

TOWN OF LAKEVILLE
Economic Development Committee
Meeting Minutes
March 4, 2014 - 7:00 PM

On March 4, 2014, the Board of Selectmen held a meeting at 7:00 PM at the Town Office Building in Lakeville. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Burke at 6:35 PM. Members present: Robert Chestnut, Aaron Burke, Jessica Bradley, Sandra Martini-Gamache, Mitzi Hollenbeck and Lorraine Carboni. Also present: Rita Garbitt, Town Administrator. There was no recording secretary; minutes were taped by a tape recorder.

Approve Meeting Minutes for February 4, 2014

Upon a motion made by Ms. Hollenbeck, seconded by Ms. Martini-Gamache, it was:

VOTED: To approve the Economic Development Committee Minutes of February 4, 2014 as presented.
Unanimous as approved.

Frank Sterrett asked if the Economic Development Committee (EDC) Minutes were available for review. Ms. Garbitt stated they were available on the EDC's page on the Town's website.

Discuss Joint Meeting held on February 27th with Planning Board and Open Space Committee

Chairman Burke spoke about the Joint Meeting with the Planning Board and Open Space Committee. He said that Sylvester Zienkiewicz had a great presentation on the housing needs of Lakeville. One of his ideas is to have the Town develop elderly housing, but the question is how to fund it. There are different vehicles to establish a trust. The Town could borrow money to invest in this type of service for the community. If the Town buys private land to develop it, you are removing the land from tax rolls. Ms. Hollenbeck said that the Open Space Plan speaks about smaller lot sizes for cluster zoning. It would be the same amount of lots, but with large amounts of open space. This could be a way to offer affordable housing for the elderly moving from larger lots to smaller lots that require less maintenance. The other thing he brought up was, if you put land into a housing trust with a Housing Authority, you could get grants and force developers to put money into the trust. That money would be coming in to fund the Housing Authority, and could help to pay the debt down. Mr. Chestnut asked if these would be rentals. Chairman Burke said they would be rental units, and the Town would be the landlord. Further discussion occurred regarding this.

Chairman Burke said the second part of the meeting was a presentation from James Marot, the Planning Board Chairman. Mr. Marot did state that it was his own opinion that zoning changes were not necessary. He drove around Lakeville, took pictures of vacant buildings and reviewed each vacant property. Mr. Zienkiewicz noted that most of those parcels have specific reasons why they are not occupied or developed. That should not preclude the need for looking at zoning in general. Everyone basically agreed in essence that we need to have a comprehensive strategy on how we deal with zoning. Right now, people don't even remember why certain parcels were brought forward for rezoning. There is no comprehensive plan why the

parcels in question are being deemed business. Ms. Garbitt said that the Master Plan Implementation Committee spent almost two (2) years looking at areas of town for economic development. They met with the Selectmen and Planning Board several times, and with residents on Bedford Street who said they would like their parcels rezoned. Chairman Burke said that Mr. Marot spoke about the need for a Town Planner to work with the Town to determine what parcels, if any, should be rezoned for the planning needs of the Town. Mr. Chestnut asked haven't we hired a Town Planner. Ms. Garbitt said in 2010, we laid off Police Officers, cut hours for Town employees and the School Department took a 20% cut. We are finally back to the point where Town employee's hours have been restored, along with some of the Police Officers. She does have the funding in the FY15 budget for a planner. We have talked about sharing a planner with another community, but we need a full time planner.

Chairman Burke said that the EDC has accomplished a lot for only meeting once a month. However, you need someone on planning matters every day. Discussion occurred regarding the updating of the Master Plan. Ms. Garbitt stated that the Master Plan was updated in 2007. Mr. Sterrett said he thought the targeted areas for development were along Route 44, not Route 18. Ms. Garbitt said neighborhood business was targeted for Route 105, but she didn't think it said where to look for economic development.

Upon a motion made by Ms. Carboni, seconded by Ms. Martini-Gamache, it was:

VOTED: To send a memo to the Board of Selectmen in favor of funding for a full time Town Planner.
Unanimous in favor.

Review and Discuss Final Results of the Resident Survey

Ms. Hollenbeck reviewed the final results from the Resident Survey.

Discuss Business/Commercial Survey

Chairman Burke said that a draft of the Business/Commercial Survey has been developed and distributed to members. One of the questions is how to circulate this survey. We were very fortunate to be able to include the Resident Survey with the census. We need to ask who the Business/Commercial Survey is directed to. Is it directed to a region or individual existing businesses within the Town? Ms. Hollenbeck said with the Resident Survey, we were not sure what we were going to get. With the business owner, they will know what drove them to locate in Lakeville. She would change Question 1 to get more demographic information, like what industry are you in and how many employees do you have. She would eliminate from Question 7 down. We want to know if their location is an issue, which could impact the results. It could be a foot traffic thing or a real estate location issue (such as not having access to municipal sewer). Chairman Burke asked what is the advantage of getting information from existing businesses. Ms. Martini-Gamache said existing business could affect the tax base if they grow, like a home occupation moving into a vacant office space. Ms. Hollenbeck said we would like to know from the existing business owners how friendly Lakeville is to business. We spoke of an organization to provide information to the businesses who are located here and want to stay, but are struggling. Chairman Burke said, if that is a role we want to facilitate, we need to have that conversation as a group. Ms. Garbitt asked if the survey would ask if the space was leased or

owned. That information might be helpful. Chairman Burke said the idea of economic development is complicated. We are talking about regional planning, town planning, zoning and leveraging the needs of the townspeople. With commercial development, vacancies are sometimes the product of the expectation of the landlord or by design to a certain extent. With private property owners, if their rent expectation does not match the market, and they are ok with it sitting vacant so they can justify the rent that they are getting from their existing tenants, it sits vacant. It is not indicative of the existing market. You can't use that information to say we do not need more retail space in Lakeville.

Discussion occurred about how to distribute the Business/Commercial Survey. Ms. Hollenbeck thought perhaps to wait until after a website is launched. To mail it, we will get very few back. If you walk around face to face, you might get a better idea without a written survey. She is concerned about the effort and cost that goes into a survey without any sort of response. Perhaps it should go out to only business owners in Lakeville. Ms. Garbitt said it could be sent out with the Personal Property Tax Bills for businesses. Ms. Hollenbeck said we could place the Business/Commercial Survey on the Town's website. Chairman Burke said that might ensure a better response. Ms. Garbitt said the Selectmen could issue a press release and announce it at their meeting. Ms. Carboni said originally, she had crossed out Question #12, but she thinks it is important. When we first started this Committee, she had spoken to a few business owners and told them that we were working towards. She would ask them Question #12, and they mostly said they didn't know. One of the local builders said it would be nice if the Town used local businesses for projects. Ms. Garbitt said we have to go with the low bidder. Once the project value goes over \$10,000 or more, it is a prevailing wage job.

Ms. Hollenbeck thought the survey should be six (6) to seven (7) questions. She will have it prepared for the next meeting on April 1. A discussion occurred about having the website with a listing of spaces for rent or for sale would be helpful to business owners. Mr. Marot's presentation did show how daunting it would be for a potential business to have to drive around Town to write down phone numbers. Having that information in one place would be an asset. Ms. Hollenbeck said that Lakeville was labeled as not being business friendly due to the Sysco project. But if you are a restaurant owner, the survey showed that residents want a restaurant.

Discuss Formation of Tourism Committee

Chairman Burke said that Ms. Hollenbeck has invited Jane Kudcey, the Acting Community Development Director for the Town of Middleborough to attend our next meeting. She will talk about joint economic workings between Lakeville and Middleboro. Ms. Hollenbeck said Middleborough just received a \$20,000 grant for a website and promotional materials from Plymouth County Tourism and another State entity. Ms. Hollenbeck said it would be great if the Middleborough Tourism Committee worked with the Lakeville Arts and Music Festival. Mr. Sterrett asked where are potential tourists coming from. Chairman Burke said that is what we want to find out. Mr. Sterrett said there is an opportunity to partner with business. Ms. Bradley said the eco tourism aspect got a big response in the surveys. Developing that stays with the Town's character and resources and will bring attention to business here. Ms. Hollenbeck spoke about events at Betty's Neck. Those could help mom and pop businesses.

Old Business

Chairman Burke said a memo was sent to the Planning Board on December 5 asking them to revisit the rezoning parcels. We had not heard back from them, so John Olivieri asked that another memo be sent. A follow-up memo was sent to the Planning Board, which he read. The Planning Board will be discussing this at their March 6th meeting. The Planning Board Chairman is on the Selectmen's agenda for March 10th to discuss the parcels.

New Business

Discussion occurred regarding creating a website for the EDC, which would be a comprehensive site that shows what types of properties are available. Chairman Burke said the ultimate goal is to have all the information on the website so that someone searching for a place to develop would have Lakeville at the top of the list. Once the website is up and running, how do we place advertisements in appropriate areas (i.e. real estate publications). Foot traffic drives interest in the Town and makes Lakeville more attractive. Ms. Hollenbeck said that Sandy Conaty from SRPEDD said that they have done some interactive maps for other communities and could help us. The map gives the parcel information, who owns it, how it is zoned, etc. Chairman Burke said he spoke to Ms. Conaty about using the 20 hours of municipal assistance to build a website. The links are good, but we would really need to map out the website. If we have a plan for the website, they have someone that can help us build it. Whether it can be done in 20 hours is questionable. However, the website would require upkeep.

Ms. Garbitt distributed information from Buddy Rocha, Southeast Regional Director of the Massachusetts Office of Business Development, regarding businesses looking for space. Lorraine stated it would be good to get some face time. Mr. Rocha has toured the former Lakeville Hospital property. Chairman Burke thought Mr. Rocha would be a good person to ask about the business survey. He would know why a company went to this Town rather than another. If it is a lack of sewer, we will always lose. Perhaps highway access could be key. It could be municipal water, sewer or both. Ms. Garbitt said that Middleborough sewer is at the Lakeville Hospital property.

Adjournment

Upon a motion made by Ms. Carboni, seconded by Mr. Chestnut it was:

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 9:20 PM.
Unanimous in favor.