



**TOWN OF NORTH HAMPTON, NEW HAMPSHIRE  
NORTH HAMPTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

**MARCH 4, 2020 5:00 PM**

**NORTH HAMPTON TOWN HALL**

***APPROVED MINUTES***

EDC MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Richard Luff, Vice-Chair Jeff Hillier, Heritage Commission Rep Nancy Monaghan, David Ciccalone, Jonathan Pinette, Renee Locke, Glenn Martin, Leszek Stachow, Select Board Rep Kathleen Kilgore, Planning Board Rep Phillip E. Wilson

EXCUSED: Gary Stevens

ALSO PRESENT: Interim Town Administrator Michael Tully

**AGENDA**

Chairman Richard Luff welcomed everyone to the March 4, 2020 Economic Development Committee Meeting and called the meeting to order at 5:03 pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

**1. Report on Hampton Chamber Launch of the Regional Economic Development Strategy**

Chairman Luff said Kathy would be late and asked that item 1 on the agenda be deferred until she arrives.

**2. Discuss Ironwood Recommendations**

**Zoning Changes, Site Plan Review Process, Master Plan Changes, Development Concepts**

Chairman Luff asked for thoughts on the basic elements discussed at the prior meeting, whether they support the EDC Vision Statement, and whether Ironwood recommendations took on the charge in terms of goals and deliverables.

Mr. Pinette said he would be in favor of having dual-purpose property to drive more activity, but his concern was to make sure of septic system designs on some buildings. He felt multi-use would make a difference to investors on Route 1 and it supports the EDC Vision Statement. Mr. Hillier said there is a significant number of years of septic outwash, most prominent in filled-in wetlands, as a result of

inadequate facilities at some businesses and said they need to look into the feasibility and expense of relocating septic systems.

Mr. Martin said some wetlands in the area were filled by taking advantage of a 24-hour EPA loophole, and said he was involved in some sales and transactions off Post Road where septic systems were now failing. Chairman Luff asked Mr. Hillier if he had any other follow-up on the presentation, and Mr. Hillier said he was impressed with the progress from the last public meeting to the presentation. He said some of it was logical and not totally unreasonable, but to his mind untimely and unaffordable, and they needed to focus on filling in what is out there with new and better businesses.

Mr. Wilson said they engaged professional assistance to obtain a visual representation of a doable Village Center for North Hampton by the year 2030. He said in agreeing to fund the Ironwood work, the Select Board specified they not do anything that requires sewer and not do anything that would affect the wetlands. He said they got visuals of some concepts but not a representation of a coherent Village Center that could be used as a marketing tool to convince property owners to buy into the plan. He said what was presented cannot be done without sewer and a lot of it would have dramatic effects on the Wetlands.

Mr. Wilson said the challenge they gave was that they wanted to revitalize activities in the Town by physical changes in a Village Center, and he felt the criteria for this project were not met and they did not understand the charter they were given. He said some wetlands on the map were incorrectly designated, concepts were proposed in the wetlands, and the concept proposed is not really doable for North Hampton in the timeframe, plus the astronomical cost of services as well as maintenance. He said it supports the vision statement if they could move businesses, put parking in the back, and provide better access management between properties. He said he is in favor of mixed use as long as they address affordable housing needs and other zoning changes.

Chairman Luff said everyone is concerned that a fair amount of taxpayer dollars was spent to generate this report, but thought there were a lot of positives in it as well. He asked Mr. Wilson what 3 things he felt Ironwood could do to better suit the presentation to our vision. Mr. Wilson said to come back with a coherent visual representation of what Route 1 would look like and not a group of maps, make sure what you are presenting can be built without sewer, and check all your maps for wetlands and conservation areas and make sure what you propose is consistent with the restrictions in those areas.

Mr. Martin said in the presentation itself they created one visual that is useful for the Town and that is the Home Depot/Shaws area. He said they had mixed use and commercial use there that could become more of a Village Center example of what is doable at this point in time and certainly within the 10-year time period. He said a local example is the Stratham Village which is up and running with new buildings, sidewalks and lights, and said maybe that is a place we start and encourage it to go on. Maybe phase 2 is behind the Mobil Station if it can be supported by septic and tie in work-force housing there. He said he they did get some benefit out of the research and those were 2 examples they could work with.

**1. Report on Hampton Chamber Launch of the Regional Economic Development Strategy**

Selectwoman Kilgore said she, Jeff Hillier, and Les Stachow attended the Hampton Chamber Economic Development launch, and said she wanted to gauge interest from other communities. She said it is in the foundation stage and for the first 2 years the Regional Economic Development Coordinator will be paid solely from private funds. She said she was encouraged by each Town keeping its own identity and not being blended into a regional view, and said other communities had not even started with Economic Development and North Hampton was ahead of the curve. She felt it was worthwhile investing in the Regional Economic Development strategy now and it has the support of the business community.

Mr. Stachow felt support for the initiative was certainly worthy of North Hampton's attention and participation. He said at present he sees it as a group of gentlemen who have been involved in managing business in their own community successfully and are hoping for this initiative to inject some new opportunity to the area regionally. He said it was even more important that people are willing to finance it, but he did not think they should have high expectations in the short term, though that could change over time with the right leader.

Mr. Hillier said he enjoyed the meeting, felt it was promising to have a Kirsten Larsen-Shultz locally involved, and felt there was a lot of promise in communities working together. He said Mr. Nyhan of the Hampton Chamber referred to a study from the MA line to Portsmouth to determine the extent of empty storefronts and business properties for sale.

Kirsten Larsen-Shultz of 121 Post Road said right now they are looking for information and collaboration. She said they are looking and to have a strategy by the end of March, and in April try to get on the agenda of all Select Boards, Planning Boards, and Zoning Boards to talk about what they are doing. She said they are looking to maybe setting up some focus groups to zone in on key issues, and said the Rail Trail is a real opportunity for this Regional Economic Development strategy to take the charge and start conversations with communities. She said at this point they are looking for people to be very much involved in creating and building the strategy.

Interim Town Administrator Tully said before he takes this to the Select Board he would first like to see it come to the EDC for a full conversation. Chairman Luff asked if they needed more discussion here on the EDC with concerns for or against. Mr. Wilson said he did not see any downside under the present proposition with 2 years' worth of funding. Mr. Martin said his concern is that North Hampton is ahead of the curve compared to the other communities. Selectwoman Kilgore said she did not feel the Hampton Chamber was looking for North Hampton to lead the charge here.

Ms. Monaghan felt that the regional idea was a good idea. She said they should ask if at the end of the 2year period the Town would be obligated to pay the ongoing person, and said she was in favor as long as the Town did not have to give up complete control. Ms. Larsen-Schultz said there is absolutely no obligation with collaborating in the first 2 years, and said this is not a one-way street.

Mr. Wilson said he had heard about business owners building their own workforce housing. Ms. LarsenSchultz said workforce housing is a critical issue in the State of New Hampshire especially on the

seacoast, and said a business owner in Dover did build a small community to staff his employees. Mr. Hillier suggested they see if they agree with this now as a Committee, take it to the Select Board, and have Ms. Larsen-Schultz join them at the Select Board meeting.

**Motion:** To recommend to the Select Board that the Town as a matter of policy collaborate with the Hampton Chamber of Commerce to establish a Regional Economic Development strategy position for 2 years as a test period to see how it works.

**Motioned:** Mr. Wilson

**Seconded:** Renee Locke

**Vote:** Motion approved by a vote of 9-0 (*Mr. Pinette left the meeting early and did not vote*)

### **Discuss Ironwood Recommendations**

#### **Zoning Changes, Site Plan Review Process, Master Plan Changes, Development Concepts**

Chairman Luff went back to the original discussion and asked if there were more comments on the presentation by Ironwood or on the 3 points they were asked to consider.

Mr. Wilson said Mr. Martin mentioned the redevelopment of the Outlet Mall and felt that was a good place to start. Ms. Monaghan said there are many interesting things in what is proposed but felt it was somewhat off their vision statement. She said they went into this saying they would use the Town survey to guide economic development, and many of the things proposed were quite far from what residents want. She said the Master Plan and Zoning are designed to limit density and residents would have to approve any changes there. She said overall there were some really good things in the Ironwood Plan, and felt something more centered on the Shaws Plaza is a natural place for redevelopment, more aesthetic things can be done to spruce up Route 1, and façade changes through grants could transform the area.

Chairman Luff asked what if the density was just along this Village Center area, and Ms. Monaghan said she felt residents did not see Route 1 as separate and included it as part of the rural character of the Town. Selectwoman Kilgore suggested the Committee have a conversation with Jeff Hyland to understand how he developed his plan as there are a lot of disconnects. Chairman Luff agreed that perhaps they should have a separate session with Jeff as a group.

Mr. Ciccalone said wastewater was his main concern with the way the 4 areas were broken up in the plan. He said the conceptual designs they showed seemed to be inconsistent with a lack of sewer, and he did not find the concepts to be very realistic with what the Town has in place. Ms. Locke said there are a lot of disconnects with what the Town wants, which is something they should resolve in talking about the identity of North Hampton. She said the Village Center may be an area more concentrated to keep the Downtown smaller, and they don't want to build something without knowing where they are going.

Mr. Martin said in the report the 4 areas are broken up, but they could focus on 2 that are viable now to see what is feasible. Mr. Ciccalone said those 4 areas are all private land and the owners may have no interest in implementing our plans. Selectwoman Kilgore said they do have the Rail Trail coming in 2 years which will be an asset which is not addressed in this report, and they should begin to plan for it so it does not overtake what they are planning for the Town to keep it rural.

Mr. Wilson said they should focus on a part that could become the Village Center like the Shaws Plaza, and include the little strip mall across the street, the Post Office, and the strip mall in front of Home Depot, and this would be closer to a coherent area that is manageable. He said they can move up towards Atlantic Avenue and see what happens after that, and a path can be made through conservation land to connect with the Rail Trail. Selectwoman Kilgore said they will also have Centennial Hall.

Chairman Luff asked if people had ever been surveyed about their feelings of separating Route 1 from the rural character of the Town. He said it would create an aesthetic Route 1 and also allow an increase in development and density. Mr. Wilson said the question about whether the IBR District should be dealt with separately in order to promote development had not be asked directly, but a repeated response has the need to improve the appearance of Route 1. He said residents also want to preserve rural character, open spaces, protect natural resources, and have development that reduces taxes and meets their needs.

Selectwoman Kilgore said she would like to see a plan for Route 1 and felt they needed to do something. Mr. Wilson said they should focus industrial uses on the north end of Route 1, and Ms. Monaghan said that is on the agenda for the Planning Board to discuss. Mr. Wilson said then re-zoning the IBR is a good suggestion. Mr. Stachow said it seems the Committee gave Ironwood a very difficult task, one they themselves were not able to answer, which is how do we mediate between the rural character and the need for a Town Center. He said he sees the report as an attempt to help them move forward toward a more focused approach while opening their eyes to various options.

Chairman Luff asked Committee members if they felt a work session should be set up with Ironwood to hammer out some of these things to get a more cohesive plan. All Committee members were in favor and Chairman Luff said he would contact Jeff Hyland to arrange something before the April meeting. Interim Town Administrator Tully said he and Jan could assist with availability of dates.

#### **Approval of the EDC Meeting Minutes of January 8, 2020**

**Motion:** To approve the EDC Meeting Minutes of January 8, 2020 as presented.

**Motioned:** Ms. Monaghan

**Seconded:** Selectwoman Kilgore

**Vote:** Motion approved by a vote of 9-0

#### **Approval of the EDC Meeting Minutes of February 5, 2020**

**Motion:** To approve the EDC Meeting Minutes of February 5, 2020 as presented.

**Motioned:** Selectwoman Kilgore

**Seconded:** Mr. Locke

**Vote:** Motion approved by a vote of 9-0

Ms. Locke said the most positive thing that came out of this whole project was the turnout from the Town and said they should not lose sight of their passion. Ms. Monaghan agreed and said it was very important that they went out of their way to make sure people knew about the meeting.

**Any other Item that May Legally come before the Committee – Period of Public Comment**

**Next Meeting:** The next regular Economic Development Committee Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 1, 2020 at 5:00 pm.

**Adjournment**

Ms. Monaghan made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Mr. Martin. Chairman Luff polled the Committee and the motion to adjourn was approved by a vote of 9-0., and the meeting was adjourned at 6:34 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Denmark, Recording Secretary

