

Town of Epsom
Economic Development Committee Meeting Minutes
Old Meetinghouse Lower Level
September 26, 2023 5:30 PM

Committee Members Present

Vincent Pagano, Chair
Linda Hodgdon, Vice Chair
Sinehan Kerman, Secretary
Meadow Wysocki, Selectman
Cheryl Gilpatrick, Selectman
Kathy DesRoches, Planning Board Representative
Jason Johnson
Susan Lombard

Absent

Joe Wysocki

Call to Order

Mr. Pagano called the meeting to order at 5:33pm.

Ms. DesRoches motioned to approve August 29 Meeting Minutes as amended. Ms. Hodgdon seconded the motion. The motion passed 8-0.

Agenda Review

No changes to proposed agenda

Discussion

Mr. Pagano opened the discussion with a review of efforts made to learn more about potential expansion of the Water District. Mr. Pagano connected with Water District representatives Kevin Reeves and Gary Kitson, and reiterated the importance of expanding water access in order to attract new business in Epsom. Mr. Pagano requested having a Water District representative present at the Economic Development Committee (EDC) meeting. He learned that expansion of the Water District with existing wells is limited, and shared that the EDC is interested in continuing on past efforts made to explore new well locations. Ms. Gilpatrick suggested the EDC continue research to understand how potential new wells can tie into the existing Water District, or explore what it would take to create a new Water District. Ms. Gilpatrick also explained the importance of increasing funding available for the Water District expansion project so that when the Water District is ready for expansion, the town has more matching funds available when applying for grant funding. Ms. Wysocki shared documentation with the EDC on previous efforts around Water District expansion. Mr. Pagano shared that he is researching what is required to apply for grant funding in the coming year. Ms. DesRoches

discussed the additional need for public education on the process of grant funding and town matching.

Mr. Johnson inquired about whether the Water District expansion is included in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) regional plan, as he had not seen it in the recent addendum. Mr. Pagano shared that the project was included in 2019 plan, but was not included in the 2023 addendum. He shared that each town applies to have their projects included in the CEDS project priority list, which is updated every two to four years. Every five years the Strategy is updated. Mr. Pagano shared that being on the list of projects within the CEDS plan is beneficial when applying for funding either through grants or congressional earmark funds.

Ms. Gilpatrick shared that some businesses at the circle chose not to tie into the current Water District. She suggested that the EDC focus on education material to help explain why matching funds are needed when applying for grant funding. She also shared that in the informational packets for the town meetings, there are typically handouts about the upcoming warrant articles. The EDC will consider having representatives present to speak at the upcoming deliberative sessions. It may be beneficial to explain the connection between Economic Revitalization Zones (ERZs), Water District expansion, and expansion of business activity.

Around Goboro Road, there is an Economic Community Revitalization District, where tax assessment values are locked in, in a way that would incentivize economic activity. Ms. DesRoches shared that Epsom does not have a strictly commercial zone. The ERZ near Gauthier Drive may be a good area for a strictly commercial zone. The EDC discussed that it might be interesting to find out the history of why the existing ERZs were chosen. Ms. DesRoches shared that the current ERZs may have been determined because they were large areas of undeveloped land. Ms. Gilpatrick reviewed the ERZ map with the EDC group, and Mr. Pagano shared where the aquifers were located during the first phase of the Water District expansion project work done previously.

Next, Mr. Pagano discussed the recent Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission meeting. He shared that someone from the Bureau of Economic Analysis spoke at the meeting about the Farm Bill, about districts in the state in need of funding and how some towns in Merrimack County may qualify for economic development funds outline in the Bill. Mr. Pagano offered to share the minutes from that meeting.

Next, Ms. Gilpatrick suggested that the EDC think about compiling a fact sheet to share information about the ERZs on the Epsom Town website, and include the blurbs from the ERZ map boards. Mr. Pagano suggested that the group look into something called “storymaps” that are great for sharing this type of information. Ms. Kerman and Mr. Johnson suggested also compiling video content and moving forward with an account on YouTube to help share this content.

Next, Mr. Pagano moved on to other projects on the EDC project list. The group discussed a potential survey for Epsom businesses to find out why owners chose to locate their respective businesses in Epsom. The group plans to work together on developing the survey questionnaire. Ms. Gilpatrick suggested that during the winter months, the EDC could check the current list of Epsom businesses and compare to the existing listing on the Epsom Town website.

Mr. Pagano shared that he will be speaking at the upcoming October 2 budget presentation. EDC has not used the existing budget while the group had not been active. The group discussed budgetary needs for the upcoming fiscal year and estimated what types of needs would arise, such as printing costs, ERZ sign permit fees, and any other potential line items.

Mr. Johnson asked about having the EDC brief the Zoning Board on upcoming plans, and Mr. Pagano agreed to reach out on behalf of the committee.

The EDC discussed moving the next meeting date to October 20th at 5:00 PM to allow for a quorum.

Public Input

None

Mr. Johnson motioned to adjourn the meeting. Ms. DesRoches seconded the motion. The motion passed 8-0.

Respectfully submitted, Sinehan Kerman.