



Falmouth Economic Improvement Committee

Wednesday, February 19, 2014
Minutes

Attendance:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Present</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Present</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Present</i>
Ann Armstrong	√	Phil Bixby	-	Janice DeLima	-
William Lunt III	-	Anne Theriault	√	Sandra Lipsey	√

Council Liaison: Councilor Anderson
Staff present: Theo Holtwijk
Others present: -

The meeting was started around 3:47 PM.

1. Review of Draft Minutes of January 8 and 22, 2013

This item was deferred as there was no quorum.

2. Representative for Ad Hoc Route 100 Committee

Anne and Sandra stated that they were unavailable to serve on the Ad Hoc Route 100 Committee. Ann Armstrong stated that she was interested to serve on that committee. The other committee members were appreciative of Ann's willingness to do so. Theo will inquire if any FEIC members who were not present have any interest.

3. Falmouth Economic Development Plan Approach

Theo reported that the Council had agreed to request from the FEIC a recommended approach to prepare an Economic Development Plan for Falmouth. Such an approach would be 1 or 2 pages long, and be produced over next couple of months. It would describe the scope, schedule, and participants to that effort.

The stated that he had put a package of materials together that he hoped members would review at home. The first was a summary of three, recent plans in the Greater Portland area: Scarborough, Portland, and Freeport. There are similarities and differences between these plans. They give the FEIC an idea what the final plan product could look like. The process that each community went through is also described in the plans. The other use for these plans is to see what these communities propose to address. There may be good ideas that could apply to Falmouth that can be gleaned from these plans. Theo stated he hoped that people would mark up these plans to make note of any aspects that could apply to Falmouth.

Theo reviewed the kind of outreach that each community had done, from public meetings, to one-on-one interviews, to focus groups by industry sector.

In the packet are also two articles by Jim Damich, who lives in Scarborough and was a consultant on Portland and Freeport plans. He describes the changing economic landscape. It is important for FEIC members to learn about those trends as they may inform the plan. The materials have been compiled to assist committee and community education on this topic.

Lastly, Theo shared some approach ideas that FEIC members could think about. He saw communication and community education as central themes to such a plan. It will be important to understand how the Town can be most effective in economic development, and how to work with all other interested parties. Consensus was needed to create a practical plan.

Theo suggested to:

- Expand the committee to “FEIC+” (similar to LPAC+) for purpose of preparing Economic Development Plan;
- Target and recruit key additional members;
- Target and recruit draft plan readers (people who don’t have time to come to meetings, but whose opinion is important and who are willing to review draft materials)
- Do committee education by inviting experts to come and speak on how the economic environment is transforming and how a municipality like Falmouth can best respond to that. If these sessions were video taped they could be shared with the community.
- Review existing reports relevant to Falmouth;
- Review good plans from other communities (such as the three examples provided, but there may be others);
- Conduct focus groups by industry sector
- Conduct one-on-one interviews as some people may be more frank that way;
- Develop a short, on-line outreach survey.

Russ stated that the Council would also be interested to hear what issue the committee feels the plan should address. He recalled Bill Lunt’s observation that Council may find certain issues unacceptable and that the committee should avoid wasting time on those. It was not entirely clear what Bill had meant. Theo stated that he thought Bill meant that if certain business uses were not acceptable to the Council those should be known. He stated that one effort could be to review the zoning ordinance to see what uses it allows and if there are limitations to that. Russ thought that it could also mean perceived barriers to business development.

Sandra felt that the Economic Development Plan should work in concert with the adopted Comprehensive Plan as that provided the context of growth and rural areas. Committee members thought it may be worthwhile to find out what owners of large tracts of land have in mind for their property.

The committee agreed that this was a very important topic that required all members to be present. As Russ, Sandra, and Theo cannot come to 3/5 meeting, the group decided to schedule the next FEIC meeting for March 12. An earlier start time of 3:00 PM was suggested to allow enough time to get into this topic. If people cannot come right at 3:00 PM, they could come a bit later and jump right in. The meeting after that will be on 3/19 (back to the regular schedule). At

the 3/12 meeting there will be a brainstorm on an approach and scope for the Economic Development Plan. The tentative schedule for coming up with a recommended approach is as follows:

- March 12: FEIC brainstorm
- March 19: FEIC review draft 1 of approach (prepared by Theo after 3/12)
- April 2: FEIC review draft 2 of approach, make final tweaks, and submit to Council

The committee liked this approach.

4. Falmouth Business Association Feasibility Process

Theo stated that he was in process of assembling a Leadership Team for this project. He hoped such a group could assist the Town with:

- a. organization of outreach events,
- b. distributing outreach invitations,
- c. being community “listeners” and bringing feedback back,
- d. preparation and review of draft briefing materials, and
- e. taking over the reigns from Town and forming the actual association, if it shows there is sufficient business interest to do so.

He asked if the FEIC could provide him with names and contact information of any interested business people. He stated that he had reached out to Barbra Esposito, Chris Peterson, and Ann Armstrong.

Anne asked how many people would be on this Team. Theo said seven or so to keep it relatively small and flexible. He stated that managing this effort through the FEIC meetings would be cumbersome and take away valuable FEIC time. The committee agreed with that.

Anne asked what detail people would be provided with. Theo replied that they would get the handout he had distributed. Ann felt that that was not enough. Theo explained that the handout was just for starters and would be updated and expanded as the Team dove into the project. It was intended to provide the overview and not provide all the answers. There are several research tasks that he had already undertaken and had obtained material for.

Ann suggested Sam Hirsch and Pete Leavitt for the Leadership Team and the committee agreed with those suggestions.

Sandra stated that from two other experiences she observed that there were “birth leaders,” people who get excited about forming a new organization, may who will step aside to let others run and manage that organization once it is formed. People will come into and step out of these efforts.

Anne suggested that the Shop Falmouth committee members could be part of the Leadership team. She will send Theo names and contact information. Ann reminded the group that the feasibility effort is intended to be broader than organizing a single event. Theo will send out an invitation to the Shop Falmouth members to invite them to join the effort, if they are interested.

5. Route One Communications Campaign Update

Theo handed out the RFP for Route One Communications Campaign. Deadline for proposals is February 26. The CDC will manage this effort with staff expected to implement most of it (in an

effort to save some expense). The role of the FEIC would to bring back what it hears in the community, so any issues can be addressed. FEIC can also help with getting the word out. Anne felt the Town should communicate to businesses the status of the temporary sign provisions. The provisions have sunsetted, but the Town Manager has stated that the Town is not enforcing it for the time being. Anne felt that businesses should be told what is going on. Sandra agreed that transparent, clear communications from the Town to the business community was important and that the Town could improve on that. The temporary signage issue was the elephant in the room that no one is addressing.

Upon discussion the committee agreed that it was important to determine first what the Council's position was on this issue, so it was clear what needed to be communicated. The experience has been that very few businesses have taken out sign permits. Many of those that have put up signs are doing so in illegal locations and for periods longer than allowed.

The committee agreed to place this topic on a future FEIC agenda. It will not be on agenda for 3/12, so as not to distract from the Economic Development Plan topic.

6. Other Business

a. Status Update

Theo handed out a status update sheet on all current economic development projects, so people can see at a glance where a particular project is at.

b. Wayfinding Signage

One of those projects is wayfinding signage. There is currently an RFP out for that. The committee was pleased to see that. The deadline for proposals is March 26. Committee members will forward the RFP to their contacts as appropriate. Theo stated that this RFP, like the Route One Communications campaign one, had been sent to a number of firms in the area, that a legal ad had been placed and that the RFP was posted on the Town's website.

c. Open Space Support Letter

Bob Shafto has requested a letter of support from the committee regarding an open space land acquisition grant he is seeking on behalf of the Town. Theo distributed a draft letter and map. As there was no quorum, the decision on this will be deferred. Theo will distribute the letter and map to the members that were not present, so they can study it and have the committee not devote too much time on it at its 3/12 meeting.

7. Next Meeting

The FEIC will meet next on March 12, 2014.

The committee adjourned at 5:11 PM.

Draft minutes prepared by Theo Holtwijk, February 20, 2014