

ASHLAND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

January 26, 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

Others present

Paul Branscombe, Fran Newton, Norm DeWolfe, Kathleen DeWolfe

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

Glenn Coppelman, Economic Development planner for North Country Council was scheduled to attend to discuss EDA federal grants. He was unable to attend and will be scheduled for a future meeting.

Disposition of Meeting Minutes

Steve Felton made a motion to accept the minutes from the Dec. 16, 2014 meeting. Susan MacLeod seconded the motion. The vote was 3-0 in the affirmative. (Beno Lamontagne was not yet present at the meeting.)

Business Retention

Paul Branscombe began a discussion on how best to retain current businesses in Ashland. There has been a "rumor" in town that a large business in Ashland is considering moving its Ashland operations to another location. It was agreed that immediate action is necessary to determine the truth of the rumor and what needs to be done to ensure the business keeps its operation at the Ashland facility. Paul, Steve and Beno will determine the best person(s) to contact and schedule a meeting.

Federal HUBZone Program/Tax Incentive Programs/Grants

There are many tools available to help retain and bring new businesses to town.

- The **Historically Under-utilized Business Zone (HUBZone) Contracting Program** encourages small businesses to locate in and hire employees from economically disadvantaged areas of the United States. Companies participating in the program can receive competitive advantages in winning federal contracts. The HUBZone Empowerment Act became law as part of the Small Business Reauthorization Act of 1997.

Beno stated that Ashland had been on the HUBZone map but was removed at some point. Contacting Annie Kuster and/or Kelly Ayotte's office to find out how Ashland could get added back to the map is recommended.

For more information about HUBZone go to: www.hubzonecouncil.org and www.sba.gov/content/hubzone-maps

- **NH RSA 79-E, Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive** - Tax relief granted under this chapter shall be calculated on the value in excess of the original assessed value. Original assessed value shall mean the value of the qualifying structure assessed at the time the governing body approves the application for tax relief and the owner grants to the municipality the covenant to protect public benefit as required in this chapter

For more information about 79-E go to : www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/v/79-e/79-e-mrg.htm

- Paul Branscombe has been working with Taylor Caswell of NH CDFA. The **Community Development Finance Authority** provides Community Block Grants. Ashland is seeking a grant to do necessary upgrades at town hall. Some work needs to be done before we can receive a block grant, i.e. the bathroom at town hall is not ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant. To make the bathroom ADA compliant will cost about \$40,000. Paul and Beno will continue to work with Taylor.

For more information about CDFA go to: www.nhcdfa.org/block-grants

- We will continue to pursue opportunities for a Brownfields grant for the mill area. EPA's Brownfields Program empowers states, communities, and other stakeholders to work together to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. Revitalizing brownfield sites creates benefits throughout the community. The term "brownfield site" means real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant.

For more information about Brownfield grants go to: www.epa.gov/brownfields/basic

Wallace Building Products

Paul Branscombe, Ashland Town Administrator has been in contact with Jay Smith, owner of Wallace Building Products, currently located in Danbury, NH. Mr. Smith is considering expanding and relocating his business, which manufactures pre-fabricated walls for construction. The business is growing and currently has 24 million dollars in sales. He currently lives in Plymouth, NH and is looking for a 10 – 12 acre site that would be more conveniently located for him and many of his employees.

A lengthy discussion on potential sites and advantages to relocating to Ashland took place. Paul, Steve and Beno will schedule a meeting with Jay Smith to discuss. Lee Nichols has contacts he will also meet with that may be of assistance.

UNH Cooperative Extension

The Board of Selectman received a letter from Geoffrey Sewake, Field Specialist, Community and Economic Development at UNH. Mr. Sewake offered his expertise and resources. He will be invited to a future meeting.

Future Meeting Guests

- Glenn Coppelman, Economic Development planner for North Country Council will be invited to the February meeting.
- Geoffrey Sewake will be invited to a future meeting.
- George Bald, former DRED (Department of Resources and Economic Development) Commissioner will be invited to a future meeting.

- Brien Ward of Littleton will be invited to a future meeting.

Other Topics

Susan MacLeod recommended that this committee needs an official town email address. A request will be made to the Town Administrator. The cost is \$2.00 per month.

A discussion took place about an official minute taker for this committee. It is difficult for a committee member to fully participate and take the minutes. Cheryl Cox will continue to keep the minutes until another option can be determined.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:19 pm.

The next meeting will be held on **February 9, 2015 at 6:30 pm** at the Ashland Fire Station, ***unless notified otherwise.***

Minutes submitted by Cheryl Cox