

MINUTES OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
EXECUTIVE CONFERENCE ROOM
OCTOBER 23, 2018 4:00pm.

Committee Members present: Councilor Martin Dumont, Chairman
 Councilor Jon McCallion
 Councilor Richard Michaud
 Councilor Edward Levasseur (entered at 4:35)

Administration/Staff present: Bob Belmore, City Manager
 Kelly Gagne, Deputy City Clerk
 Shanna Saunders, Director of Planning & Community
 Development
 Robin Comstock, Economic Development Manager

Other: George Bald, former Somersworth Mayor & former State
 of NH DRED Commissioner

Chairman Dumont called the meeting to order at 4:08 pm.

APPROVE MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER 18, 2018 MEETING

Motion made by Councilor Michaud, seconded by Councilor McCallion, to accept the minutes of the previous meeting as presented, Motion passed 2-0, Councilor McCallion abstained.

GUEST – MR. GEORGE BALD, Resident and FORMER SOMERSWORTH MAYOR & STATE OF NH COMMISSIONER

Mr. Bald came here to share some ideas and suggestions to the Committee at the invitation of the Chairman; he stated that he has been fortunate enough to have always been involved with Economic Development. There are three things that are needed in order to be successful in Economic Development they are: *patience, confidentiality and relationships*. He spoke of examples of each, with the first being patience perhaps as communities need to understand things do not happen overnight, rather it takes patience and being persistent. The second being confidentiality; companies do not want to read in the paper that they are looking at a particular town or site until any decision becomes final. If the word gets out that a company is looking to relocate, other economic development managers might reach out and try to persuade the company to look at their City or Town; or perhaps the company decides not to do so for another reason and residents perceive this to be the town's failure. The third being relationships; it is important that before you go looking for new companies that you make sure that the existing companies here are happy. He suggested that the Mayor/City Manager, EDM Robin Comstock,

and if appropriate a Committee member schedule a visit to each company within the City to build relationships. Also, it is important to have a list of existing businesses that have been visited provided to potential businesses to have contact for references. It is good for the Community to look positive when developing the City, having good articles in the paper occasionally is beneficial to the City. Somersworth (to him) is an ideal place for businesses owned by their principal. He suggested that the Committee invite Mike Bergeron from the State to come to a meeting and / or meet with staff; it would be beneficial to have Somersworth at the top of his mind as companies call him for relocation assistance.

Manager Belmore stated there has been some feedback that we are not business friendly enough, that the development process also could be better streamlined. Belmore asked if George had experienced certain examples in other communities that we could draw from to improve our process. Mr. Bald answered as an example, if you say do “ABCDEFGH,” and then we’ll give you the permit; however then the City comes back and asks for additional things before the permit is given, that can lead to potential companies becoming discouraged. Another thing to keep in mind is during a meeting, if appropriate; place the larger projects in the beginning of the agenda, so they don’t have to sit through the entire meeting. Some people will just blame the system even if it is their fault, just be clear and honest with them from the beginning.

Councilor McCallion suggested that a cartoon-a-gram be used to explain our development process and passed out to potential businesses.

Shanna Saunders shared that she hears a lot of people that are looking to move in available spaces, but Somersworth has a lot of land available and not enough available buildings. Shanna then asked - How do we turn them around to want to build? Mr. Bald answered that most companies are in need of ready move in spaces, they can’t wait for a building to be built

Councilor Levasseur thanked Mr. Bald for being there, he asked if he has heard of our plaza project and if so what are your ideas for that area? Mr. Bald responded that he had not heard of it, but the fact that you received no responses isn’t a bad thing. He suggested that we go to other developers that are already in the City, Eric Chinburg as an example. Keep your standards up, don’t sell yourself short and be patient.

NEW BUSINESS

None

OLD BUSINESS

PLAZA RFP UPDATE

No updates.

FORMER POLICE STATION PROPERTY

No updates.

MARKETING PLAN UPDATE

No Updates.

FORMED BASED CODES RFP UPDATE

Form based codes are due on Nov. 1. 2pm

MISCELLANEOUS

Yesterday Councilor Levasseur spoke of a meeting he went to in Berwick, Maine. He stated that the 4th bullet goal on their agenda was to study traffic flow from Somersworth & Berwick. Councilor McCallion stated there was a parking Commission years ago that might supply the number of spaces.

Next meeting will be Tuesday, Nov 13th @ 4pm.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Councilor Michaud, seconded by Councilor Levasseur to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried with a vote of 3-1, Councilor McCallion abstained. The meeting adjourned at 5:45p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelly Gagne, Deputy City Clerk