

ASHLAND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

April 27, 2015

6:30 pm

Ashland Fire Station

Steering Committee Members Present

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

Absent with Notice

Jill White

Ad Hoc Committee Members Present

Lee Nichols, Superintendent (Ashland Electric Department), Scott Stephens (Plymouth Regional Chamber of Commerce)

Others present

Attorney Brien Ward from Littleton, Paul Branscombe, Norm DeWolfe, Kathleen DeWolfe, Jae Demers, Fran Newton, David Toth

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm by Chairperson MacLeod.

Littleton, NH's Economic Development

Brien Ward, who has been heavily involved in the economic development progress made in Littleton, NH did a presentation on their process and successes.

Brien stated the major points to keep in mind:

- The four types of assistance that will be needed:
 - Technical assistance
 - Engineering
 - Grant writing
 - All available funding resources/partners
- By using state funding to help leverage federal funding and using federal funding to leverage state funding they were able to maximize the amount of money available.
- Anticipate setbacks but keep pushing forward and have patience. Littleton has been at this process for ten years or more.
- Government Outreach: Involve Ashland's congressmen and senate representative. However, don't waste their time. Make sure you have a credible project to present.
- Keep positive energy: "nothing can be accomplished through whining, complaining, finding fault or making excuses".
- Develop your relationship with Plymouth State College. Littleton did not have convenient access to such a valuable resource.
- Economic development "never ends, there is constant economic churning." Learn how to identify the opportunity in a negative occurrence.
- Other towns Ashland may want to talk with relative to economic development: Newmarket and/or Lincoln, NH.

- Littleton has received or applied for many various types of grants. In addition, they have received private contributions. It is important to note that grants requests are **NOT** typically funded on the first try. You must not get discouraged and keep applying.
 - US Dept. of Transportation TIGER grant: The Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery, or TIGER Discretionary Grant program, provides a unique opportunity for the DOT to invest in road, rail, transit and port projects that promise to achieve critical national objectives.
 - Federal Economic Development Agency grants, Community Block grants, Tax Credits, NH Department of Resources and Economic Development (DRED) grants, Rails & Trails grant
- North Country Council has helped Littleton write grant requests. Brien provided names of several people from NCC and who have written grants for Littleton.
 - North Country Council - <http://www.nccouncil.org/about/staff>
 - Northern Community Investment Corporation (NCIC) – www.ncic.org/who-we-are/staff
- Keep track of, communicate and celebrate your accomplishments, “the singles, doubles and the walks”. Don’t wait to communicate and celebrate only “the grandslams”. Small successes can reap benefits in more areas than you may have expected.
- You need to have a clear vision for the community. It must be clearly and consistently communicated to the people of the town. Littleton uses cable access television.
- The town vision must be fully supported and “sold” to the town by the Board of Selectmen and other town leaders.
- When asking townspeople to fund a project, they must be given all necessary information, including other sources of funding, so they can make an informed decision.
- “Buff up” your downtown and the I-93 access area for a quick improvement. Littleton got more interest by making those types of improvements then they did by actively soliciting businesses. Consider joining the National Main Street program. - <http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/about-main-street>
- Maintain the “About Ashland” kiosks.
- Make partnerships where ever possible. Consider involving Alex Rey to get assistance in making some quick and inexpensive improvements.
- You must have “local ownership and local leadership”.

Handouts:

Ashland / Littleton Comparison – Littleton Redevelopment Projects 1977 - 2013
Downtown Littleton Reconnect Project – Littleton River District Revitalization
Littleton 1995 – 2005, A Decade of Progress and Accomplishment

Marketing Sub-committee Update

Members: Cheryl Cox, Jae Demers, Fran Newton, Lee Nichols, Jill White

The team met earlier in the week. The consensus of the group was to have a “business after hours” gathering as soon as details can be worked out. The group is researching venues and reaching out to local business owners. The intent is to get a core group of 10 or more local businesses to participate. The theme would be two-fold. First, groups within town government and other local groups and organizations will be asked to participate to answer any questions that business participants may have. Second, ask the participants how they think we can best market Ashland. Lee Nichols stated that at least two business owners he has spoken with have expressed interest in participating.

To seek involvement and partnering, visits with local businesses will be scheduled.

Susan MacLeod suggested creating some type of welcome package to be provided when a new business opens its doors. Also suggested:

- acknowledging those businesses that make an effort to improve the appearance of Main Street by hanging flower baskets, etc.
- spotlighting businesses in Ashland in some way

GIS Sub-committee Update

Members: Steve Felton, Michelle Roberts, Norm DeWolfe, Eli Badger

It has been a challenge to get GIS up and running due to the large amount of information to be added from tax maps. The key layers of information must be identified. Milford, NH has successfully implemented GIS and will be contacted for best practices.

The team will work with heads from all town departments to create a steering committee to determine additional information that should be added.

Land Available Sub-committee Update

Members: Susan MacLeod, Eli Badger Paul Branscombe, Lee Nichols

An inventory spread sheet for commercial/industrial zoned land/buildings has been created. Gathering the information to put into the spreadsheet is time consuming as it is in multiple locations and forms. As part of the process, the possibility of altering zoning boundaries to better facilitate economic development should be addressed at some point.

Laptop Provided by PSU

Susan MacLeod requested and received a laptop for AEDC use from Plymouth State. The cost of adding an operating system and security software is being researched.

General Discussion

It was agreed we need to now prioritize the areas in town we should focus attention on and develop plans for specific projects. No project is too small. We need to have some successes and begin to share and celebrate each success.

Some discussion took place on potential uses and restrictions for the land near the town well.

Stockholders/Partners

Various ideas were shared on how to make the “entryway” to Ashland off of Route 93 more inviting and welcoming. Some areas are town owned, some state owned and some privately owned. Alex Rey owns property adjacent to this area. We need to contact appropriate people to determine some quick and inexpensive things that can be done to improve this area and seek sponsors, if possible.

Welcome Sign(s)

Work had been done previously on design for a welcome sign, including a quote for making it. It was agreed we should revive that effort.

Information

Lee Nichols shared the following information from NH RSA's:

- Municipal Finance Act/Purpose of Issue of Bonds and Notes – Chapter 33: Part 33:3
- Capital Reserve Funds.... – Chapter 35: Parts 35:1c, 35:5, 35:7, 35:8 and 35:9.

- Article on NH's Invisible Infrastructure Dilemma
- Report from environmental study done on Samyn-Delia 26+ acre property that is for sale

EDA Grant Application

For the next meeting, we need to determine several projects we would like to pursue in order to complete the grant application for the technical assistance from the Economic Development Administration. Glenn Coppelman from the North Country Council is waiting to assist in completing the application.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:12 pm.

Due to the Memorial Day holiday, the next meeting will be held on Tuesday, **May 26, 2015 at 6:30 pm** at the Ashland Fire Station, ***unless notified otherwise.***

Minutes submitted by Cheryl Cox