

Minutes, Bucksport Economic Development Committee - January 12, 2016

Attending: Andy Lacher, Mark Eastman, David Kee, Linda Plourde, Frank Dunbar, Bill Tymoczko, John Paul Lalonde, Rich Rotella; also Code Enforcement Officer Jeff Hammond

Meeting was called to order by Chair David Kee; December, 2015 Minutes were read and accepted.

Economic Director Rich Rotella introduced Code Enforcement Officer Jeff Hammond, explaining that he had invited him to attend future meetings and keep us up to date on issues he is addressing. Jeff expressed his agreement that his attending is a good thing, keeping communication open with the BEDC and how issues may impact businesses and economic development. He explained the appendix K Land Use Ordinance Amendment, one provision of which would allow some applicants to apply at the Code Enforcement level and not have to go before the Planning Board. Some examples: the Subway move, antique mall on Main St., a day care, gunsmith on Rt. 46. If the ordinance is adopted, there would be only one application fee, rather than two currently. Another change would be to seasonal roadside sales: these would be approved in the residential areas. These might be selling Christmas wreaths, seasonal products, etc. There would be no time limit on length of time these could be selling, Jeff stated. David Kee asked if each could still be appealed, and Jeff said they could. John Paul Lalonde asked what if, for instance, Subway's move had been controversial – if the request came to you (Jeff Hammond) only, would there still be a way for the public to speak? Jeff replied that he would look at it and if no issues were seen, would move forward; but if there were questions or issues, a Level Two Review would be held.

Jeff also explained that the Comprehensive Plan Committee met the night before and looked at land use. After this section is complete they will look at goals and plans for the next ten years. Jeff said the Planning Board just met, and dealt with a request for a cattle farm on Millvale Road. He said there were a number of citizens present expressing some concerns. The Planning Board has some questions regarding legal authority on this with Home, Inc. Andy Lacher said he thought we should have Jeff Hammond attend BEDC meetings.

YMCA Update: Bill Tymoczko explained there had been two meetings with Peter Faragher, Tim Emery, Town Manager Sue Lessard, Rich Rotella, Peter Stewart and himself; with guidance given as to how to proceed. Sue Lessard suggested Tim Emery, Jim Boothby and Peter Faragher meet together on the playing fields and their maintenance. The proposal is now in the YMCA's court; with the proposal going to their Board on Jan. 22nd. If they accept they will bring us a proposal; then it would go to public discussion, and on to the Town Council to decide. Rich Rotella said he attended both meetings and they broke down all departments with adequate information for Peter Faragher and the YMCA's needs. Bill said if their Board says no, they'll release us from their jurisdiction and we can pursue going with Bangor or Belfast. He said Ellsworth has had a lot on their plate of late. David Kee asked if Tim Emery got his questions answered? Bill said yes; his were local control and site care issues – many were answered. The public can ask more later.

Wednesday on Main Update: The \$3,000 approved by the Town Council will not be needed, as Darlings will underwrite the entire cost (\$9,700) for the 2016 season. David Kee gave thanks to Ron Russell for this generous donation being made.

Electronic Sign on Main St. Update: Paula Kee was able to acquire a grant from Maine Communities Foundation for \$5,000 toward the purchase of a sign. These funds would have to be allocated by March, 2016 or be returned. Rich Rotella solicited three bids for the signs, from Neokraft Signs, Inc., Bangor Neon, and Sierra Signs. Bids ranged in size, color options and packages (including a "plow pkg"., with allows sign to be placed in different locations), with bids running from a low of \$17,872 to \$26,606. Wireless internet access is needed for complete installation. David Kee asked if the high school sign cost more? Rich was unsure. David asked if the goal is to get people to turn left, or from Ellsworth? Mark Eastman asked who will manage the sign? He said it takes quite a bit to manage the signs. Andy Lacher asked if it could be read from a distance? What about colors – amber, or red? Bill Tymoczko stated this is a lot of money; do we want to market to local citizens? Mark Eastman asked if this is a good use of monies? Linda Plourde commented that it should not be too busy, as it is distracting. She thought the existing posts at the Verona bridge the best location, as had been suggested. David Kee wants to see if the Town Council will support the plan.

ADA Update: James Bradney of Bucksport Healthy Communities spoke to the BEDC about some recent very good publicity for Bucksport as a positive community for seniors. *Maine Policy Review* published an article we submitted on healthy living in Bucksport. Bradney also reported that Erwin Gratz of *Morning Edition* would like to interview him regarding age-friendly communities – i.e. diverse age groups, sidewalk provision, parks, services, etc. James proposes we apply for inclusion in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities program. The coalition is mostly prepared, and it should be easy to achieve. The inclusion would be a boon to Bucksport's appeal in development. James will take the proposal to the Council.

James Bradney brought Pearl Swenson and Dorothy Blair with him, and Pearl Swenson explained how the "Show You Care" campaign was presented when they were invited to the Maine Senate recently. Pearl said she had been working for years for elderly citizens and with the new Americans with Disabilities Act started in the 1990's. In Augusta 500 people gathered as she gave a report on Bucksport Healthy Communities as an all-volunteer organization in coordination with the Chamber of Commerce, Senior Resource Committee, local groups and the Town Council working together regarding sidewalks, mobility, transportation, local businesses and the Downeast Bus availability. Sidewalk clearing, postal pick-up, etc. were obstacles that were looked at and many concessions were made as a community effort. Disability provisions were made at the library, pharmacies, town office, etc. A grant for "Thriving in Place" program was acquired. The Methodist church works to provide rides for citizens in need. The presentation was well received in Augusta.

Dorothy Blair explained she had been working with Circle K to get handicap accessibility; work should finally begin there starting in spring. Now she is working with Bucksport House of Pizza, but hasn't been successful. The effort is to get handicap accessibility throughout town---James Bradney wanted to bring to our attention needed access and more work to be done in future. The Maine population over 65 will increase substantially, and this is a crucial matter for economic development. David Kee asked him to keep us informed on the AARP application.

Harborview Update: Rich Rotella has been working with Harborview Restaurant to remove the propane tank on their site. Leadbetter has stated they will remove in spring when no frost will affect the walkway there. The Exxon site property sale is on hold due to the culvert issue on the property. Linda Plourde expressed that it is discouraging to have the restaurant closed for so many months, taking away from downtown offerings.

Heart and Soul: Chris Johnson announced that all meetings are open to everyone, and the next meeting is January 20th at 6 pm. A \$15,000 grant came in on December 31st. John Paul stated there were lots of organizations there for the first meeting, and it was successful and moving forward. An audience member asked what Heart and Soul is? Chris explained it is a grassroots citizen initiative to find out what is of importance to the town – first to identify the positive, and then to look deeper. Information will be in the papers. David Kee asked if we could get on a website? Yes, it is available, John Paul Lalonde stated. The Orton Foundation is funding the coach for Bucksport, which is a \$25,000 donation. The King Foundation is looking at a \$15,000 grant, and Maine Communities Foundation monies also may be available. Linda Plourde asked how Bucksport Next fits in – they will continue to gather information and work with Heart and Soul; which works as a "citizens up" group, where others often are "government down". David Kee said contrary to comments made in the papers, we NEED lots of committees and groups! We need as much information and participation as we can get – it is **not** a bad thing.

Old Business: David Kee thanked Bookstacks for hosting "Santa Claus" on December 19. Rich Rotella stated the issue of vendors on the waterfront has garnered much controversy on both sides, and will be considered at the next Town Council meeting. Jeff Hammond said we may need a land use ordinance to clarify.

John Paul Lalonde stated he thought maybe we should do a marketing plan first before spending any money on the electronic sign, as it is a substantial amount. Mark Eastman agreed there may be a better use of these monies. An audience member asked if the Comprehensive Plan would cover it? John Paul and others thought maybe Heart and Soul should look at it.

From the audience Bob Hoffmann suggested we need better notice and information regarding meetings and the posting of agendas and meeting notices in the paper, etc. He thought it had been a problem for awhile. Council meetings and others could be posted earlier on the town website. John Paul said people still submit

quite late. David Kee stated we will work on that. Rich Rotella said the BEDC agenda hasn't been on the website, but will be from now on.

Wilson Hall - Recently developers met with Larry Wahl, Jeff Hammond and Rich Rotella. They discussed building eight apartments – a problem if the town wants to use the lower level for community activities. David Kee suggested they talk with Sue Lessard and then the Town Council.

Rich Rotella is now on the Hancock County Planning Commission Brownfields Advisory Committee. The committee meets quarterly and works with HCPC staff, the environmental specialist and Maine DEP to identify potential sites and make recommendations. Rich may be able to address the AIM site as need arises.

Linda Plourde reported that some preliminary efforts have been made toward starting a "Friends of Silver Lake" group along with Chris Johnson; and will continue to urge the Town Council to form a water resources committee to oversee the water issues that are key to our town, this area, and development opportunities.

Chris Johnson brought up the *Bicycle Coalition of Maine*, to which he belongs. They are having a meeting on February 4 at the Moore Center in Ellsworth. He and Rich Rotella are attending, and he urged us to make our presence known and perhaps persuade them to hold an annual event here in 2017. The event would include pedestrian activities, as well, and would be good for visibility and development in Bucksport. Chris also stated that though we have multiple groups working on Bucksport's issues right now, they will survive and flourish as they work together. He expects to see a real, positive effect soon. He said that Ellsworth is an example; though they may have some troubles, they have no shortage of community involvement.

Motion to adjourn, Andy Lacher, seconded Mark Eastman. Adjourned.

Submitted by Linda Plourde

Next regular meeting will be Tuesday, Feb. 9, 2016 @ 5:00 p.m.