

ASHLAND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES
September 28, 2015
6:30 pm
Ashland Fire Station

Steering Committee Members Present

Susan MacLeod, Cheryl Cox (Planning Board ex-officio), Steve Felton (BOS ex-officio), Benoit Lamontagne

Ad Hoc Committee Members Present

Scott Stephens (Central NH Chamber of Commerce), Jae Demers, Eli Badger (Housing Standards Board), David Toth (Water & Sewer Commissioner), Kathleen DeWolfe (Conservation Commission), Lee Nichols, Superintendent (Ashland Electric Department)

Others present

Taylor Caswell (CDFA Executive Director), Michael Long (Chairman, CDFA BOD) Fran Newton, Norm DeWolfe, Leigh Sharps

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 pm by Chairperson MacLeod.

Community Development Finance Authority (CDFA)

Thanks to Beno for inviting Taylor Caswell and Mike Long to our meeting. Taylor Caswell gave an overview of the function of the CDFA. He explained they are a quasi-state agency. They are not state employees. They are incorporated as a non-profit which allows them to be more nimble and flexible than a state agency. Their purpose is to help towns build on their own capacity to grow. Their focus is on assisting with community development, economic development and clean energy finance. Community development is the main focus and includes programs such as Main Street programs, affordable housing and assisting with public utilities improvements. Relating to economic development they are moving towards things like assisting with workforce training and encouraging entrepreneurship. They have invested heavily in business incubators such as the Enterprise Center in Plymouth. He explained the concept of “maker spaces”. These are locations where hobbyists or small businesses use their resources to assist or train others interested in the same craft, such as woodworking (as an example). Related to clean energy, the effort is to assist in finding ways to lower energy costs and improve energy efficiency.

There are several funding sources for CDFA, much of it being federal funding. State funds are available. Another source is through tax credits. This source is usually capped at \$5 million per year. There is obviously a lot of competition for the funds available.

Mike Long made the following points:

- The Enterprise Center is a nearby resource for finding entrepreneurs looking for a site to open a new business.
- Community Development Block Grants are a great source of funding to do infrastructure improvements.

- Decide on a project and get all available resources (CDFA, DRED) in a room to talk about best ways to fund the project.

Steve Felton asked about recent projects that were funded by CDFA. Taylor talked about the improvements made at Polly's Pancake Parlor in Franconia. These were made possible by loans through CDFA. He noted how successful the business enterprise centers have been. He explained early childhood programs such as boys and girls clubs and after school programs are more often being funded through the community development funding programs.

Taylor recommended that the best way to be successful with any project is:

- to have the town decide for itself what it wants.
- Don't pay someone to come in and tell you what is best for your community.
- it is a good idea to think regionally and partner with local agencies such as North Country Council and the Grafton County Economic Development Corporation.

Decide on a feasible project, then seek funding.

Both Taylor and Mike recommended the AEDC visit Claremont, Keene and/or Littleton. Claremont and Keene have old mill buildings that have been revitalized. They offered to put us in touch with the appropriate people.

Steve Felton asked what could be done in the situation where several different property owners are involved in an area you are looking at for development. Both Taylor and Mike agreed you would need to bring the owners together and discuss the best use of the area. You could then get a block grant and do a marketing feasibility study on best use of the property. There are opportunities for block grants and other grants up to \$500,000 per community per project. If the project includes housing, other grants are available. Tax credits up to \$500,000 are also available.

Deadlines for Grants: Community Development block grants (CDBG) deadlines are January and July/August. The Tax credit grant application process begins in February. Applications are due in April and the funding begins in July. Economic development grants applications are on a monthly basis. Ashland meets the criteria for CDBG grants.

It was recommended we invite Katie Martey, Director of Economic Development for CDFA to a future AEDC meeting for more specifics about grant applications. Christine from North Country Council was an additional recommended resource.

General Discussion

The Booster Club: Lee asked about proceeding with meetings to consider improvements at the Booster Club. It was agreed that any improvements to the building would benefit everyone. It is important to keep in mind that it is a town building and all appropriate people need to be involved in any meetings. There are opportunities for grants as well as Alex Ray's offer to match any money raised for improvements.

Mill Property: In 2011 a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment was done at the former L.W. Packard Mill at 6 Mill Street per request of the town of Ashland. (NHDES Site No. 200009045).

The report is at the following link:

http://lakesrpc.org/documents/brown/Packard_Phase_I%20ESA.pdf

In addition, NHDES had some involvement with one of the buildings when they removed barrels containing potentially hazardous liquids from the site. The possibility of doing a Phase II assessment has been discussed but cannot take place if corrections recommended in the Phase I report have not been made. The owner of the property has not made those corrections. DES will not typically press a property owner to correct problems found. If DES deems the site to be an imminent danger they could fine the owner. The town has made applications through DES and the EPA for funds to clean up the property and will continue to pursue those. Beno recommended contacting Christine Frost, Executive Director of North Country Council see if Brownfield funds are available.

Ashland Business Meet and Greet: Everyone was pleased how well attended and positive the recent meet and greet was. There were at least twenty-seven people from (at least) seventeen businesses in attendance. A thank you for attending email was sent out for the AEDC mailbox. Some discussion took place on next steps. The sub-committee will meet on October 6:00 pm to discuss more specifics. The Christmas Night in Ashland celebration is a very good opportunity to involve the businesses in town.

David Toth stated a meeting has been set up to discuss the possibility of extending sewer lines from Ashland into Holderness. We were pleased to note that several concerns/issues brought up at the meeting, such as GIS capabilities and businesses in Ashland closing, could be answered/explained in the positive. It was beneficial for attendees to find out these topics, and others are being discussed and addressed.

LRPC Commissioner Meetings: There is a conflict with the AEDC meetings and the LRPC Commissioner meetings that Cheryl should be attending, as the Ashland commissioner. Given the meeting schedules in town, there did not seem to be a different time the AEDC could meet. The October meetings are also in conflict. Cheryl should attend the commissioner meeting on October 26 and someone else from the sub-committee can report on next steps.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:01 pm.

The next meeting will be held on **Monday, October 26, 2015 at 6:30 pm** at the Ashland Fire Station, ***unless notified otherwise.***

Minutes submitted by Cheryl Cox