

Wolfeboro Economic Development Committee

Tuesday, February 21, 2017, 8 a.m.

Wolfeboro Town Hall – Great Hall

Meeting Minutes – [Approved](#)

Members present: Chair Kathy Eaton, Cindy Patten, Denise Roy-Palmer, Dr. Craig Gemmell, Alan Harding, Steve Durgan, Lisa Lutts, Mary DeVries, and Board of Selectman/EDC Liaison Alternate Linda Murray

Members/staff absent: Mike Roush, Jeff McGuinness, Steve Johnson (alternate), Board of Selectmen/EDC Liaison Dave Bowers, Town Manager Dave Owen

Staff present: Director of Planning & Development Matt Sullivan, Recording Secretary Larissa Mulkern

1. **Call to Order:** Chair Eaton called the meeting to order at 8:05 a.m.

2. **Approval of Minutes: A motion to approve the minutes of the January 17, 2017 meeting as submitted was made, seconded, voted on and passed.**

3. **New Business**

a. **Business & Other Updates:** Skelley's Market is closing; a new convenience store is moving in and will offer barbecued and smoked foods. No new news on the Allen A Motel property; the current owners are looking to sell and Charles Wibel has put forth a proposal for investors. Jackie's Boutique is moving into the space formerly occupied by Preferred Rentals. The Christian Science Reading Room has been vacated; the new owner wants to charge rent. The Cooke's, owners of the historic Pickering House, have asked the EDC for a letter of support to accompany an application to the National Register of Historic Places.

b. **Warrant Articles involving Freight House:** Chair Eaton previously distributed via email a draft of the letter of support regarding Freight House-related warrant articles: The text follows:

"The Wolfeboro Economic Development Committee supports passage of 2017 Warrant Articles #22, #23, and #24 pertaining to renovation and leasing of the town-owned building known as the old Freight House as a museum by the Lakes Region Model Railroad Museum.

The Wolfeboro Economic Development Committee's mission is "to identify barriers and opportunities to enhance the economic growth and opportunity of the Wolfeboro community and all of its constituents and to champion the actions necessary to achieve economic growth and benefits that exceed growth in our county and state while also balancing impacts on the Town's environment, character and culture."

This proposal is an opportunity to enhance economic growth AND our Town's character and culture.

It is the EDC's position that restoration of the Freight House would enhance this area of downtown adding another piece of memorabilia to the historic Wolfeboro Depot and railroad-themed playground environs.

Such an enhancement will add to the historic and cultural character of our town, making it even more attractive as a year-round vacation destination.

Leasing the building to the Lakes Region Model Railroad Museum is an added economic benefit, providing one more reason for visitors to come to downtown Wolfeboro. The museum will be a great rainy-day family activity providing an opportunity for some members to play while others explore our shops. All will need to have something to eat too.

Tourism is Wolfeboro's number one industry, critical to the economic health of our town. The EDC recognizes that establishing Wolfeboro as a year-round vacation destination would balance our economy making many small businesses, especially those downtown, less dependent on the summer season. Restoring this historic building into a multi-seasonal family attraction is also in keeping with this goal."

Mrs. Eaton said John Simms has reviewed the draft and had no changes; he thanks the EDC for its support. Ms. Patten added she spoke with his group regarding providing some retail space at Black's to sell model railroad items. Mr. Harding said the letter was well written and that the railroad museum at the Freight House would be a great addition to the town. Mrs. Murray said the Board of Selectmen supported it 100 percent and that many spoke in favor of the warrant articles at the Deliberative Session.

Motion: Mr. Harding made a motion for the EDC to adopt the position included in the draft letter of support and to send the letter to the editor of the local papers and in publicity. Mrs. Roy-Palmer seconded the motion; members voted and the motion passed.

- c. **BR&E Quarterly Meeting Report:** Mrs. Roy-Palmer suggested holding the next quarterly meeting after Town Meeting; Mrs. Murray suggested April. Mrs. Eaton provided Mr. Sullivan with some background on the meeting and explained how the Business Forum provides an opportunity to update individuals who were involved in the Business Retention & Expansion Survey. The event is also valuable as an outreach to the business community in general. At the most recent quarterly meeting, the three committees provided updates. Mrs. Eaton added one thing that came up was to clarify how the BR&E committees fit with, or within, the EDC. It might make sense to restructure the BR&E and EDC committees so they are part of one entity. Mrs. Eaton said the BR&E was part of a long-term commitment, a mindset to support the business community. Mrs. Roy-Palmer said they were in the final stages of implementing Stage III of the BR&E recommendations. Discussion ensued regarding desirability of adding hotel rooms and perhaps those that allow pets, a growing market. Ms. Patten said it might be an interesting niche to explore – the Allen A Motel might be a great place to do that since it is located near the dog park and walking trails. Mr. Sullivan asked if the committee structure of the BR&E would be absorbed in full by the EDC. Ms. Patten said they may want the committee structure to be dynamic depending upon the current business needs; she suggested the

subcommittees of the BR&E become part of the EDC, with the BR&E a subcommittee of the EDC, in effect. That way the group would have a broader mission and be more dynamic. Mr. Sullivan suggested eliminating the subcommittees of the BR&E. Ms. DeVries agreed that she was thinking that the subcommittees of the BR&E come under the EDC. *[The subcommittees of the BR&E are: Special Events - to create more year round events; Marketing – to coordinate a marketing plan; and Communications – to improve two-way communication with town government and increase the town’s digital footprint.]*

Mrs. Eaton made the motion: “The EDC recognizes that Business Retention and Expansion should be an ongoing part of the EDC’s mission; the EDC is voting to create permanent project subcommittees; the existing BR&E project committees will now become ongoing EDC committees.” Ms. Patten seconded the motion. Members voted and the motion passed.

The topic of updating the Mission Statement will be placed on the agenda for an upcoming meeting. Mrs. Murray suggested the EDC provide the revised statement to the Board of Selectmen for review.

- d. **Marketing Committee Report:** Regarding the cooperative advertising program: Mrs. Eaton has contracted with *Yankee Magazine* – they publish six editions a year. Ms. DeVries found the magazine offers a discount for ads in all six issues – six issues are \$3,000 versus \$2,400 for three issues. The Chamber already adds \$500 to that cost and it answers all the inquiries generated by the magazine. The ads generate between 600 to 800 leads per issue. Mrs. Roy-Palmer said in the past they have run an ad designed to recruit businesses, to attract a workforce and to encourage young people to move into the area. Trying to find the right vehicle to do that is difficult, added Mrs. Eaton. How can the money be used to best attract a workforce? Ms. Lutts asked Mr. Sullivan if his generation utilizes Facebook, assuming they don’t use print media. Mr. Sullivan said he does not personally use Facebook – others of his age group are users -- and that print is not necessarily ‘dead.’ Devoting oneself to either/or for print and digital/social media is not a good idea as the younger generation is consumers of both. Ms. Patten said that Yelp is a good tool, even though it’s a passive system, and she gets 70 to 80 queries and feedback a month from it. Mrs. DeVries said the EDC might not want to purchase all six issues of *Yankee* in order to spend elsewhere to reach other demographics. Mrs. Eaton said she recently met with *Hippo Magazine*; they will have a travel page in every issue, with the heading, “Close to Home but Out of this World.” There has also been good response to our ads in the Mill Falls Marketplace Magazine out of Meredith. The Chamber splits the \$1,600 cost with the EDC; Mr. Durgan of Goodhue Hawkins shared his company’s advertising experiences with print and online media. He noted that the company’s website is a huge asset and directs a lot of customers, especially for boat rentals. This year the company is approaching nearly \$1 million in boat rental revenue. After additional discussion:

Motion: Ms. Patten made a motion to spend \$800 for the Mills Falls Marketplace Magazine; Mr. Durgan seconded the motion; members voted all in favor and the motion passed.

Mrs. Eaton passed around a short description for the Lakes Region Tourism Association booklet/guide members listing, limited to 20 words. Changes were suggested and made to the listing, adding "Wolfeboro, Jewel of Lake Winnepesaukee" to the text. Take off '101 Things to Do.'

4. Old Business

- a. **Joint meetings with Planning Board:** Mr. Sullivan reported that the Planning Board discussed the joint meetings, the first of which is on March 21, at 7 p.m. at the Great Hall; the idea is a work session style, roundtable meeting format. What was agreed upon was the EDC would create a list of questions for the Planning Board and vice versa. For this group, a discussion of those questions would be ready for the March 21 morning EDC meeting. Mr. Sullivan suggested one question could be, 'What actions are the Planning Board taking in 2017 to address the need for lodging capacity in the community.' Mr. Sullivan created a basic outline of the Master Plan work structure. Discussion of the Master Plan begins in June. There is no due date. Some chapters have been updated over the last few years, such as the Population chapter and Natural Resources section. Dr. Gemmell suggested sharing the questions a few days in advance. Mrs. Eaton suggested sending the questions to Mr. Sullivan by March 3. Another point raised was that it was unclear how the two groups were supposed to work together. This was listed as a question for the roundtable. Discussion ensued, with Mr. Durgan suggesting the Planning Board could increase economic development; Mrs. Murray adds that not many people run and that there is only one contested race in town. Dr. Gemmell said that before we have a question and answer based discussion, to find out first what our shared values are to help create a framework.
- b. **Lodging Forum:** Discussion tabled to March meeting.
- c. **Rusty McClear Meeting:** Mr. McClear will attend the March 21 EDC meeting to discuss lodging. Mrs. Roy-Palmer has provided him with a copy of the lodging study.
- d. **Fisherville Committee Report:** Mrs. Murray said last Thursday after the storm the Town was going to lay the snow down and the snowmobile club was supposed to come and spread it out on the trail at 4 a.m., but the club members did not show up. Mr. Ford felt it was unsafe to leave the snow where it was and it was moved. An event is moving forward this March 4, with a Beer Fest in the parking lot. Mr. Ford was concerned about the thin ice on the lake; three people in Alton died after falling through ice with their snowmobiles. Due to the weather, Mrs. Murray did not think that icehouses of Fisherville would be placed on the lake this year due to unsafe conditions. Mr. Durgan noted that uncertain weather is problematic for a town attempting to offer itself as a winter wonderland. Mrs. Murray suggested trying to do Fisherville at Foss Field. Mrs. Eaton suggested putting in at Brewster Beach.

5. Other Business: No other business.

6. **Town Planner/EDC Director Report.** Already discussed above.
7. **Town Manager/Selectmen's Representative Report.** Already discussed above.
8. **Adjournment:** A motion to adjourn made, seconded and passed at approximately 9:25 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:
Larissa Mulkern, recording secretary