

Town of Epsom
Economic Development Committee Meeting Minutes
Old Meetinghouse Lower Level
August 29, 2023 5:30 PM

Present

Vincent Pagano, Chair
Sinehan Kerman, Secretary
Meadow Wysocki, Selectman
Kathy DesRoches, Planning Board Representative
Joseph Wysocki
Jason Johnson
Susan Lombard
Glenn Horner, Public
Deborah Sargent, Public

Absent

Linda Hodgdon

Call to Order

Mr. Pagano called the meeting to order at 5:28pm

Ms. Lombard motioned to approve August 1 Meeting Minutes as amended. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion. The motion passed 7-0.

Agenda Review

No changes to proposed agenda

Discussion

Mr. Pagano began discussion with an update on the Economic Development Committee (EDC, "Committee") project plan, beginning with the Economic Revitalization Zones (ERZs). Mr. Pagano received notice from the NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs confirming that the Epsom ERZs will not be changing, therefore the process for renewal will be straightforward. For businesses located in the ERZs, sometimes the Planning Commission and EDC will partner to share information about benefits to businesses operating in ERZs. Discussion continued regarding existing business in the Zones, and Mr. Pagano shared that while parcels are owned, they are currently not being utilized to the requirements needed to receive benefits. Ms. Wysocki suggested working with Epsom Town Offices to gather a list of businesses in the area that would qualify for ERZ benefits. Mr. Pagano suggested sharing the ERZ fact sheet with these businesses which includes information about eligibility and how to apply for ERZ benefits. The EDC then discussed businesses that may fall in the Zones, as well as an open parcel on Route 4 that has been vacant for approximately 20 years.

Next, Ms. DesRoches shared that Ms. Gilpatrick on the Select Board has a file of what the previously discussed missing ERZ sign should look like. As a next step, Ms. Wysocki will bring the image to Elite Sports to inquire if anyone has seen the physical sign. Ms. Wysocki and Mr. Pagano discussed the need for a physical space within the Planning Board office to organize and hold EDC materials.

Mr. Pagano continued conversation into the Broadband Expansion project. While the vision will require longer term planning for Epsom, Mr. Pagano shared that the contract for Broadband Expansion was awarded to Mission Broadband, and he is working with Loudon and Canterbury to apply for the first round of funding. The Broadband Matching Grant Initiative opened for applications this week, with a second round opening in 2024. While Epsom isn't necessarily attractive to internet service providers, the town may benefit from a neighboring town that would be better qualified for the grant. The EDC discussed the process for building funds specifically for grant matching. Ms. Wysocki shared that all grant matching fund applications must be approved by the Select Board.

Next, Mr. Johnson shared that his documentation on how to start a business in Epsom was ready for review. Ms. DesRoches suggested that the Planning Board can review the document for accuracy before it is published publicly.

Mr. Johnson asked if the Master Plan Survey could be shared with the Zoning Board. Ms. DesRoches shared that the draft has not yet been accepted, and is not yet publicly shareable. Mr. Wysocki asked if the Committee should try to address the ideas set forth in the Survey by focusing on potential opportunities in the ERZs. The Committee discussed how to attract developers to create the walkable spaces and other community friendly areas given the current mixed use zoning and areas that are currently traffic concerns. Mr. Pagano shared that there is a project to count traffic, including at the Route 28 and Route 4 traffic circle, and many out of state visitors come through the area.

Mr. Pagano discussed that many of the longer term goals for the EDC are reliant on expanding water access. Discussion continued on the need for more public education and materials to explain how the ideas and aspirations of citizens can be met. The Committee discussed how many of the desires expressed in the Master Plan Survey would require water district expansion. Ms. Wysocki shared that there is one town meeting per year, and information sessions happen with the Select Board, and Planning Board. There is also a deliberative session. Mr. Johnson suggested making educational slides to share at such sessions, and creating a storyboard or infographic for voting day. During the deliberative session, Warrant Articles are discussed in terms of importance and impact. Ms. Wysocki shared that on voting day, any informational materials are only allowed outside of the voting center, and any lobbying requires a person to be present with such materials. Mr. Wysocki suggested the need for tangible examples of how we could utilize ERZs to fulfill needs raised by residents, and how the potential projects require water expansion. Ms. Lombard suggested that it might help to show residents the difference in tax revenue from current use and developed land use. The EDC discussed other towns that have

developed community areas, such as the Contoocook village zone, and how businesses impact the tax base within the town.

Ms. Lombard inquired about industrial spaces in Epsom and asked if there were businesses looking to locate to those spaces in the past. Ms. DesRoches shared that recent inquiries have mostly been submitted by residents, and not businesses. Ms. DesRoches shared some recent examples of applications submitted, including a solar farm, an affordable housing development, and a cluster development of condominiums and single family units. Ms. Lombard inquired about the process for review of these applications, and Ms. Desroches shared that there is a preliminary Planning Board discussion, then the Planning Board will have a discussion with the Zoning Board, if needed. Mr. Pagano offered to collect questions for the Planning Board and will share these questions with Ms. DesRoches for upcoming Planning Board meetings.

The EDC then discussed potential speakers for upcoming EDC meetings. Mr. Johnson suggested asking someone from the current Water District to come speak at a meeting. Mr. Pagano suggested ranking priority of which speakers the EDC would like to meet with. Mr. Johnson suggested meeting with the Water District first to help the Committee continue with current priorities. Mr. Pagano plans to invite a Water District representative to the next meeting.

Mr. Johnson shared that he has footage from the Epsom Old Home Weekend to add to the EDC shared drive. Ms. Wysocki shared that the Select Board will permit the EDC to create a Gmail account in order to create a YouTube channel.

Next, Mr. Johnson inquired about progress in determining an Epsom town motto. Ms. Wysocki suggested the Committee connect that effort with the upcoming Tricentennial celebration, for which there will be a dedicated committee formed.

Public Input

Deborah Sargent inquired about how grant funding would impact tax payers. Discussion continued on how grant funding is available and why groups apply for grant dollars.

Glenn Horner from the Zoning Board introduced himself. He shared that he would like to collaborate with the EDC. Mr. Pagano offered to attend a Zoning Board meeting in his role working for the Planning Commission.

Ms. Kerman motioned to adjourn the meeting, and Mr. Johnson seconded the motion. The motion passed 7-0.

Respectfully submitted, Sinehan Kerman.