

**Town of Epsom**  
**Economic Development Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Old Meetinghouse Lower Level**  
**March 7, 2024 5:00 PM**

**Present**

Vincent Pagano, Chair  
Linda Hodgdon, Vice Chair  
Joe Wysocki  
Meadow Wysocki, Select Board  
Sinehan Kerman, Secretary  
Jason Johnson

Susan Lombard  
Scott Elliot, Public  
Deborah Sargent, Public  
Donna Cadose, Public  
Liz (No Last Name Provided), Public

**Call to Order**

Mr. Pagano called the meeting to order at 5:00pm.

Mr. Pagano motioned to approve January 30th Meeting Minutes as amended. Ms. Lombard seconded the motion. The motion passed 7-0.

**Agenda Review**

Ms. Wysocki requested an agenda item addition, as the Economic Development Committee (EDC) needs to re-elect committee officers.

Mr. Pagano requested to move the Community Power discussion to the final item of the agenda to allow for better transition into public discussion.

**Discussion**

**Nominating and Selecting Committee Officers**

Ms. Hodgdon motioned to nominate Ms. Kerman for the Secretary position. Ms. Lombard seconded the motion, and Ms. Kerman accepted. The motion passed 7-0.

Mr. Johnson nominates Mr. Wysocki for Vice Chair position. Mr. Pagano seconds the motion, and Mr. Wysocki accepts. The motion passed 7-0.

Ms. Lombard motioned to nominate Mr. Pagano for the Chair position. Ms. Hodgdon seconded the motion, and Mr. Pagano accepted. The motion passed 7-0.

**Groundwater Grant**

Mr. Pagano reminded the committee of the town elections on Tuesday, March 12, and the related warrant article to replenish the Capital Reserve Fund. Ms. Wysocki shared that the Select Board has accepted the grant funds at the recent public hearing and that the paperwork

is back with the State awaiting final approval. Following, we will know more about the timeline for next steps in the process.

### **Economic Revitalization Zone (ERZ) Signs**

Mr. Pagano shared that letters have been sent for permission from landowners for sign placements. He has not heard back from anyone, and discussed follow up steps. The EDC made suggestions to help with gathering replies, and Ms. Hodgdon suggested to send letters certified with a required signature.

Ms. Wysocki reminded the group that the costs of sign posts will still need to be considered, and posts will need to be ordered. The sign for the Gauthier Drive ERZ is still in the process of being located.

Mr. Pagano shared that Bridget Beckwith, who is an administrator of the ERZ program with the NH Department of Economic Affairs, would be a great resource to speak with the EDC about suggestions to promote the ERZs. Ms. Wysocki suggested creating a brochure with ERZ details that can be shared with real estate agents selling property in these zones, and that a digital copy needs to be available on the town website. Mr. Wysocki shared that the EDC needs to decide on high level items for website, and have those questions answered by Bridget to guide what is posted.

Next, the EDC discussed the zone locations, and whether or not there are any existing businesses in those zones. There may not be existing businesses that can benefit from being in an ERZ, but the benefits should be shared more broadly to encourage future business growth. Mr. Pagano will invite Ms. Beckwith to an upcoming meeting to help guide the EDC next steps.

### **Other Business**

Mr. Pagano shared that the next EDC meeting date is March 26, at 5:00pm.

### **Community Power**

Mr. Pagano opened discussion with an explanation on how the process of participating in Community Power works. The Board of Selectmen was approached regarding Community Power, and decided that the EDC as an advisory board should take on the research about the program to make a recommendation. If the Town of Epsom decides to move forward with Community Power, then a committee must be formed, and any decisions ultimately go to a town vote. The intention behind Community Power is to provide more control to residents over utility costs. In NH, the electric suppliers buy their power in six month time blocks and the rates are changed every six months. With Community Power, these rates and time tables can be negotiated. There is also an option to choose what kind of power is purchased, whether it be lowest cost, a mix of traditional and renewable energy, or fully renewable energy at a higher comparable cost.

Mr. Pagano shared that these types of programs have not been successful in the past because they were not well known and operated on an opt-in basis, and there was not enough participation to benefit from economies of scale.

Mr. Wysocki asked what the risk is if most people opt out of the program, and if there have been any studies to see if there are actual savings? Mr. Pagano believes there is an option to opt in or out, but will require additional research. Some towns have seen savings, and some have not, but this is also dependent on what options are chosen and how rates are negotiated.

Ms. Lombard asked the utilities are able to earn profit with this model. Mr. Pagano shared that supply is one cost, transmission is a second cost, and delivery is a third cost. Delivery is dependent on existing infrastructure, so while a program like Community Power allows choice in supply, the servicing will remain with the existing delivery source.

Ms. Wysocki asked about who would be responsible to work with the coalition on negotiating rates if the town engages with Community Power. This will need to be researched.

The EDC discussed other questions, such as the costs associated with negotiating these contracts, the opt out process, and how the relationship with Merrimack County Community Power program impacts the process and decision making at the town level.

Mr. Wysocki suggested that the EDC collects all related questions in a shared document, as there are many being generated, and these items are crucial as the group analyzes the costs or benefits to the program.

Mr. Pagano reminded the EDC that this is a multi-year process to review and move forward, and will require public input along with answering these questions before any recommendations can be made.

### **Public Input**

Deborah Sargent shared that Community Power has a focus on the “Green New Deal” and her concern is that it means higher costs for consumers. She shared some recent articles about Community Power with the EDC.

Scott Elliot would like the EDC to ask about line maintenance. Mr. Pagano shared that the delivery company, such as Eversource, would still be responsible for this.

Additional public input was shared regarding the concerns for cost impact to residents.

Ms. Kerman motioned to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Lombard seconded the motion. The motion passed 7-0.

Respectfully submitted, Sinehan Kerman.