

**Economic Development Committee
Meeting Minutes
APPROVED 1-25-2021**

Members or alternates present:

Chairman Kathy Fairman Eaton (member), BOS liaison Linda Murray (member), Bill Petersen (member), Liz Baker McClain (member), Kathy Tetreault (member), Dave Maher (member), Robyn Masteller (member), Mary DeVries (alternate)

Members or alternates absent:

BOS alternate Dave Bowers, Steve Durgan (member), Mike Hodder (alternate) and Carrie Duran (member)

Staff present:

Tavis Austin, Wolfeboro Director of Planning and Christine Metcalfe Doherty, Recording Secretary

Guests: N/A

1. **Call to order:** Chair Kathy Fairman called the meeting to order at 9:03 AM
She read the attached script for the remote portion of the meeting. (See attached)

Roll Call for members present. Kathy Tetreault, present at LRTC office, Robyn Masteller present at home alone. Linda Murray present alone and in my home. Liz Baker McClain present at home alone. Dave Maher present at home alone. Bill Petersen present in my office alone. Kathy Fairman present at home alone.

2. Old Business: 2021 Business Survey

Ms. Fairman read the Town Attorney Opinion on the draft survey cover letter and news release pertaining to the proposed extension of the town docks. (see attached)

We have some good clarity on more than one issue. We are not town employees, so we can do and say what we want as individuals and as a board. However, we were planning on using a staff member and town resources for the survey so it is my recommendation we separate the two issues. One being the news release and the other the business survey.

Ms. Murray: This is a sound decision. We received the attorney's advice and I suggest we send the survey back to the sub-committee to be done as a separate project.

Ms. DeVries: I agree with moving forward as presented. At the Town Dock Committee meetings, they discussed the pros and cons of including dollar amounts, the consensus was the Dock Committee would not include the dollar amounts (in its recommendation to approve the dock articles.)

Ms. Fairman: Is the dollar amounts you are talking about is the minimum of \$500k of revenue?

Ms. DeVries: That is correct.

Ms. Fairman: For the news release, lets discuss if we should include that figure.

Mr. Maher: We referred to figures used by the State's Bureau of Tourism (regarding dollars spent per visitor) but decided to use a different figure. We assumed, conservatively, that a 24ft boat at a 2 hour stay with 2 people may spend about \$200. That is what the \$500k was based on. Increasing the dock space increases people, increases money spent.

Ms. Murray: Was that calculated only on weekends and holidays?

Mr. Maher: Yes, from Memorial Day to Labor Day, weekends and holidays. It's a very conservative figure.

Mr. Petersen: I think this is a conservative number but anyone could argue about it. The whole point is it will pay for itself in less than three seasons.

Ms. Baker McClain: I agree and as long as we are transparent where the numbers come from, I think it would be fine to use those numbers.

Ms. DeVries: I like the idea of including the reference to the report, but people may not take the steps to find the report. Maybe refer to data in the report from the State of NH.

Mr. Maher: We initially had that data in the report and then we decided to remove that reference and make it \$100 per person.

Ms. Fairman: The state figure included lodging, so we removed that. We knew we were making an anecdotal assumption. But we are being so conservative and feel it is a reasonable projection.

Ms. Masteller: Are we still leaving in the news release the discussion about us doing the survey or did we decide to take that out?

Ms. Fairman: Leave it in to say that the survey is coming. It will help us for future projects.

Ms. Tetreault suggested eliminating the \$500,000 from the second paragraph and inserting \$300,000 to \$500,000 in the third paragraph.

Ms. Murray: I don't see any problem with leaving in the info about the survey and I like using the word projecting and a minimum of 300k.

Ms. Fairman: We can't change the analysis we did. The analysis estimates that the 18 additional boat spaces will bring about 500k in a season.

It was moved by Bill Petersen and seconded by Robyn Masteller to accept the release as amended stating it will bring a projected \$500,000 of revenue. Members voted, Linda Murray-yes. Bill Petersen-yes, Liz Baker McClain-yes, Kathy Tetreault-yes, Mary DeVries-yes, Dave Maher-yes, Robyn Masteller-yes, Kathy Fairman-yes and the motion passed unanimously.

(Amended news release attached)

Ms. Fairman: On the survey, are we good with sending that back to the sub-committee?

No discussion on that. And it will go back to the sub-committee.

Linda can they modify a warrant article at Deliberative Session?

Ms. Murray: Yes, they can.

Ms. Murry explained that the Deliberative Session (Tuesday, February 2) will be an in-person meeting only with no virtual option.

Ms. Fairman: A couple of issues for the Deliberative Session: No virtual option and several members of the EDC are not residents of Wolfeboro, so they cannot speak. Is there anyone who is a resident and is comfortable attending the meeting in person?

Ms. Murray: We can have Randy Walker (Town Moderator) read a letter from the EDC.

Ms. Tetreault indicated via chat that she would be willing to speak at the Deliberative Session for the EDC.

It was moved by Dave Maher and seconded by Liz Baker McClain for the chair to do a draft of Letter to the Editor for the docks to consider at our next meeting. Members voted, Linda Murray-yes. Bill Petersen-yes, Liz Baker McClain-yes, Kathy Tetreault-yes, Mary DeVries-yes, Dave Maher-yes, Robyn Masteller-yes, Kathy Fairman-yes and the motion passed unanimously.

3. Other Business

N/A

4. Adjournment

It was moved by Dave Maher and seconded by Bill Petersen to adjourn. Members voted, Linda Murray-yes. Bill Petersen-yes, Liz Baker McClain-yes, Kathy Tetreault-yes, Dave Maher-yes, Mary DeVries-yes and Kathy Fairman-yes, the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 9:47 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Christine Metcalfe Doherty

**EDC Special Meeting 1/25/21 Background Information:
Wolfeboro Town Attorney Opinion on EDC News Release/Letter**

Jim,

Suggestions on Documents

As I understand it, the Economic Development Committee ("EDC") is a committee established by the Board of Selectmen in 1992 to serve in an advisory role. It has no statutory mandate and no statutory authority. It is advisory only, an unofficial "bridge" between the public and private sectors in Wolfeboro.

Because it was established by the Board of Selectmen, it is subject to the right-to-know law (i.e., its meetings should generally be open to the public, minutes should be kept, etc.). However, its members are not Town employees but rather members of an advisory board without any statutory authority.

Thus it is lawful and appropriate for the EDC to write a letter to Wolfeboro business owners and to issue a news release. My only substantive suggestion is that both the letter and the news release may want to mention that the EDC was established by the Board of Selectmen in 1992 to serve in an advisory role with respect to economic development in Wolfeboro.

The only legal issue that I see is possible "electioneering" in violation of RSA 659:44-a. To "electioneer" means "to act in any way specifically designed to influence the vote of a voter on any question or office." The primary purpose of the letter and the news release is to influence the public on a "question," namely to vote affirmatively on the warrant article to appropriate money to extend the Town's recreational docks. However, it only prohibits a "public employee" from electioneering while in the performance of his or her official duties; and prohibits a "public employee" from using government property or equipment for electioneering. The members of the EDC are not public employees; they are members of an advisory board established by the Board of Selectmen.

The only caution would be to make sure that Town employees are not assisting the EDU and using Town property to do so.

EDC's Authority to Write a Letter to a Newspaper

As set forth above, members of the EDC are not prohibited from "electioneering" (acting in any way specifically designed to influence the vote of a voter on any question or office). Thus the EDC itself, or a member on its behalf, can write a letter to the local newspaper or take other action for the purpose of influencing voters on any question or office that they will be voting on, without running afoul of RSA 659:44-a.

Should you have any questions on the above, please contact me.

Mark

Mark H. Puffer, Esq.
603.410.1500 Tel
mpuffer@preti.com

Wolfeboro EDC Supports Dock Repairs/Extension

Wolfeboro – The Town of Wolfeboro’s Economic Development Committee (EDC) supports 2021 Warrant Articles calling for the voters to appropriate \$850,000 for dock repairs (a bond issue) and \$300,000 (2021 cash item) to extend the four fingers in the middle of the recreational docks.

An analysis completed by the EDC projects that the 18 additional boat spaces will bring a minimum of \$500,000 of additional revenue to downtown businesses in one season. This figure is based on the additional spaces being full only weekends and holidays. (Read the Report at wolfeboronh.us – Economic Development Committee.)

In submitting its report to the Board of Selectmen (BOS) last fall the EDC unanimously supported the extension of the town docks on Wolfeboro Bay as a top priority.

The Town’s 2019 Master Plan also calls for expansion of the town docks under two sections: **Transportation** “to provide access to Wolfeboro village core by boat,” and under **Economic Development** “to increase boat parking capacity and increase economic development.”

“We know the overall economic impact of expanding the docks will be remarkable,” said EDC Chairman Kathy Fairman Eaton. “We’ve identified 125 businesses within walking distance of the docks. If each business averages at least 4 employees, and several have more than that in the summer, that’s 500 families that could be helped by this investment.”

While discussing its support of the dock projects, the EDC considered surveying Wolfeboro businesses to find out how many tourism-related jobs might feel the effect.

“We realized this information would be very helpful for economic planning in general for everything from grant applications to public works projects,” she added.

With that in mind the EDC is working on a brief survey of Wolfeboro businesses which will be mailed to as many businesses as possible. Business owners will have the option of responding either on-line or by regular mail.

The Wolfeboro EDC was established by the Board of Selectmen in 1992 to serve in an advisory role with respect to economic development in Wolfeboro. It serves as an unofficial bridge between the public and private sectors in Wolfeboro and is appointed by the Selectmen.