The Town of Brooklyn

Economic Development Commission

Chairperson, Robert Simons

(860)774-6544

**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

**Tuesday, December 3, 2019**

**Members present:** Jeff Gagnon, Cary Garcia, Chris Landis, Robert Simons

**Also present:**  Austin Tanner, AJ Kerouac

1. Call to order – Mr. Simons called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

1. Approval of minutes – Mrs. Garcia made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of August 6th. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gagnon. Motion passed unanimously.

1. Unfinished Business

Future of EDC – The commission discussed the challenges and concerns of going forward with a lack of executive support from the Town. Mr. Tanner’s presence was appreciated, and Commission members informed him that they have been advocating for a part-time EDC coordinator for at least 10 years. This would be someone who could be privy to opportunities or happenings in Brooklyn regarding economic development and keep the commission informed and help with planning on a timely basis. The commission could then act in an advisory role and help with projects as requested. The Commission feels that Jana Roberson could be a potential choice on a trial basis as someone already on staff in the Town. She has the knowledge and expertise to help move economic development forward in Brooklyn, even if it was just for 1-2 days per week.

If there is no coordinator, the role falls on the First Selectman to provide that leadership, which the Commission agrees has been very limited. Currently, there is a disconnect between the Commission and Mr. Ives as he has been unresponsive to our invitation to discuss these issues with us for the last quarter of 2019. Mrs. Garcia pointed out that the EDC is a volunteer commission. It does not have an economic development professional, and economic development experience has never been a requirement for membership on the commission.

The commissioners have remained in their positions because of their concerns as active citizens of Brooklyn and out of their desire to see Brooklyn succeed. The EDC has attempted to set goals for the future of Brooklyn in terms of economic development without success because of disagreement with the First Selectman. Consequently, the commission believes that it will require an active paid staff member of the town to set proper goals that are reachable and realistic for successful economic development to occur. Nearly all other commissions and boards in Brooklyn have a staff member. Other towns in the area who want economic development to succeed in their town seem to have hired staff to lead the effort.

* 1. Mr. Landis requested Mr. Tanner’s input on whether there is an opportunity for discussion about the future of the EDC at the Selectman level. Mr. Tanner said that he would speak to Mr. Ives on the subject before the February meeting.

1. New Business
   1. Mr. Gagnon inquired with Mr. Tanner about a grant for the baseball fields that was never signed. Mr. Tanner stated that he was just only learning about the issue as well and did not have much information.
   2. Mr. Tanner stated that the 2021 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) should be in progress and usually has input from the EDC. Mr. Landis, who participated in the 2011 POCD process, agreed that the work should have commenced over a year ago. It is unknown if a chair has been named.
   3. 2020 calendar - The group reviewed the schedule and revised as needed to accommodate schedules. Some will not be held on the 1st Tuesday of the month and the commission agree to remove the statement “Held on the 1st Tuesday...” from documents and website to allow for more flexibility and avoid a special meeting request. A motion to approve these calendar related items and the schedule was made by Mr. Landis, seconded by Mrs. Garcia. The motion carried unanimously. The following 2020 schedule will be submitted to the Town clerk:
      * February 11, 2020
      * April 7, 2020
      * June 9, 2020
      * August 4, 2020
      * October 6, 2020
      * December 1, 2020

1. Public Commentary
   1. Mr. Kerouac suggested that as a bare minimum perhaps Ms. Roberson could put together the welcome packet that has been discussed for years, offering that Plainfield has a very nice packet that includes a booklet that answers all questions for any incoming businesses.
   2. Mr. Kerouac re-visited the topic of the future of the EDC. He feels there is purposeful neglect and that disbanding could be good and to let the Selectmen deal with the consequences. Mr. Landis suggested waiting for a response from Mr. Ives before holding the next meeting. Given Mr. Tanner’s presence at the meeting and willingness to discuss the issue with Mr. Ives, Mr. Simons motioned to continue the EDC into 2020 but will hold meetings contingent on participation from the Selectmen’s office. Seconded by Mr. Landis. The motion carried unanimously.

1. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 11th at 4 pm.

1. Adjournment - A motion to adjourn was made at 4:43 p.m. by Mr. Landis, second by Mr. Gagnon. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cary Garcia, Secretary