording Secretary