

# ASHLAND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

## MEETING MINUTES

August 19, 2014

6:00 pm

Ashland Fire Station

### Steering Committee Members Present

Susan MacLeod, Jill White, Cheryl Cox (Planning Board ex-officio), Steve Felton (Board of Selectmen ex-officio)

### Ad Hoc Committee Members Present

Scott Stephens (Plymouth Regional Chamber of Commerce)

### Others present

Katie Maher, Jae Demers, Rick Ash, Fran Newton, David Toth

This meeting of the Ashland Economic Development Committee was called to order at 6:00 pm by Chairperson MacLeod.

### Disposition of Meeting Minutes

A motion was made by Steve Felton to accept the minutes from the July 15, 2014 meeting. The motion was seconded by Jill White. The vote was 4-0 in the affirmative.

### Facebook Page

No update on the Facebook page. The BOS has approved a page on the Ashland town website for the AEDC. Mardean Badger will create a page.

### Mill Area Tour

Due to her interest in the work done by the HEAL (*Healthy Eating, Active Living*) Coalition in Ashland, Senator Jeanie Forrester contacted Fran Newton and David Toth. When she was informed about the Ashland Economic Development Committee and some of its goals, Senator Forrester requested a tour of the mill area. She will be joined by:

- Mark Scarano, CEO, Grafton County Economic Development Council
- Scott Stevens, Plymouth Chamber of Commerce, Member of Ashland Economic Development Committee
- Benoit Lamontagne, NH Division of Economic Development, North Country Rep
- Susan MacLeod, Chair of Ashland Planning Board and Ashland Economic Development Committee
- Eli Badger, Chair of Ashland Zoning Board of Adjustment
- Fran Newton, member Ashland Board of Selectmen

The purpose of the tour, which will take place in September, will be to get a better understanding of the issues and potential economic development opportunities that may exist in Ashland, particularly in the mill area. Senator Forrester wishes to work with Ashland in finding potential developers for the area. She has worked with Alex Ray and Rusty McLearn on various projects in the past.

### **Bike-Pedestrian Committee**

Joe Mazzone has received and refurbished twenty-five bicycles. Several of these have been made available to people in the community. If anyone is interested in receiving one of the bicycles they should send an email to [heal@ashland.nh.gov](mailto:heal@ashland.nh.gov).

Susan MacLeod was informed by Nik Coates of HEAL NH ([healnh.org](http://healnh.org)) about federal funds available through a NHDOT grant to improve sidewalks in a community so that it is easier and safer to walk and bike the area. In conjunction with the Ashland Public Works Department a letter of intent was written and sent out which will be followed up with a formal application and description of the proposal.

### **Business Owner Interviews**

Jill White and Susan MacLeod shared the feedback they received from Ashland business owners during the interviews scheduled at last month's meeting. About ten people were interviewed as of this meeting, with more scheduled.

Katie Maher volunteered to complete a SWOT analysis (Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats) for Ashland based on the feedback given. Most comments on the chart are the opinions/perceptions of those interviewed. The committee members also shared their views. **See attachment 1.**

### **Economic Development Forum**

The tentative date for the Economic Development Forum is Tuesday, Oct. 14. Other details still need to be worked out and finalized. The goal of the forum will be to define one or two initial projects for the committee to work on.

### **Other topics**

- The Plymouth Area Chamber of Commerce supports business from Exit 23 – 32. Some businesses in Ashland are currently members of the Chamber. There are plans to create sub-groups within the CoC to help improve the level of support that can be provided to area community members.
- The idea of a town newsletter has been discussed. The goal of a newsletter would be to keep people informed about town processes, all the valuable activities taking place in town, many done by volunteers, as well as sharing ideas on how to make Ashland better.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 pm.

The next meeting will be held on **Tuesday, September 16, 2014 at 6:00 pm** at the Ashland Fire Station, ***unless notified otherwise.***

*Minutes submitted by Cheryl Cox*

August 19, 2014

<p><b>Internal Factor Positive</b></p> <p>What do we do well?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical skills</li> <li>• Leading brands</li> <li>• Distribution channels</li> <li>• Customer loyalty/relationships</li> <li>• Service quality</li> <li>• Scale</li> <li>• People</li> </ul> <p>What unique resources can we draw on?</p>	<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Located off I93</li> <li>• Center of NH</li> <li>• Squam Lakes and River</li> <li>• Deep rooted sense of community</li> <li>• Lowest electric rates in region</li> <li>• Active rail line</li> <li>• Upgraded Cell Tower</li> <li>• K-9 school</li> <li>• 4<sup>th</sup> of July Celebration</li> <li>• Ball Field &amp; Booster Club</li> <li>• Passionate local NFPs</li> <li>• Proven success stories i.e. HEAL</li> <li>• 150<sup>th</sup> in 2018</li> <li>• Economic Development Committee</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived disparity in treatment for new versus generational residents</li> <li>• Ambiguity on established processes; lack of documentation &amp; training of staff, elected officials &amp; volunteers</li> <li>• Businesses perceive themselves as Ashland 'customers' expecting 'service'</li> <li>• Business departing due to lack of market/traffic &amp; cultural challenges</li> <li>• General awareness or misinterpretation of RSA's, municipal rules &amp; regulations</li> <li>• Parking limitations</li> <li>• Internal discord on issues/projects</li> <li>• Blight in some buildings creating weak first impression on main street</li> </ul>	<p><b>Internal Factor Negative</b></p> <p>What can we improve?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Missing skills</li> <li>• Weak brand</li> <li>• Customer retention</li> <li>• Service reliability</li> <li>• Management</li> </ul> <p>Where do we have fewer resources than others?</p>
<p><b>External Factor Positive</b></p> <p>What opportunities are open to us?</p> <p>What trends can we take advantage of?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing customer tastes</li> <li>• Technological advances</li> <li>• New distribution channels</li> </ul> <p>How can we turn our strengths into opportunities?</p>	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell a different story about Ashland</li> <li>• Business development of property increasing tax base i.e. Dollar General</li> <li>• Accurate property listing &amp; town amenities to attract new businesses</li> <li>• Legion parking lease</li> <li>• Learning from Bristol &amp; Littleton</li> <li>• 9/24/14 Mill Tour with Jeannie Forrester</li> <li>• Grant money for Economic Development</li> <li>• Community Visioning Project</li> <li>• Volunteer &amp; Employee Appreciation Day</li> <li>• Ashland Committee with Plymouth Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>• Monthly newsletter in electric bills</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bedroom community</li> <li>• Large number of rental units</li> <li>• Low quality housing and its inherent problems</li> <li>• Perceived rising drug problem</li> </ul>	<p><b>External Factor Negative</b></p> <p>What threatens our business?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing customer base</li> <li>• Closing markets</li> <li>• Technological advances</li> <li>• New distribution channels</li> </ul> <p>What is our competition doing?</p> <p>What threats do our weaknesses expose us to?</p>