

Fairhaven Economic Development Committee
Thursday, January 25, 2018

The meeting opened at 6:30 p.m. and Mr. Laughlin advised the meeting was being recorded and put on Live on Facebook.

A ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

Present: Kevin McLaughlin, Bernie Roderick, Robert Espindola, John Seed, Todd McGregor, and Eddie Lopez.

Wayne Hayward was absent.

William Roth, Town Planner was also in attendance. Mark Rees was also in attendance.

Acceptance of Minutes: None at this time, will put forth for next meeting.

B. Meet with FXM – Economic Development Plan – Discuss Draft Report

Mr. Frank Mahady gave an overview of the Draft Report. He explained the trends that were used and industries that are growing in the area. They did an assessment comparative to other Towns and Cities in the area. They did an extensive shared work space draft workup. They did 12-15 interviews of people, business developers in Town. Mr. Mahady reviewed the summary of findings.

He spoke about office work space being a particular option for Fairhaven, especially where there are retail vacant space in Town. He advised he thinks they need to change zoning. A demand for rental housing in the area.

He stated the interviews done were favorable for the Committees and Boards. Minor grumbling of some committees, but more satisfied with the way businesses feel about doing business in Fairhaven. He talked about the tax rate. Fairhaven is attractive because of the lower tax rate for residential compared to other Towns and Cities. He stated the report makes suggestions on how to make Fairhaven more attractive. Infrastructure is good, economy stable. Very promising that you have an EDC that wants to move to get things done in Town, not like that everywhere.

Bernie Roderick asked about rental properties. Mr. Mahady believes there is a demand for it.

Mr. Roderick asked about two specific condominiums area and what occurred with them. One was G. Bourne Knowles and the other the old Chinese restaurant area.

Mr. Roth stated that the market went south and G. Bourne Knowles developer thought it wouldn't be a good investment. He also stated that the Zoning Board of Appeals denied the condo developing in the area for various reasons.

Mr. Espindola asked about the draining of the school system with these types of housing. Mr. Mahady stated that it's the empty-nesters or younger millennials that would be interested in these type of housing. He said the market doesn't show there would be a drain on the school system.

Mr. MacGregor referred to page 20-21 on how to repurpose buildings, retail empty stores – especially where online shopping is taking over.

Mr. Mahady suggested zoning – mixed use district.

Mr. Roth stated that is one of the implementation plans through the current Master Plan. One of the goals is a mixed use district in implementing.

Discussion on Benny's and how to move forward with them and Ocean State Job Lot to provide assistance to ask where they need our help.

Mr. Espindola said the marketing approach is very important – a good message on the website. He believes the marketing approach is doable and should be a number one priority.

Mr. Espindola asked Mr. Rees specifically about the budget that is available to perhaps get started on some of the marketing ideas.

Mr. Lopez suggested a social media platform to reach more people and specify who you want to see your message; by employment, age group, etc.

Mr. Espindola suggested using some of there budget to hire someone and get the website going, which is doable in a month or so.

Mr. Roth cautioned the amount of time that a person needs to monitor the Social Media page can be very taxing. Although it's a good idea, he felt it could be taxing to one person. Mr. Lopez thought it could be a good outreach tool, and thought the Committee members would be able to help out with the data.

Mr. McGregor suggested reaching out to TJX (who owns Marshall's) & possibly suggesting Home Goods as an expansion in this area.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. Roderick suggested piggy backing on NB Harbor, because it is Fairhaven's Harbor as well. He noted newspaper articles recently expressing promotional tasks about New Bedford Harbor.

Mr. Mahady gave a few names that they could meet with to discuss what options are available for the Committee to reach out to and express their interest.

Important to recognize marketing and resources tool that is out there.

Discussion about the wind farm resources.

Mr. McGregor's thoughts were that the residential rate should go up a little and the business rate should go down a little. Also to attract more small businesses, office workspace and less restaurants.

Mr. Mahady said you have to be careful with restaurants because they define a Town. He said restaurants bring people in and there's a value to that.

The major finding in the study is that New Bedford is Fairhaven's biggest competition vs. other towns regarding economic development.

Fairhaven has a compelling transportation avenue – highway, 240 and the Fairhaven/New Bedford bridge.

Discussion on commercial property and the tax rate. Discussion on fees assessed to business owners.

Discussion about work space incubators. Discussion on shared work space and the demand for it is huge and it is beneficial.

Discussion on redevelopment on lots that can be utilized vs. looking at lots (like the Drive-in) that may not be buildable because of wetlands, etc. especially when using your local resources and economic standpoint.

Mr. Roth suggested collaboration among different Town committees need to work together and the Selectman and the Town Administrator. A unified approach is necessary – including the School Committee.

Mr. Rees suggested putting specific goals from the Master Plan regarding EDC – he says what lacks in this report is specific objections and goals, so they should be incorporated in this report.

Mr. Espindola discussed page 47-possible funding sources. He suggested if there is a project that the committee can come up with, they be able to slightly add more to the Committee's budget. As well as spending some of the funds that are still available to them for this fiscal year.

Mr. Rees advised the Chairperson that the draft report would need to be approved so the recommendation from the Committee could be made to the Board of Selectman. He said they didn't need to approve it tonight, but they could add the amendments and approve tonight or at the next meeting. Mr. Rees suggested one of the amendments is to include the goals and objectives from the Master Plan supported or not the ideas of the EDC as they see appropriately.

Mr. Rees left the meeting at 8:51p.m.

The Committee continued to discuss the report with questions on how to implement.

Mr. Seed agreed that mixed use really needs to be looked at along with the drive of development through web development and social media.

Mr. McLaughlin spent a lot of time thinking about page 8 and the wages table. He also had general questions on page 21 regarding projected demands of space and projected new jobs.

More discussion ensued about the Master Plan objection #1 for EDC.

Mr. Espinola made a motion to approve the draft with the amendments and grammatical errors spoke about this evening and adding the goals/objectives to the document and was seconded by Todd McGregor. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Roth explained the procedural from this point with this draft – Mr. Mahady will make the corrections and sent to Mark Rees, who will make the recommendations on behalf of the committee to the Selectman with or without the Committee members present.

Mr. McLaughlin was discussing when they should have their next meeting should be.

Mr. Espindola suggested an earlier meeting in February as they have the momentum to build upon the marketing web avenue.

Next meeting scheduled for Thursday, March 1, 2018 at 6:30 p.m.

Todd McGregor made a motion to adjourn and was seconded by John Seed. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting ended at 9:35p.m.

Respectively submitted,

Patricia A. Pacella
Recording Secretary