

GOFFSTOWN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
MINUTES TO MEETING OF JANUARY 3, 2023

In attendance were Jon Napoli—Vice Chair, Charles Birchmeier, Richard Bruno, Chris Barrett, Sarah Smith-Troupakis, and JoAnn Duffy—Planning & Economic Development Director.

CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Jon Napoli called the meeting to order. He led the Council in the Pledge of Allegiance. He asked the Board to introduce themselves.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A QUORUM

Jon Napoli noted there are 6 members and that is a quorum of the board.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chris Barrett made a motion to approve the minutes to the EDC meeting of December 6, 2023. Charles Birchmeier seconded the motion. VOTE: 5-0-1. Jon Napoli abstained. Motion carries.

GUEST--Weeks Pizza

Tony Weeks, from Weeks Pizza, said he opened the pizza restaurant about 3 weeks ago. He explained his experiences with permitting and all he had to do for the town to get his business opened. Everyone at Town Hall was amazing. Getting the permits has been easy. Contacting the people hasn't been so easy. He's still trying to finish off some documentation. He suggested a website that explains what is needed when they come to Goffstown. He didn't know if he needed a business permit or anything else. There was nowhere he could look easily for that information without calling. He first talked with the town clerk who was extremely helpful and gave him some information.

Jon Napoli said the EDC does have a link somewhere. Is it not easy to find?

JoAnn Duffy said she can check again to see where it's currently located. It has questions but it is not very specific. It covers a broader picture.

Charles Birchmeier asked his background, and if he'd ever opened a business before.

Tony Weeks said he has never owned a business. He's worked in a kitchen for 20 years and has been a production manager for 15 years. He used to live on Danis Park Road but got priced out. Saw the opportunity and jumped at it. He does work another job so he's not there all the time. Hopefully, he will be able to make that his main job.

Jon Napoli asked him about the different steps he had to take.

Tony Weeks said the Town Clerk was the most helpful. He called her every time he didn't know where to go. She was always extremely nice. There are probably 10 to 15 different steps that have to be taken between Goffstown and the State of New Hampshire. He talked to five or six people at town hall to find out if he needed things. He didn't have to talk to the water department or sewer department.

Joanne Duffy said he talked to her, and he would have talked to the fire inspector and the building inspector. There was no zoning involved because he's leasing the building. Because it was an existing

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restaurant he could easily go in. However, the fire department does do an inspection and there are a lot of requirements they have regarding the kitchen and machinery, and how it's set up. In addition to that they have to get a state health license. All those certificates have to be in place before he can open.

Tony Weeks said there is nothing that can be transferred over.

JoAnn Duffy said if he decides to sell liquor, he'd have to go to the state for a liquor license. The department most involved would be the fire department. If he's doing any electrical, plumbing work, or moving walls that would be the building department.

Jon Napoli asked how they could facilitate something easier for them to know where to go to get what they need.

JoAnn Duffy said she wonders if IT would be able to help them develop something that will provide answers to these questions, with links to the forms and applications. We would have to have the other departments join in, so we get the correct.

Dick Bruno said he envisions a general heading that says something like "Doing Business in Goffstown" with questions business owners could answer.

JoAnn Duffy said they have something similar but it's just text. And it's not for taking over an existing business. They could e-mail us. Many times, the Town Clerk will transfer calls to her to talk with them.

Jon Napoli said he'd like to take another look at their document because it doesn't seem Tony saw it at any point.

Tony Weeks said you have to know what you're looking for to begin with. Like him, people have never owned a business and just fell into it and have no idea what they're looking for. Terminology alone was a challenge. There were things he wouldn't even think to look into. He thinks it would be more helpful to have a generalization of doing business in Goffstown. It should include the people that have to be contacted who will set you up with the different scenarios.

Sarah Smith-Troupakis suggested having something that could also be printable so they could have that information.

JoAnn Duffy said they have their TRC, but they wouldn't know that.

Tony Weeks said the Fire Inspector's title wouldn't lead him to believe he needed to call him. That's a catch 22 but he figured it out.

Jon Napoli said they want to know who they should call rather than all the nuances.

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Sarah Smith-Troupakis said every department would know what all the nuances are. They will be able to determine where someone needs to go. If she were going to open a business that is what she would want.

JoAnn Duffy said this is something they could do, and it's definitely needed. There are people who go in different directions depending on how they start out and who they talk to. They don't always get the town clerk to begin with. There are a lot of different scenarios. Some people will come in and to the counter and ask what they are supposed to do. Other people will call. But each one is different. There are many different questions they have to ask before they know what they need. It's a matter of sitting down with the person and having a half hour chat. There is a large icon on the home page of the website that says something about economic development. But the average person wouldn't know what it is. They will be changing their website, although she doesn't know when.

Jon Napoli said it sounds like they have an opportunity to have a section of the website for starting a new business, and something to get them started so they know who to contact.

JoAnn Duffy said at the Technical Review Committee meeting is when all the departments are at the table and the applicant presents what they want to do. They go over what needs to be done and answer questions. In case they did not need a TRC.

Sarah Smith-Troupakis said they should make it as simple as possible. The EDC is trying to engage businesses, and if someone goes to the town website and they're not getting a feel for what to do, they go on to the next town.

Jon Napoli said it should give them some baseline information to give folks a foundation of what they need to be thinking about. Then they can refer them to either the different departments or the town clerk or wherever it needs to be. It should give them some clarity as they're starting the process. It will give them something to think about and the contact information.

Tony Weeks said on the website he'd be looking for something about businesses and starting or running a business. He wouldn't have thought about the EDC. He defaulted to the Town Clerk. They usually have all the answers. He started there and worked his way down the line. It would have been good to have something for new businesses, even if it were just JoAnn Duffy's name as a contact person. Nothing to do with Goffstown held him up. At the state it was mostly just the name change and the food licensing.

Sarah Smith-Troupakis said it should be something so they know what the rules are and so it becomes simplified for them.

Jon Napoli asked if they'd talk to IT to add something like a button or link and a person to call.

JoAnn Duffy said she will check what's there now and see what they can do to improve it. She works for the planning department and people may not think about going there. In the planning department, you go on the website then you go to forms. That brings you to a list of forms and one of them is for the technical review committee, but it's called something else. So, things don't show up when you do a

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search on it. And no one would really know that they need to go to planning board forms to find what they're looking for.

Charles Birchmeier said he doesn't like that they're losing business because people have an idea and the desire, but don't know where to start. There has to be a simpler way to do it.

Jon Napoli asked JoAnn Duffy to talk with IT about having a link on the website and resources listed along with contact information.

Dick Bruno asked if he was looking for a business in Goffstown.

Tony Weeks said he'd been looking for a business for about 3-4 years. He's always looked in Goffstown since he first lived here. He knew about and loved Goffstown and wanted to go back to it. He saw the pizza place for sale on Biz Sell. He typed in businesses for sale in New Hampshire. Then he looked in the towns he was interested in. His is a pizza place that has subs. He tries to do quality product with what he can. Hopefully, he will knock it out of the park more than he misses the mark. He has 10 employees and he kept everybody over from when it was Ray Street. They are all local people. That being with taking down the Vickster's sign is they have to be able to close down the street to be able to get up there. If he turns off the sign it will shut off his front lights. Hopefully in the next 6 to 8 months he'll be able to take it down or change the sign.

JoAnn Duffy said he could put up a temporary banner on the front of the building.

Jon Napoli asked if there were issues or items the EDC could advocate on his behalf.

Tony Weeks said at this point everyone has been amazing, including the town and other businesses. He doesn't know what he doesn't know yet.

JoAnn Duffy suggested he distribute his menus at certain places.

Tony Weeks said he has the menus online because it's very easy to change as compared to hard copies. He's working through things and making changes as he goes. He doesn't know what he will be changing or what he will be keeping at this point.

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

ZBA Agenda 1/3/24

JoAnn Duffy said the ZBA meeting was held last night. The Cercle National Club application had been continued from another meeting. They were granted a variance to allow their activities. Their property is split zoned, commercial, and residential, and it was only on the commercial side. The rest of the applications were new. The Planning Board added a warrant article to

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change the process for obtaining an ADU. If they are just going to be added as an attached ADU, they don't need a special exception. If they want a detached accessory dwelling unit they would need a variance. She also tried to get them to change it from 800 square feet to 1000 square feet, but they would not do that. ADU's are a good way to provide affordable housing for people.

Sarah Smith-Troupakis said if you look at the prices of housing and the availability in Goffstown, and a common house in Bedford, they are similarly priced.

JoAnn Duffy said with the higher interest rates, it's hard for people to find something they can afford. Even apartments are scarce. There is another new business that will hopefully be opening soon. It is in Pinardville where the hibachi restaurant was. The owner is the brother of the owners of the Mexican restaurants on Second Street. There was a flood there when the former tenants left because the owner hadn't winterized it. They are cleaning up that mess and have to change out the kitchen equipment and do other repairs. They have already applied for their liquor license. When that's all said and done, they plan to start the renovations. It will be another Mexican restaurant. She thinks it will be a boom for that plaza.

Dick Bruno asked what's going on with the land beside the new car wash.

JoAnn Duffy said it's on the Planning Board agenda for a conceptual for a 10,500 sq ft retail building. She's not heard from the owners of the Villa for a long time.

Dick Bruno said that's something the EDC should be involved in. If they are developing down there, there might be some effort to put lines in down there.

Sarah Smith-Troupakis said it's owned by RDF Corp. They look like they are being quiet because they may have a government contract for aerospace applications for their sensors. Perhaps they can't talk about it, which would make a lot of sense. They refuse to comment on what they are making or doing in the building.

Dick Bruno asked if it would be appropriate to review that with Liberty Gas with the recent activity going on.

JoAnn Duffy said she thinks that would come more from the EDC vs the Planning Board. Nothing has ever been presented to the Planning Board. JoAnn Duffy said the car wash is in. This retail building will have to go for a site plan, but it has nothing to do with the Villa property.

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Dick Bruno said that might be an opportunity to do something, to get a line down Mast Road, which would make it more attractive to businesses.

JoAnn Duffy said she understands the line ends at the old women's prison property. That building is gone so they have lost that usage.

Items for Next Agenda – February 7, 2024

Jon Napoli asked JoAnn to report back at the next meeting about the discussions with IT and the Town, and how they can have a simple addition to the Town web page that will direct them to the proper resource that is easy for someone coming in to start a business. They can develop it further as they go along.

Sarah Smith-Troupakis said it would be a good idea to make an accurate list of all the businesses in town; not a list that we think are businesses. It would include home businesses. Someone directed her to Ursula, who might have a database of the businesses because she does a lot of advertising for businesses in the Business Connection. It would be useful. They tried to do a survey but didn't turn out as well as they'd like. It would be nice to have a way to contact those people, those business owners. They could do mailings and different things. But they don't even have an accurate list now.

JoAnn Duffy said they never closed out their contract with UNH Cooperative Extension because they didn't get as much information as they needed to be able to do anything with it. She has not spoken to Scott, but she could certainly call him.

Sarah Smith-Troupakis said it's difficult to get out to the businesses when they all have jobs. That's why it's good for someone who has a permanent position promoting business in Goffstown is something to strive for. Also, having things in place, such as a website, makes it easier for people to do business. She suggested the idea of making a map of areas where they are developing on Mast Road. She likes the idea of talking about promoting bringing gas in. What you talk about is what's going to be promoted. If they produce ideas about the way they would like to implement change, they might be able to have some realistic ideas for this coming year. They want to be responsible for the money given to them and she thinks the website would be something good to invest in.

Jon Napoli said outside of the survey, he doesn't know if Scott had anything additional.

Sarah Smith-Troupakis suggested hiring a marketing company to build a list of local businesses. There are other ways to go about getting inaccurate lists. If they don't know who the businesses are, they don't know how to approach them to make change and to improve things.

Jon Napoli said it's good to see where Scott got to with the list. Part of it was for us to update because things had changed.

Sarah Smith-Troupakis asked if they can communicate what their goals are for the year.

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JoAnn Duffy said they typically do it in March, but it doesn't matter when. Goals are set every year, and they can change.

Jon Napoli suggested a reminder for next month's meeting so people can come prepared to discuss the goals for March.

Sarah Smith-Troupakis said when people ask her what the EDC does, we can say we help them. If we change the website, it's another time we can say we helped someone. They need to be able to communicate with people in a way that they understand what the EDC is trying to do.

Dick Bruno said the goal would be to have someone who is the economic development person who can provide the answers for new businesses.

JoAnn Duffy said she'd like to see a focus for next year as to what the EDC wants to hone in on.

Chris Barrett made a motion to adjourn. Dick Bruno seconded the motion. VOTE: 6-0-0. All in favor. Motion carries.

The meeting adjourned at 6:58 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Gail Labrecque
Recording Secretary

These minutes are subject to approval by the EDC.