

**TOWN OF WOLFEBORO**  
**PLANNING BOARD and ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**  
**April 25, 2017**  
**MINUTES**

**Planning Board Members Present:** Kathy Barnard, Chairman, Vaune Dugan, Vice-Chairman, Brad Harriman, Selectmen's Representative, Mike Hodder, John Thurston, Paul O'Brien, Members.

**Economic Development Committee Members Present:** Kathy Eaton, Chairman, Cindy Patten, Vice-Chairman, Denise Roy-Palmer, Steve Durgin, Members, Mary DeVries, Alternate.

**Planning Board Members Absent:** Peter Goodwin, Member, Dave Alessandrone, Alternate.

**Economic Development Committee Members Absent:** Craig Gemmell, Alan Harding, Mike Roush, Lisa Lutts, Members, Steve Johnson, Alternate, David Bowers, BOS Representative.

**Staff Present:** Matt Sullivan, Director of Planning and Development, Lee Ann Hendrickson, Administrative Secretary.

*Chairman Barnard opened the meeting at 7:00 PM at the Town of Wolfeboro Great Hall.*

**I. Lodging Forum**

Kathy Barnard introduced the members of the Planning Board, reviewed the history of the Lodging Feasibility Study and reviewed proposed zoning changes.

Kathy Eaton introduced the members of the EDC. She stated the Business Retention and Expansion Survey results depicted a concern as to whether the Town has enough lodging therefore, a Lodging Feasibility Study was conducted.

Dave Peterson, The Lake Motel, stated the notion that there is not enough rooms is a fallacy and noted a trend in Airbnb's; noting 55 Airbnb's are established in Wolfeboro and Tuftonboro (230 beds). He stated that often people are interested in one night stays for weddings however, that is not what Wolfeboro wants to promote. He stated he is trying to promote longer stays and family oriented activities. He noted the report does not include the Lady of the Lake, Laughing Loon, Windrifter or Brewster Academy. He stated it is not fair to change the 50-room limit to accommodate a franchise that will be his competition; noting the Town has to be really careful with what is done. He stated allowing a franchise with a conference center and restaurant will hurt the existing lodging facilities. He stated he feels that Airbnb's are taking care of the issue. He noted that all owners work together to fill up their facilities. He noted he purchased The Lake Motel in 2003 and the motel currently has a total of 42 units, 14 of which are available in the winter. He stated his facility is considered a nonconforming business in a residential area; noting he should not be penalized because a 100 room franchise is permitted in a district.

Rich Wyman stated he would rather meet the need through existing infrastructure and asked what the Town needs to bring more people in to fill up the existing rooms.

Kathy Eaton stated the EDC and Planning Board want to help existing businesses to prosper the best they can.

Shelley Burch, General Manager, Wolfeboro Inn, questioned the intent of bringing in another hotel.

Kathy Eaton stated there is no move to bring in a chain hotel and noted the present Town regulations wouldn't allow it.

Shelley Burch stated 2016 was a record breaking occupancy level at 56% with 47 wedding receptions. She questioned the unemployment rate in Wolfeboro; noting the Wolfeboro inn averages 80 employees (60 full time off season and 100 during the peak season) however, there is a real issue with regard to filling the available positions. She stated the facility has several spaces available for functions (one space accommodates 75 people, the ballroom accommodates 160 people and 200-240 can be accommodated outdoors).

Aynne de Beer, Clearwater Lodges, stated her family's lodging facility is the last cottage colony in Wolfeboro, being independently owned since 1948. She stated another hotel, a chain hotel, is not needed rather, how to fill the existing vacancies should be resolved. She agreed with Mr. Peterson in that the Airbnb's are filling the need. She stated that since their facility is located on the waterfront, their taxes increased 60% five years ago; noting such makes it challenging.

Scott Oullette, Inn on Main, questioned the type of current requirements and/or restrictions for commercial properties and for the expansion of those existing commercial properties.

Kathy Barnard stated standards are dictated by the underlying zoning district and for those commercial properties that exist in a residential district, expansion becomes more challenging. She reviewed the districts that inns are permitted.

Dave Peterson stated that no proposal is permitted to have more than 50 rooms therefore, why does the room number have to be changed.

Kathy Eaton stated we believe the entrepreneur should be able to decide the number of rooms and are aware that to make it profitable, 75 rooms are needed. She stated zoning restrictions that are holding back existing businesses need to be examined.

Scott Oullette stated he would rather expand business during the off season months and increase year round occupancy and noted a lack of quality rooms.

Charles Wibel stated it is up to the owner to generate its own demand and recommended weekly events to do such. He stated he feels the 56% occupancy rate at the Wolfeboro Inn is an embarrassment and stated businesses should not rely on the Town or the Chamber of Commerce. He stated problems with zoning is a historical NH problem and noted there is not enough business in Wolfeboro to keep the businesses open.

Heidi von Gotz Cogean, 1810 House (Bed and Breakfast and winery), reviewed the events that her business would sponsor (Harvest Festival in October and another event at Christmas). She recommended providing more opportunity with off season events and requested help from the other inns to promote the festivals and events.

Maggie Stier, Chairman, Heritage Commission, stated Ms. von Gotz Cogean made application to the Discretionary Barn Easement Program; noting tools such as that helps the Town preserve its historic character. She stated she is not in favor of a 75-bed facility and that part of the charm of Wolfeboro is its small businesses. She stated the Planning Board is developing architectural standards for commercial buildings which will maintain the character of the Town. She stated she is opposed to franchise type businesses.

Scott Oullette questioned the type of support available for events.

Kathy Eaton stated the EDC is established and appointed by the BOS and its mission is to identify areas of opportunity to promote economic development of the Town that will maintain the character of the Town. She stated the Town recently updated their website (and the Chamber of Commerce is currently doing such. She stated the need for a master list of events that all businesses can coordinate has been identified. She stated they are trying to help Downtown businesses survive; noting that people not staying or eating in Wolfeboro is a loss.

Scott Oullette confirmed that all websites are linked.

Dave Owen stated there is a Business Directory on the Town's website (registry of local businesses) in addition to a community events and Great Hall calendar.

Sheila Chittum, Manager, Windrifter Resort, stated the Windrifter is upgrading their rooms and function spaces. She agreed that the businesses need to promote themselves and noted that maintaining employees has been an issue.

Shelley Burch stated the Wolfeboro Inn has a hard time staffing housekeepers and line cooks.

Sheila Chittum stated there is a misconception of the industry among the residents and comments made regarding such (such as "I don't want my kids making beds).

Dave Peterson stated the local high schools have announce that The Lake Motel is hiring. He noted that more and more businesses are hiring overseas.

Kathy Barnard noted that the Windrifter is also located in a residential zone.

Cindy Patten, Black's Gift Shop, stated she has invested in a business plan with regard to hiring help and has been more active with social media. Referencing positions that dictate a specific wage, she recommended providing an incentive.

Scott Oullette stated a study conducted by NH Hospitality and Lodging showed that ages 18-35/38 are moving out of NH and retirees are entering the State.

Dave DeJagar, Cottages of Wolfeboro, stated snowmobiling is used to promote Wolfeboro in the winter however, there is a lack of trails, lack of destination locations and lack of conditions in the area to guarantee such. He noted the craze in pond hockey.

Mary DeVries, Wolfeboro Area Chamber of Commerce, stated the snowmobile industry has been identified as a huge value to Wolfeboro and the State and agreed that the Town is missing out. She stated the BOS and the Chamber of Commerce is trying to ensure accessibility from the lake when the weather cooperates.

Attendees of the forum discussed snowmobile events, the need for good access to hotels and restaurants and infrastructure to hold rallies, races, etc.

Shelley Burch stated the Wolfeboro Inn has held an ice bar event the past two years and suggested turning the event into a town wide event; noting 325 people attended the event.

Scott Oullette recommended coordinating off season events such as a winter carnival and a fall event such as a pig roast (brew & bbq).

Mary DeVries stated the Wolfeboro Area Decks and Docks party is scheduled for 5/6/17.

Steve Durgin, Goodhue Hawkins Navy Yard, stated he does not experience issues with summer help and noted there are a lot of quality workers in Wolfeboro. He recommended advertising on Indeed.com and change strategies. He stated that if the workers are treated right, they will come back year after year.

Charles Wibel recommended looking at the Chatham Chamber of Commerce events.

## **II. Other Business**

None.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:52 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Lee Ann Hendrickson*

Lee Ann Hendrickson

***\*\*Please note these minutes are subject to amendments and approval at a later date. \*\****