

The Town of Groton Economic Development Committee

Minutes of Meeting, November 22, 2011

Introduction

Date, Time and Place

A meeting of the Town's Economic Development Committee was held at 5 o'clock P.M. on November 22, 2011 at Town Hall.

Attendees:

- Mike Rasmussen as Chairperson, Gus Widmayer as Recording Secretary, Anna Eliot, Peter Myette, Jim Ryan, and Jane Bouvier.
- Russell Burke was not in attendance.
- Members of the public who were present included Steve Webber and Pierre Comtois.

Proceedings

The Minutes of Meeting of the previous two sessions were reviewed, modified and submitted to the Recording Secretary for safekeeping in the book of Minutes. These were approved by five of the six members in attendance; Jim Ryan having arrived late.

Discussion of the Town's Master Plan

- Members were assigned homework to read the Town's Master Plan, with particular focus on Chapter 9, Economic Development, [See: pp 109-132].
 - a. See: http://www.townofgroton.org/xml/town/Master_Plan/Groton_Master_Plan_2011.pdf
 - b. This committee was created by the Selectmen in part to help alter a perception of the town being inhospitable to business.
 - i. One example of this is how incoming businesses have to go from board to board to board, all the while bearing the expenses of these meetings, e.g. legal fees, etc.
 - c. GMS as IT department in Groton
 - d. Automate the Form of Intent
- The Design Review Board is an advisory board only, not meant to hold power to modify designs but merely to assist in the process and to help the applicants understand it.
- Jane Bouvier interjected, "Applicants are not greeted with 'Welcome to Groton', but rather 'What are YOU doing here?'"
- Anna Eliot recommended that we write to the Planning Board asking for a different mechanism for the 180-day process contained in the Master Plan.
- Steve Webber felt that the Planning Board holds a bias more toward residential development.
- There is a meeting to discuss the Master Plan on December 1st with the town's consultant. Would a letter from this board have any effect?

Discussion of the EDC as Part of the Process

- Potential ideas:
 - a. Interview local businesses to ask their opinion of the process they had to go through.
- Peter Myette asked how many businesses have applied this year and a count on those accepted.
- Business applicant plans must meet guidelines or the guidelines would have to first be changed. No other route.
- Jim Ryan added that many local businesses are not often "bankable" tenants. The Town's guidelines take us down a path that may not work.
- Mike Rasmussen considered that the Town Center Overlay District really needs to be completed before further problems ensue.
 - a. No. 134 Main Street and the Groton Inn may go to residential development, if not.
- Steve Webber asked that this committee perform "*post mortems*" on business applications that failed over the past five years.
 - a. We need to notify the selectmen of our intent to do this and then take the results of our survey to them.
 - b. *i.e.* "Here are the problems we see as the EDC."
 - i. One issue is the extent of engineering that is required, including abutting property reviews, etc.
 - ii. Parking is another.

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- EDC members will need training before welcoming new applicants to town.
- Jane suggested we have one member present at land use department meetings toward the beginning of the process.
- The EDC is here to add businesses and jobs, not to address design issues.

Discussion of the EDC Map

- Print another edition now in anticipation of the last batch running out. Don't wait another year.

Dates and Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 o'clock P.M.

- The next regularly scheduled meeting will be held at 6:00 P.M. on Tuesday, December 27, 2011 at Town Hall.

Summary of Votes at Meeting

- Minutes of the prior two meetings were approved by 5 of the 6 members present.
- By unanimous vote, to obtain a list of prior business applicants in order to gather information.
- By unanimous vote, to send one rotating member to the land use department meetings.

Action Items

1. Write to the Planning Board asking for a different mechanism for the 180-day process contained in the Master Plan.
2. Read the Town's Master Plan, with particular focus on Chapter 9, Economic Development, [See: pp 109-132].
3. Ask Michelle Collette how many businesses have applied this year and how many were accepted.
4. Notify the selectmen of our intent to perform a *post mortem* survey on failed business applications.

Reference Items

- Jane Bouvier's television program can be viewed online at <http://vimeo.com/thegrotonchannel>
- Mike Rasmussen's e-mail address has been changed to bostonbruins@verizon.net.