

Town of Epsom
Economic Development Committee meeting minutes
Old Meetinghouse Lower Level
June 27, 2023 5:30 PM

Present

Vincent Pagano, Chair
Linda Hodgdon, Vice Chair
Joseph Wysocki
Jason Johnson

Susan Lombard
Meadow Wysocki, Epsom Select Board
Kathy DesRoches, Epsom Planning Board

Call to order

Mr. Pagano called the meeting to order at 5:31 PM

Agenda review

Susan Lombard name spelled with an "N" instead of "M". Jason instead of JJ. Mike Tardiff last name spelled incorrectly. Ms. Hodgdon motioned to accept the minutes as amended, Mr. Johnson seconded the motion. The amended minutes passed unanimously.

Discussion

The next meeting date was brought up and stated to be the fourth Tuesday of the month. Ms. Wysocki said the meeting is set to be recur on the fourth Tuesday of each month unless moved at least a week in advance. Ms. Hodgdon said she will be traveling that week. Mr. Wysocki mentioned he will not be available on July 25 either. Ms. Lombard also will not be able to attend. Mr. Pagano asked to move the next meeting to August 1 and there was agreement to move the meeting to August 1 at 5:30pm.

Mr. Pagano updated Ms. DesRoches about the first meeting of the EDC.

The Board moved on to review the list of proposed and potential project for the EDC to complete.

Ms. Lombard brought up internet service in Epsom and potential issues. Mr. Pagano went over the current FCC guidelines to build out internet to unserved areas. That funding will only be for households that do not have internet above the 25/3mbps threshold. This does not apply to locations that are served by one provider, so any further internet buildout would have to be coordinated with an internet service provider (ISP) to bring more options or faster options to the town. Mr. Pagano said that his work in Loudon is investigating the same issue and will bring any findings to the EDC when he has them. Mr. Pagano said he will send out the FCC link along with the minutes. EDC members brought up the importance of fast and reliable internet for current and future business. Businesses use internet to power much of their processes,

particularly POS systems. Reliable internet that can be installed quickly, which is currently not the standard in Epsom, is important to business development in any town. The EDC agreed to add broadband internet expansion to the list of projects for the EDC.

Mr. Pagano then suggested the EDC choose 2-3 projects on the list to achieve first. Ms. DesRoches brought up the signs for the Economic Revitalization Zones. There are several signs, one is at Gauthier Drive but was taken down by an unknown party during construction of the Elite Sports Academy facility and is yet to be found. Ms. DesRoches said she will look for the sign and find the application material to get the other signs up. The other signs that are waiting to be installed require permission from the State as they would be in State rights-of-way. Mr. Johnson said the signs are important, but it goes further than that. For someone driving by and seeing the sign that may have a business to bring to town they may not be aware of what an ERZ is and its function. Mr. Johnson suggested there be resources on the Epsom town website for people looking to start or expand business in Epsom that could take advantage of the ERZ. Mr. Johnson also said there should be information on the application process and suggested this gets in place before the physical signs are out up. Ms. Lombard said Northwood does a good job with their Tax Increment Financing fee information and this may be something Epsom can emulate. Mr. Pagano said the Google Drive for the Epsom EDC has the ERZ information from the state. Mr. Johnson reiterated the steps, first get information on ERZs on the website, then post the signs. Ms. DesRoches said the district engineer that can give permission to post the sign on the right of way has left, so there is time. Mr. Johnson asked if the town could incentivize business development on top of an ERZ, such as a reduced tax rate. Ms. DesRoches said there would likely have to be a warrant article. If there are any potential warrant articles that the EDC suggests, they should be started soon to fit into the process of getting them on to the warrant article. Ms. Hodgdon asked if the ERZ is due for a review, and Mr. Pagano said he will check with Mr. Tardiff at CNHRPC and the representative at NH Business and Economic Affairs.

Regarding tax breaks for grocery stores, there are several things to consider such as definition of a grocery store, service benefit to citizen vs. reduced tax revenue, and consideration of additional tax revenue that would not be had if there were no grocery store, as well as traffic patterns and continued maintenance.

Ms. DesRoches then mentioned the Epsom Master Plan, and Mr. Pagano defined what a master plan is. Mr. Pagano then mentioned there was a Master Plan Survey that was done in 2019 as well as a public hearing session that was completed several years before. Mr. Pagano said that there is information on businesses in Epsom and what people would like to see and said he would put that on the Drive after Ms. DesRoches checks with the Planning Board. Hundreds of people replied to the survey.

Ms. DesRoches explained how a business can start in Epsom, where they would go to the Planning Board after filling out a form, hear if their business is allowed, get approval, and then move forward. It was stated that there could be an infographic on how to start a business and the processes that go along with that for potential business owners in Epsom. Mr. Wysocki said that people will probably start looking online, so it's important to have that information easily

accessible which on its own can incentivize a business to come to Epsom. Ms. DesRoches said that support is important to retaining business and gave the Rage Room that was in the strip mall in Epsom for ~four months and then left. Mr. Pagano summarized and said the first priority seems to be getting the Epsom Website populated with support for businesses. This could potentially go under the EDC section, or on the home page as a banner that links to the resources on starting and owning a business in Epsom. Mr. Johnson said the content needs to be put together first, and Ms. Wysocki said there is currently information on 79-E and ERZ. The EDC will produce a rough draft for the flow chart to starting a business in Epsom before the next meeting. Mr. Wysocki summarized the steps to be completed as develop the website under the current platform which the town has at least through the end of the year, develop a draft of the process to start a business in Epsom, concurrently apply for the ERZ sign to be posted on state property, and to prepare the infographic on benefits of an ERZ to business owners.

Then discussion arose about the flag posting on the Epsom Traffic Circle. 300 flags were posted by a private entity. The flags will be removed by the group following July 8.

Mr. Wysocki said there are projects that he missed, and he will add them.

Discussion was had about social media for economic development in the town. There are multiple platforms that may be beneficial, but questions arose about management and actual use of social media. Mr. Pagano said he can at least start a YouTube account for Economic Development in Epsom to highlight special features of Epsom's location and business base.

The last items on the project list to be discussed were flags, which was handled by the private group, a town welcome sign which the EDC discussed and said there may be a motto, but everyone was unsure. Ms. Wysocki said she would investigate the existence of a town motto.

Next meeting

August 28, 2023

Mr. Johnson made a motioned to adjourn. Ms. Hodgdon seconded the motion. The motion passed 7-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:42PM.

Respectfully submitted, Vincent Pagano