

Town of Boscawen
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
FINAL MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, January 2nd, 2024, at 5:30 p.m.

Members Present: Barbara Randall – Chair, John Porter – Vice Chair, Jacob Martin, Tom Laliberte, Mason Donovan – Alternate, Lorrie Carey – Ex-Officio & Vincent Pagano – Central NH Regional Planning Commission

Members Excused: Adele Sanborn

Members Absent: Sean Goldman

Staff Present: Kellee Easler – Planning and Community Development Director, Katie Phelps – Town Administrator & Dean Hollins – Public Works Director

Guests Present: Charlie Niebling, Mike Tardiff – Central NH Regional Planning Commission, Matt Monahan – Central NH Regional Planning Commission & Matt Taylor – Central NH Regional Planning Commission

Chair Randall opened the meeting at 5:30 p.m. and completed roll call.

Chair Randall appointed Mr. Donovan as a voting member for the meeting.

Minutes:

- Ex-Officio Carey requested two changes to Line 49 – Change “but” to “put” and “with in” to “within”.
- Chair Randall requested one changed to Line 55 – Sentence to read “Seconded by Vice Chair Porter.”

Mr. Donovan motioned to approve the 12/05/23 draft minutes as amended. Second by Ex-Officio Carey. All in favor. None opposed.

Update to Rules of Procedure:

PCD Director Easler said all the Boards/Committees/Commissions will be updating their Rules of Procedure to include *Utilization of Town Counsel Policy*. PCD Director Easler read the addition to page 2 and asked that the Committee motion to accept the change.

Vice Chair Porter motioned to adopt the addition of the Utilization of Town Counsel Policy to page 2 of the Economic Development Committee’s Rules of Procedure. Seconded by Mr. Donovan. All in favor. None opposed.

New Business:

Grant Discussion for Pavilion: Mr. Niebling said he attended/listened to the Select Board meeting where Chair Randall recommended a pavilion be placed at the Boscawen Town Park to commemorate the Storrs Bridge and has taken an interest in the project in the last couple of years. He thought this would be the perfect proposal for the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant program. He explained that the LWCF gets divided between two big pots. One is for use by federal agencies such as the Park Service, Forest Service and US Fish and Wildlife who received hundreds of millions of dollars for land acquisition and infrastructure. The other is allocated to the state side. The State Division of Parks administers that fund. They use some of the money for State Park infrastructure and administer the rest as decided by a competitive grant process. Mr. Niebling said the grant application process is very straightforward and he thinks the pavilion and potentially other improvements at the Boscawen Town Park or other recreational facilities where the town has some control would be a competitive project. Grants are \$50,000 up to \$500,000 and require a 1:1 match. The match can be met in a variety of ways: cash, contributions, donations of labor or materials. The program has been made very flexible to allow towns options to fulfill the match requirement. The minimum match is 1:1 with the more match brought to the table the better chances are of receiving the grant. Mr. Niebling offered to write the grant with the help of the EDC. He said they have yet to issue the Request for Proposals (RFP) for 2024. He assumes it will come out in the spring. Mr. Niebling thought that the Boscawen Town Park or Jamie Welch Field received LWCF money in the past. Ex-Officio Carey thought the boat ramp may have received that money. Mr. Niebling asked if the funds that were previously set aside for the bridge had been spent. Ex-Officio Carey said the funds have not been utilized. There is \$26,101.19 available. Mr. Niebling thought there was a way to meet the match without town appropriations other than the funds that already exist for this project. Ex-Officio Carey agreed having had many unofficial conversations around town with business owners who would be willing to donate to the project. Discussion ensued. Chair Randall asked if the grant application would require itemized project details. Mr. Niebling said no, but the closer they could get to hard numbers and identifying the sources of the match the better their chances of receiving the grant would be. Chair Randall said that some of the money that has been set aside for the bridge will need to be allocated for an educational piece. Ex-Officio Carey explained that the pavilion itself would be the educational piece. PW Director Hollins said that he has two large pieces of the original bridge that are shaped like an "X" that are about 2.5'-3' feet high. His vision was to square them off and put a piece of granite on top to make a bench. Mr. Donovan suggested getting quotes on what a pavilion would cost.

Ex-Officio Carey motioned to approve Charlie Niebling to prepare a grant on the town's behalf for a park facility at the Boscawen Town Park. Seconded by Mr. Laliberte. All in favor. None opposed.

Mr. Niebling asked if a subcommittee could be appointed for this project. Vice Chair Porter, Ex-Officio Carey and PCD Director Easler volunteered to join the subcommittee. PCD Director Easler will work on this.

Other Business:

Member Resignation: Chair Randall said she received Mr. Martin's letter of resignation. The EDC wishes Mr. Martin well.

Mr. Donovan volunteered to become a regular member. Chair Randall thanked Mr. Donovan.

6:00 p.m. Visioning Session with Boscawen Planning Board: Chair Randall turned the meeting over to Planning Board Chair Martin. Mr. Taylor said he was hoping to receive some input from residents for several Planning Board projects, particularly the Master Plan Housing Chapter. The last Housing Chapter update was done in 2001. A demographic trend identified in NH and Boscawen over the last 20+ years was the aging population. Another trend was school enrollment that has been declining. In Boscawen's case, the elementary school was built in 1996, with peak enrollment in 2006 with over 300 students. More recently, enrollment was closer to 215 students. Covid-19 had a large impact on enrollment as well. He said the town needs to consider these trends and how they could impact public services. Mr. Taylor said another factor to consider was the rising cost of housing. This had an impact on who can move, live or work in Boscawen. Back in August, the PB had a table at Old Home Day to talk about housing with residents. That venue did not foster great results, which resulted in this Visioning Session. Mr. Taylor said the PB had also researched implementing a financing mechanism to fund much needed infrastructure in the Mill Redevelopment District (MRD). The PB has decided to move forward with a Warrant Article at 2024 Town Meeting to establish a Tax Increment Finance (TIF) District. CNHRPC had some questionnaires available for anyone that was interested in giving input. Some of the questions included were "What kind of housing does Boscawen need and why?", "Who can afford to live in Boscawen?", and "Who can't afford to live in Boscawen?". Mr. Laliberte asked what was considered affordable housing. Mr. Tardiff replied that there was a formula that the federal government uses to calculate affordable housing. Essentially 30% of the median household income in Merrimack County. Mr. Laliberte asked why the demand for affordable housing was so great in comparison to larger homes. Mr. Tardiff said because there is a gap in the types of housing that young families and older couples are searching for. Chair Martin explained that the cost of building was also driving housing prices up. A question was asked by a resident if transportation would be included in plans of housing growth. Mr. Tardiff said transportation would be a part of the growth, but it would need to be used. Capital Area Transit will be expanding their route to Franklin through Boscawen. A resident asked what a TIF District was. A TIF district is an area within a city or town that is found to be "blighted" and in need of redevelopment. A TIF reallocates funds from property taxes to encourage investment within the district, and the increased property taxes generated by the TIF development are used to repay the debt. A TIF is a tool that municipalities use to finance improvements for public infrastructure like streets, sidewalks, and stormwater management systems. A TIF creates funding for public or private projects by borrowing against the future increase in property-tax revenues. PW Director Hollins described what kind of infrastructure existed located within the MRD. Discussion ensued. Mr. Laliberte said he was worried about too much development disrupting the rural character of Boscawen. Chair Martin said the intent of the PB is to make different types of housing more attainable and affordable to developers and residents alike.

Mr. Donovan motioned to adjourn. Seconded by Ex-Officio Carey. All in favor. None opposed.

The next meeting will be held on January 9th, 2024 in the Boscawen Public Library.

Respectfully submitted by Kara Gallagher.