Southwest Region Planning Commission
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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

July 27, 2023
1:00 p.m.

Southwest Region Planning Commission
37 Ashuelot Street
Keene, NH

Online: Join here
Phone: 1 646 558 8656
Meeting ID: 828 1269 6718
Password: 305643

AGENDA

I. Welcome and Introductions

II. Minutes of April 12, 2023

III. Discussion: Public Water and Sewer Resources Available via NHDES

IV. Update: Our Economy, A Strategy for Southwest NH

V. Partner Updates

VI. Other Matters

VII. Adjourn

SOUTHWEST REGION PLANNING COMMISSION

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

April 12, 2023

Members Present: Keith Thibault, Chairman, *Southwestern Community Services;* Sarah Bollinger, *Town of Swanzey;* Steve Dalessio, *Town of Walpole;* Steve Fortier, *NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs;* Med Kopczynski, *City of Keene*; Ed Merrell, *Town of Jaffrey;* Cody Morrison, *Monadnock Economic Development Corporation;* Luca Paris, *The Greater Monadnock Collaborative/Chamber;* Ron Rzasa, *Town of Chesterfield;* Bruce Smith, *Town of Westmoreland.*

Staff: Todd Horner, *Assistant Director*; Tim Murphy, *Executive Director*.

Guests: Tom Bascom, *Town of Greenfield;* Davis Bernstein, *Office of Congresswoman Kuster*; Jo Anne Carr, *Town of Jaffrey;* Taryn Fisher, *NH Small Business Development Center*; Robert Graham, *Office of Senator Hassan;* Rick Miller, *Town of Greenville;* Phil Sletten, *NH Fiscal Policy Institute*; Mark Tigan, *Winchester Economic Development Corporation*; Raisa West, *Town of Hancock.*

I. Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Thibault called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. and introductions were made.

II. Minutes of April 12, 2023

Motion: To approve the minutes of April 12, 2023 as submitted.

Motion by Ron Rzasa, seconded by Bruce Smith. Approved by unanimous vote.

III. Guest Presenter: Phil Sletten, NH Fiscal Policy Institute

Phil Sletten, Research Director at the NH Fiscal Policy Institute, provided a presentation on regional workforce trends, factors constraining workforce development, and elements of the proposed state budget that could affect those factors. He also shared information about how Local Fiscal Recovery Funds made available through the American Rescue Plan Act have been spent across different types of projects and in different counties across the state. A copy of the presentation is available at https://nhfpi.org/resource/workforce-constraints-and-the-state-budget/.

IV. South-West Collaborative Economic Development Region (SW CEDR) – Updates

Todd Horner provided an overview of the nomination process underway to identify projects that could benefit from grant writing or similar technical assistance funded through the SW CEDR. He noted that a current goal of the SW CEDR is to enhance the capacity of local stakeholders to pursue funding opportunities in support of economic development projects within the Monadnock Region or Upper Valley. He indicated that a short online form is available for interested parties to submit nominations. A project review committee will review nominations and evaluate them against criteria developed previously by the SW CEDR membership.

V. Our Economy: A Strategy for Southwest NH

Todd Horner led meeting participants through a portion of a modified SWOT analysis. During a previous meeting, EDAC attendees discussed regional economic development strengths, i.e., "what's working." At the current meeting, attendees continued the exercise by identifying weaknesses, or "what's not working." Below is a summary of issues and themes that attendees perceived as challenges.

- Childcare
  - A lack of openings.
  - Price points unaffordable to many households.
- Coordination – siloed social networks, both online and in person.
- Education
  - The lack of student debt relief.
  - The quality of public education, especially high schools.
  - The lack of financial incentives to pursue higher education in NH.
- Housing
  - A lack of clarity around housing definition, e.g., "affordable" versus "workforce."
  - Lack of information and process regarding attached dwelling units.
  - Limited land for residential development.
  - Few homeownership opportunities.
  - "Not in my backyard" (NIMBY) sentiments.
- Infrastructure – the absence or insufficiency of public water and sewer limits development.
- Jobs – growth in the service industry but not higher-paying jobs.
- Policy environment
  - State-level overregulation of federal funding.
  - Alteration of terrain (AOT) permitting process.
- Transportation
  - A lack of transportation options for older adults.
  - A lack of transportation options for youth.
- Workforce – a widespread shortage in available workers.

VI. Partner Updates

Partners updates included:

- An upcoming event hosted by the Greater Monadnock Collaborative regarding the recovery court system in Cheshire County and across the state. Recovery courts provide an alternative approach to criminal justice for individuals with substance use disorders. The Honorable Tina Nadeau, Chief Justice of the New Hampshire Superior Court, is the featured presenter.
- Progress on the Jaffrey "Dog-Leg" project. One structure claimed through eminent domain has been demolished in order to make way for a new roundabout. The Town has engaged a consultant who is providing recommendations regarding streetscape designs.
- The new Regional Housing Needs Assessment developed by SWRPC is available for public comment and review.[1]
- There will be a new funding round of the Complete Streets Implementation Grant Program, administered by SWRPC.
- The City of Keene has published a new local housing needs assessment.[2]

[1] https://www.swrpc.org/housing/
[2] https://keenenh.gov/sites/default/files/Community%20Development/Projects/Housing%20Analysis%202023/Full%20Report%20(No%20Appendices).pdf

- A medical services provider has bought a historic mill building in Greenville and has proposed converting it into an inpatient mental health facility. The proposal anticipates that the facility would house 40 clients and would host about 30 jobs. Public hearings are expected to take place in the months to come.
- The NH Liquor Store in Chesterfield occupies only a small portion of the parcel where it is located. Is there potential to develop housing on the property? The issue could be worthy of exploration, perhaps with assistance by the Community Housing Navigator working under the auspices of SWRPC and in partnership with the Town, as well as three other participating communities.
- The Municipal Per-Unit Program operating under the umbrella of InvestNH still has funding available. The Town of Swanzey has been awarded about $840,000 through the program, as a result of permitting construction of new workforce housing units. The Town is free to use those funds in any way it deems fit.
- The Town of Swanzey has about 500 units that have made it through zoning and site plan review, some of which are under construction and some of which are awaiting necessary permitting. The first project coming to fruition is anticipated to welcome tenants by the end of the summer.

VII. Other Matters

There were no other matters.

VIII. Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for July 12, 2023.

VIII. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Todd Horner
Assistant Director