

Town of Haverhill
Economic & Development Advisory Committee
Minutes of Meeting
August 24, 2011

Present: Connie Smith, Liz Shelton, Kevin Shelton, Homer May, Jim Hobbs, Scott Nichols, Richard Fabrizio, Howard Hatch, Dick Guy, Wayne Fortier, Wendy Warcholik, Sean O'Donnell, Glenn English.

Kevin Shelton opened the meeting at 6:32 pm.

Kevin reviewed the AGENDA

MINUTES of the July meeting: Howard Hatch stated he was quoted incorrectly in the minutes. He did not say that Haverhill students could not read or write. He said there were issues in filling out employment applications. Homer May moved to accept the amended minutes, Scott Nichols seconded and all approved.

SELECTBOARD COMMENTS:

Wayne Fortier explained the discussions which occurred at several Selectboard meetings. His research showed that the Board never took a vote authorizing the Committee but in their discussions there was a consensus of all Board members that an economic development committee and a discussion of economic development issues might be of help to the Board. Issues such as tourism, the business park, chamber of commerce were discussed. Lynn Wheeler had said that progress had been made over the years on this but we never seemed to get to the last step. Rick Ladd had some issues with direction of the Committee's work. Dave Joslin felt that as long as the Committee was advisory it would be helpful to the Board. Wayne said he agreed. He said the Board supports the Committee but the Committee should not usurp the Board's authority. The Board should help direct the Committee.

PRESENTATION:

Connie Smith led the Committee through a presentation on how the Committee might function: The Committee agreed on the Mission Statement and reviewed the comments made by Michael Bergeron (NH DRED).

SWOT: Connie described the SWOT analysis which she had prepared. There was general agreement on the SWOT. Jim Hobbs stated that young people will always leave Town but we need to attract other young people to come here and hopefully get our own people to come back at some point. Jim passed out his observations about Economic Development in the Town. Scott Nichols said that he and his students have done SWOT analyses using a business model and the Committee should encourage

individual businesses to do SWOTs for their own operations. Howard Hatch said good businesses do this every day. Connie agreed to assist any business who needed help doing a SWOT.

Organization of Committee: Connie reviewed the wire diagram of the Committee and its function which identifies a core group and various sub committees. The Core group would be responsible for the functioning of the whole Committee and each sub committee would be responsible for researching its own area and bringing recommendations back to the full Committee. She said that people could choose their area of interest and work on that. There are also people out in the Community, like Mike Graham, who were interested in helping as a resource without committing to attending the meetings. Scott suggested a technology committee and beautification committee. Kevin and Connie suggested that these areas would fit under Infrastructure and Tourism and Downtown. Homer May said we need a correct web site that encompasses all information about the Town. He used to do this for the Town but the Selectboard cut him off. They wanted a town government web site. He said he has the expertise in marketing, promotion and technical knowledge of web sites. He might be willing to do it for free. Howard Hatch said he feels the Selectboard is going in five different directions. They need to provide leadership and not blame things on the fire departments and precincts. He said that the burden of state licenses and inspections take up to 1/3 of his time and now, due to cutbacks, the state people are not available to get these things done. Connie Smith said that Upper Valley Press has pulled in State people to help them, such as DRED Commissioner Bald. She said she didn't want to pursue this work without the Selectboard's support. Howard said that this Committee is advisory only and is not stepping on anyone's toes. Wayne said that he had heard that the Selectboard doesn't work in unison. It doesn't give clear direction to the town manager. He said it is hard to get five members to agree and build consensus. He said again that it was his view that the Board does agree on supporting the Committee's work so that we can get to the last step that Lynn talked about. He has the energy to do this and also to work with precinct officials. The Board should set policy and the town manager carries it out. He felt that the work plan presented tonight is on track. The Committee should concentrate on the strengths. Take the high road. Wendy said that the Selectboard may not like what they are hearing. The Committee is providing a critical role that we need in this Town. Kevin said we may never get to the last step. Economic Development is a work-in-progress. Our work will never be done. Howard asked how do we get our ideas across to the Town – to each Selectboard member? Connie said recommendations should be made, in writing, to the Board as a whole. We need to prioritize the main issues and see how the Board responds. Bring factual information to the Board. She said that in reviewing the older SWOT and other material that a lot has been done but some people may not be aware of it. Howard Hatch said he noticed that the Town had slipped when the budget committee lost control of the budget to the town manager. There is no way to input into the town manager's budget or to change it. How many Selectboard members are in business? He said he will fit into the work of the Committee as needed. He said 1/2 of the Committee is already gone. Connie said that some could not come tonight and others are willing to help. Homer May said that the word "development" is scary to some people. We need to explain why economic development is important. We need to create a town that can support itself. But we need balance between development and what we have now. Government is rampant in Washington, D.C., the state and town. He said the mission statement should reflect these things. Kevin said that some of the things which we say or do may not be what people

want to hear. Dick Guy objected to equating the Town with Washington or the State. The Town budget was reduced this year. He wished he could say the same about the School budget. He complemented the Town on the budget process. Connie said that this Committee may also make recommendations to the School Board. Connie asked for volunteers for each committee. Core Committee: Wendy, as liaison to Selectboard, Infrastructure: Dick Guy and Wendy, Tourism & Downtown: Liz Shelton and Wendy, Small Business: Dick Fabrizio (maybe Sheila) and Howard Hatch Manufacturing: Connie Smith. Connie said she would recruit others to fill out the committees.

COMMENTS: Jim Hobbs said maybe we shouldn't try to get to step five but should start again at step one. Things have changed since the original SWOT analysis. Liz said that she remembers a meeting about Main St. where she suggested that we market the Disney way. They have been very successful. Kevin remembered that the response to the Main St. idea was disorganized and there was no money and no organization. Jim Hobbs reported that a student had done a parking plan for Woodsville years ago but it could not be found. Liz said that many schools have internships. We should get student help. It would be free. Dick Fabrizio said that Woodsville was important to his business and other businesses in Town. The better downtown Woodsville is doing the better he does. Scott said that the Committee's main effort should be in Woodsville, Main Street. Connie agreed that the Woodsville Main Street is a strength for retail but we also need to look at the whole Town. Jim Hobbs said that Woodsville is the welcome mat and it has gone to pot. Liz asked who was in charge of the business park and could answer questions about it. Glenn said he would. Wayne said the Board needs to communicate better. Homer asked what is expected of Committee members. Connie explained that the various committees would be working between meetings of the main committee such as gathering information and making recommendations for their specific area. She will be sending e-mails out on committee work. Next meeting we will set up the 5-6 priority issues for each committee. Kevin reviewed Jim Hobbs paper with the Committee. Dick Guy said that downtown Woodsville has become a strip development from Rite Aid to the Bridge. It's not the tight little downtown it used to be. Zoning may have solved some of the property use issues but it's basically a free-for-all. Liz Shelton asked about condemning buildings. Glenn stated that there are no local rules only the State Hazardous and Dilapidated law which the Selectboard had used to secure dangerous buildings. It is a cumbersome process. There was a discussion of Zoning.

Dick Fabrizio made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Scott and all approved.

Kevin reminded all that the next meeting will be on September 28th, 6:30, here in the Gym.

Minutes taken by Glenn English