

**Town of Swanzey, New Hampshire**  
**Economic Development Advisory Committee**  
Meeting Minutes – December 10, 2012

*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.*

The regular meeting of the Swanzey Economic Development Advisory Committee was called to order at 5:10 p.m. Committee Members Present: Steven Bittel, Chair, Amy Bush, Greg Johnson, and Lynn Rust.

Absent: Guy Pronesti, David Cairns, Arthur Boufford

Others Present: Sara Carbonneau, Town Planner, and Shane O'Keefe, Town Administrator

**Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes:** The minutes for October 15, 2012 were reviewed and a **motion** to approve them made by Bittel. Rust seconded the motion, all in favor. ***Motion passed.***

**Review of Current Projects:**

- West Swanzey Charrette update

The final presentation portfolio is expected sometime in January. It will be available online. The meeting was well attended with over 60 people attending over the two day event. In addition to Bittel, Boufford also attended.

Bittel provided a copy of the funding analysis done by the Plan NH volunteers at the Charrette's final session taken from his notes, and said that he thought the presentation was practical and business-like. The analysis indicated a ten-to-one private/public ratio for funding, based on their proposed changes to the West Swanzey area. The rough projection for total for the Town (public) funding was \$2 million, which Bittel said is do-able over 3-5 years or less, depending upon the level of private participation. In his opinion, the plan is financially viable if properly documented. Aside from possible grants, a Tax Increment Financing District with transitional anticipation notes is one possible Town funding vehicle. Main Street presents an attractive housing stock and with Carpenter Hall's revival the potential is impressive.

Carbonneau expanded upon the Woolen Mill's possible reconfiguration and greater access to the river at all points. She continued to mention that the final presentation was aired on Cheshire TV, and it will be aired again. It may also be viewed online. Both Bittel and Carbonneau commended viewing it on CTV's website. Three copies of the program will be sent to the Town, although of uncertain format. The discussion at the Charrette focused on a number of different proposals. The Planning Board has not had a chance to review the findings, but practical zoning changes are indicated.

Carbonneau further expanded on other items. A follow-on (25% local/75% award) Community Planning Grant might further the Charrette's work, but the annual award application deadline is in February, which may be too soon for Swanzey. It has yet to be determined if the Planning

Board would like to pursue. Another possibility is a Neighborhood Heritage District, which is less restrictive than a Historical District, and might provide a good vehicle for grant applications. Selectmen would have to approve. It will be January before anything definitive comes from the Charrette.

- Hannah Grimes Coordination

Cairns - no report.

- Broadband Update

SWRPC meeting – A special segment of their regular meeting addressed regional broadband. Johnson (also a SWRPC commissioner) and Bittel attended. Swanzezy's understanding was at least on a par with SWRPA's.

After a discussion of levels of broadband internet service, both Johnson and Bittel reported that they were receiving far better than average, and in fact, generally adequate service, from their current provider (premium business level Time-Warner), and both are in rural locations. This was to some amazement of the others. It was disclosed that parts of Keene, central parts at that, had no access to the such premium service.

#### **Discussion and Consideration of New Initiatives:**

- Linkage with Revenue Development District Advisory Board (TIF District) and Safford Drive extension

Carbonneau reviewed the Town's plans and maps of extending Safford Drive to connect Route 32 to Route 12, but noted that certain issues have to be worked out with at least two abutters. Safford Drive is wholly within the Town's Revenue Development (TIF) District, and funding for the new road would be via previously authorized Tax Increment Bonds.

Bittel discussed the interface contemplated by Selectmen that EDAC should have with Revenue Development District Advisory Board and mentioned that he was about to join their Board. Helping to get the project going should be a major EDAC effort for the coming year.

Johnson mentioned that the planning stages have been in the works for several years with money appropriated and engineering work substantially complete. He questioned why three or four years have passed with no results as the road extension is a key component to further TIF District development. It would make desirable smaller 4 to 8 acre plots available to businesses considering a Swanzezy location.

Bittel noted that former Town Administration Beth Fox had handled the project, and it fell into a void after her departure. Carbonneau added that it now was becoming a priority, which was why it is on EDAC's agenda. O'Keefe said that he would do his best to provide a review of the project's status for the January EDAC meeting.

Johnson asked about the financing for the project. He thought that the funding was already in place. Bittel indicated that only the authority to issue bonds was in place, not the funds themselves. The project needs to be properly packaged before it can move forward. Johnson stated he had not heard about any abutter issues and permitting could be two or more years and noted that he had represented to two property owners that the project's start was imminent. O'Keefe said he would meet with one of the abutters.

Johnson asked about the Revenue Development District Advisory Board and what their role is. Bittel suggested that they give advisory opinions to Selectmen and support the Administrator as to District development and issuance of bonds, but will find out more as a member.

- Presentation on economic development by Stuart Arnett of Arnett Development Group

Bittel had several conversations with Mr. Arnett during the Charrette and extended an invitation, subject to Committee approval, to present to EDAC his ideas on TIF District and West Swanzey marketing. The Committee agreed to a tentative date for the February meeting.

- **Other Business**

- Swanzey Post Office - Selectmen

Bittel reported the Selectmen responded that they have made substantial efforts in the past and their efforts proved futile. Given the grave USPS financial situation they are understandably reluctant to pursue the matter further at this time. He noted appreciation for their efforts and concurred with their view, but suggested that EDAC must remain vigilant as the local post office is an economic development enhancer.

- Open EDAC seat

Bush, now a Town of Swanzey employee, will remain on the Committee and will continue to coordinate the Town's web site, but will not be able to continue that work until February or March, 2013 owing to year-end commitments.

- **Next scheduled meeting: January 14, 2013.**
- **Adjournment – move to adjourn by Bush, seconded by Johnson. All in favor. Motion passed.**

Adjournment at 5:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Beverly Bernard, Recording Secretary