

Groton Economic Development Committee

Meeting Minutes 9/8/2016

Attendees for EDC: Russell Burke, Mike Rasmussen, Art Prest, Gina Cronin, Fay Raynor, Josh Degen and John Konetzny

Non-EDC members in attendance: Anna Elliot, Greg Sheldon

Minutes:

The meeting was called to order by Mike Rasmussen at 6:05 PM at Groton Town Hall.

1. Barry Pease will review his presentation at a future meeting.
2. Russ reviewed the Groton zoning by-law provisions relative to concept plan approval. Discussed how the Myette property was already zoned for business.
3. Mike, a commercial property lender, as heard if a developer has multiple towns he/she is reviewing to bring business to and one of the towns has a concept plan approval process and everything else is equal, it could be a deal breaker for that developer to still have interest in that town.
4. Josh reviewed how concept plan approval has helped keep Groton looking the way it has over the years. He feels Groton residents like the way the town is and are fine going to Westford and Nashua for their shopping. He feels you need to be very careful bringing businesses into town because even though it can bring in more tax revenue, it can also increase road costs, police force, etc.
5. Everyone talked about how concept plan approval has protections so even though they agree with getting rid of it, there needs to be other protections put in place. Possibly keeping concept plan approval in place from The Groton Exchange (Shell) to the Mobil gas station on the corner of Old Ayer Rd. and Main St. There could be a separate set of town bylaws for downtown.
6. Russ brought up concerns with the Donelan's property which is currently for sale. Donelan's has 2 years left on the lease. Concept plan approval could hurt the future of the building.
7. Josh wants to make sure there is plenty of advertisement informing the town of a town meeting that would have concept plan approval on the agenda.
8. Art feels it is important that Boards and Committees in Groton help developers bring their business to town. They need to explain what the developer needs to do it make things "right" instead of just saying "no".
9. Greg feels it is important to educate residents on the fiscal crisis of the town. He feels it is important to ask the residents what they want the town to be like. This will help create the vision for everyone.
10. Josh proposed a motion, Russ 2nd it, to send a letter from the EDC to the Planning Board to consider eliminating concept plan approval for commercially zone property as long as there are protections in place to maintain the character of Groton, especially downtown. The motion was passed and Mike will draft the motion.
11. The EDC will be on the Planning Board's agenda on September 22nd.
12. The group discussed the topic of accessing a 6% room tax on lodging in Groton. Art reviewed how every town surrounding Groton has a room tax except for Pepperell but Pepperell does not

have any lodging. When booking a room, the room tax is not shown in the price so it will most likely not deter people away. The tax is paid by the booker and not the business. Josh and Anna feel the tax should not be assessed at this time because it is poor timing. The town is thrilled to have the hotel rebuilt and it would not be hospitable of the town to start assessing the tax as soon as they open. The EDC committee voted in favor of the lodging tax, 3 in favor, 1 against, 2 abstentions.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:37 PM.

Respectfully submitted by John Konetzny