

Arundel Economic Development Committee
Minutes
December 10th, 2013 at 6:00 PM
Mildred L. Day School Library
600 Limerick Road

Members in Attendance: Ira Camp, John Bell, Jen Burrows, Sam Hull, Linda Zuke, Sally Bates
Jason Nedeau

Other Attendees: Todd Shea, Town Manager, Tad Redway, Town Planner

Call to Order: Chairman Camp called the meeting to order at 6:10 pm.

I. Approval of Minutes

Chair Camp moved to accept the minutes of the meeting of 11/5/13. Mr. Hull seconded and the motion passed unanimously, with the exception of Ms Bates who abstained due to her absence on 11/5.

II. Discussion: TCG's Marketing & Branding Study

2.1 Revised Documents: The Town Manager notified the EDC that significant changes had been made to the documentation received from TCG, but that some information was still missing. Mr. Camp requested opinions from committee members about the revised documentation. Mr. Shea noted that the primary complaint about the original documentation was the focus on agriculture. He also noted that since the submission of the original document, there had been some serious developments in the TIF proposal for seasonal cottages on Route 1 which could have a major impact on the Town's ability to finance infrastructure projects. Mr. Shea noted that some of the concerns about the original report which had been conveyed to Mr. Kohn had still not been incorporated into the revised report, and that he was still not satisfied with the current version. He also noted that the Economic Development Plan which would be developed from TCG's report would need to be more specific about what development could be expected over the next ten years.

Mr. Shea notified the committee that TCG estimated the final report to be about 80% complete. He stated that he would welcome any further feedback from committee members about the report which could be passed on to Mr. Kohn before the report was finalized.

Mr. Hull asked what else we would be looking for from Mr. Kohn. Mr. Bell replied that he would like to see some logical progression from the extensive amount of data that TCG had compiled to the recommendations which were made in the report, which primarily focused on agriculture.

Mr. Hull stated that the report pointed out that Arundel was located near a tourist driven

economy and had referred to \$400 million in tourist sales for the area. He thought that this was meant to indicate to the committee that the EDC should try to develop tourist driven business opportunities. Mr. Bell agreed and said that he wished the report had expanded on this topic in order to diversify the town's options.

Mr. Hull asked that if the committee were to set aside the problem of the report's focus on agriculture, what was the opinion on the remainder of the report. Mr. Bell replied that since the whole point of the study was to identify niche industries which Arundel could try to attract, removing agriculture left nothing else. Mr. Shea noted that in conversations with Mr. Kohn, he had tried to make it clear that in the State of Maine, there was no unified effort to promote agriculture, and that significant agricultural activity within the state was limited to potato production in Aroostook County and blueberry production down east.

Mr. Hull stated that he viewed the report as a foundation to be built on, rather than an end in itself, and that he thought we had received what we paid for, although some of the recommendations, such as promoting the salt water aquifer and some of the financing proposals were "off the wall."

Mr. Bell stated that if the report had given any reasons, based on the data collected, for promoting agriculture, he probably would have accepted the report even though he might not have agreed with it. He repeated his contention that there was no connection that he could discern between the data collected and the report recommendations.

Mr. Shea stated that it was his opinion that Mr. Kohn was focused on agriculture because of the public perception of Arundel as a rural town. Mr. Hull felt that Mr. Kohn's focus on agriculture was also a result of his conversations with the management of Kate's Butter.

Mr. Shea stated that he would make it clear to Mr. Kohn that if the EDC were to accept his proposals for agricultural development there would have to be some justification in the data to support his position. If there were no such justification, the EDC would be forced to draw their own conclusions from the data collected.

Mr. Hull pointed out that if the focus on agriculture were set aside, there were some very good suggestions in the report, such as tourism, flex space manufacturing, a gathering place hub, Biddeford Airport, etc. Mr. Bell agreed, stating that if some of those topics, such as tourism, and the ageing population had been expanded upon, the report would have been much better received.

Mr. Bell stated that the primary requirement of the RFP was to identify niche industries that Arundel could possibly compete for, and reiterated that the report did not fulfill that requirement. He also noted that this had been conveyed to Mr. Kohn on the 18th October, and that the revised documentation was still lacking. Ms. Bates suggested that it might not be that Mr. Kohn was ignoring the notification, but that TCG might not be able to fulfill the requirement.

Mr. Camp pointed out that if the report were presented to the Town as is, it could easily be considered a waste of taxpayer money.

Ms. Bates asked what the committee would expect to see in the report, based on the data that had been collected by Mr. Kohn. Mr. Bell replied that the data clearly showed that Arundel was adjacent to a significant tourist area, but that tourism, other than ag-tourism, had been neglected, and that the data showing an ageing population had been mentioned in the report, but no effort had been made to explore or expand on this topic.

Mr. Camp stated that he was concerned with the lack of specificity in identifying niche industries in the report. Ms. Bates stated that she thought Mr. Kohn's suggestions on ag-tourism were specific and were a good idea. Ms. Zuke agreed that ag-tourism might be a good idea, but suggested that it would never materialize to the extent needed to significantly affect the town's economy.

In summation, the Town Manager stated that he would forward the committee's comments to Mr. Kohn and request a final report no later than early January. Mr. Hull suggested that the EDC return a marked up copy of the revised report to TCG to try to indicate what revisions the committee considered necessary, and volunteered to provide the Town Manager with such a copy.

2.2: Implementation of Recommendations: Mr. Camp suggested that this topic be tabled until a final report had been received from TCG, and all concurred.

After some discussion of meeting schedules, it was agreed that the EDC will meet again on January 7th, 2014 at 5:00 pm. The Chair then proposed that the committee proceed to Agenda Item IV, in order to accommodate Ms. Burrows who needed to leave the meeting early.

IV. Arundel Businesses

4.1 Retention of Existing Businesses: Ms Burrows notified the committee of rumors concerning The Landing School, which indicated the school might be looking for a new location. She suggested forming a subcommittee to canvas local businesses in an effort to retain their presence in Arundel. Mr. Shea suggested that such a function should be assigned to a committee to promote Arundel Business, which had been proposed by Mr. Hull.

Mr. Hull suggested that such a committee should try to promote an Arundel business in the Arrow, the Village, or on the web site on a monthly basis, He volunteered to take on such a task but asked for recommendations from the EDC about specific businesses. Ms. Zuke suggested Melissa's Mighty Finds, which is relatively new in Arundel. Ms Bates suggested that instead of promoting individual businesses, that the committee promote business clusters such as "Places to eat", "Places to shop", or "Businesses that have recently made major investments in Arundel". Mr. Shea suggested promoting Champagne's Energy which is moving into a new building in Arundel, Kate's Butter which will be opening shortly, and Weirs Motors which will soon complete a major facility renovation.

4.2 Environment & Support for New Business Development: Mr. Bell informed the committee

that the Town's website as currently configured has a blank page dedicated to each business listing and suggested using this for promotional information about any business which wanted to participate. Ms. Zuke suggested linking the EDC Facebook page to the business listings once they were up and running.

Mr. Bell moved to form a Promotional Subcommittee, which was seconded by Mr. Hull. Mr. Hull and Ms. Zuke volunteered to serve on the new committee and Ms. Burrows was elected in absentia. A vote was taken on the motion which passed unanimously, with the exception of Ms. Burrows who had left the meeting due to a prior commitment. Mr. Camp suggested that local business owners be recruited to serve on the subcommittee, and suggested Ms. Andreoli from the Arundel Ice Cream Shop.

III. Review of Ourselves

3.1 Steps to make the EDC more active, engaged, successful: Mr. Hull suggested that offering some degree of financing to new or existing businesses might encourage them to locate in Arundel. He suggested that at some point a subcommittee might be formed to look into this possibility. The Town Manager commented that if the proposed TIF district is successful, some of the funds accrued to the Town could be put into a fund to support a revolving loan fund for new start-ups and existing businesses looking to expand. Discussion followed of public versus private financing.

Mr. Camp brought up the proposal to hold EDC meetings more frequently. After some discussion it was agreed to hold meetings twice monthly starting in January, 2014.

3.2 Subcommittees: Mr. Camp suggested a subcommittee to support local events. Mr. Shea cited the lack of volunteers at the present time.

3.3 New Members: After a brief discussion of potential new committee members, it was suggested that the EDC Facebook page, the Town website, and possibly "Arundel Cares" be used to advertise the need for volunteers. Ms. Zuke noted that the obnoxious use of anonymous comments on the "Arundel Cares" blog might make it an unsuitable vehicle for recruitment.

3.4 & 3.5 Where we fit in/Communication & Coordination: Mr. Hull raised the problem of communication between the CPRC, the Planning Board and the EDC. He cited the problem that mixed use districts as under discussion by the CPRC might not be in the best interest of the EDC in promoting business development. Mr. Camp raised the question of why was zoning being discussed by the Planning Board and CPRC when the Economic Development Plan was not yet complete. After lengthy discussion, it was decided that staff would schedule a joint meeting of the EDC, the CPRC, and the Planning Board to coordinate the activities of each committee.

V. Adjournment

Mr. Bell moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. Bates, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:35 pm.

