



## Falmouth Economic Improvement Committee

### Wednesday, February 4, 2015 Minutes

#### Attendance:

Name	Present	Name	Present	Name	Present
Sandra Lipsey	√	Phil Bixby	-	Janice DeLima	√
William Lunt III	√	Anne Theriault	-	Dimitri Balatsos	√
Pam DiPietro-Hale	√	Chris Wasileski	-	Luc Walker	-

#### Council Liaison:

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#### Staff present:

Nathan Poore, Theo Holtwijk

#### Others present:

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Bill called the meeting to order at 3:30 PM.

#### 1. Review of Draft Minutes of January 21, 2015 meeting

The draft minutes of the January 21, 2015 meeting were approved as written.

#### 2. Brainstorm Possible Priority Projects

Theo reviewed the schedule for the Economic Development Strategy and explained what the purpose of today's meeting was. He reviewed the two survey summary sheets.

The committee reviewed the list of most popular actions:

Regarding action #1, Pam asked what assistance the Town had provided to the owners of the Falmouth Shopping Center. Theo explained the Community Charrette in 2009 and the regular meetings with the owners.

Regarding action #10, Bill asked who would own the Turnpike Spur ramp area if there was no ramp in the future. Nathan gave an update on his discussion with MDOT on that matter. The future owner would likely be selected through a competitive process. The State would want to see a developer take responsibility of demolition of the bridge and ramps and rebuild an at-grade intersection. The Town would have to determine the zoning district for this area.

Regarding action #4, Sandra suggested that the Route 100 commercial area may also be an area suitable for more mixed use. Nathan stated that historically the Council has not been in favor of adding retail uses to the Route 1 North area. Housing in that location is a possibility.

Sandra reminded the committee that its view for the Strategy should be on the long term and that the Council will tackle short term issues. Bill stated that more retail on Route 1 North was desirable.

Sandra wondered why the responses to action 6 were not the same as with action 4, as these actions were so similar. Dimitri felt that the way actions are worded may affect the responses. Nathan suggested stating for action 4 “maximize opportunities for more mixed use” or something to that effect.

Dimitri was interested to see a chart that compares the draft actions to what the Comprehensive Plan says about them. Janice felt that this type of vetting could be done later.

Regarding action #2, Theo suggested that this could include a market study. Janice was not in favor of the Town rendering that type of assistance as developers have their own approaches and ideas for projects.

Janice asked about the Rivalries restaurant controversy. Nathan gave quick background to that. She was in favor of the Town facilitating quicker decisions on matters such as that one. She felt that such could also help the Falmouth Shopping Center.

Dimitri wondered how much influence residents have in such decisions. Nathan said that residents have a tremendous influence in the land use approval process. Bill commented that the Tidewater Master Plan was developed through contract zoning and that the developer did the best he could.

Nathan summarized the discussion by stating that the Town needed to be nimble on zoning issues, master plan development, and with development prospects.

Janice said she had the feeling that projects get tangled up in zoning and master planning. Nathan stated that the process needed to be expedited and that the Town needed to be responsive to developers. Janice said that that felt right to her.

Nathan added that in considering flexibilities attention needed to be paid to the surrounding zone of a particular project and that respect needed to be paid to the Route 1 and Route visioning processes.

Bill felt that economic viability was of prime importance before the Town sets a vision that may not be viable for developers.

Pam asked who the final decision on Rivalries makes. Nathan said it is a decision for the Council.

Dimitri felt that the challenge was to pull the three commercial areas of the town together and give a sense of soul. Janice felt the task for FEIC was to look a higher level at possible actions and what economic development can mean. She felt it should be aimed at meeting the needs of existing businesses and at responding to what creates economic activity. She wondered if annual events could help with that.

Dimitri felt the plan should focus on bigger projects with the aim of attracting millennials. He cited a recent article on that in Wilmington, Delaware. He felt that attractive housing was

important in that. He suggested that the focus should be on what type of business the Town wanted to attract. What is it, where do we want it, do we have the needed infrastructure for that – those were the questions he felt that should be answered.

Janice felt that developers were good at identifying such opportunities. She wondered if a real estate symposium would be helpful.

Dimitri felt that the Town's strengths should be broadcast on its website, flyers and other publicity. They should also be shared with a dozen or so developers so they become more aware what Falmouth has to offer.

Bill felt that it was putting the cart before the horse by stating what business the Town wants. He felt it was important to hear from developers what they felt could be done in a particular area and what worked financially.

Sandra stated that she disagreed with that and gave an example from another community which had stated to developers: "this is the model that we want you to build." Not every developer can fill such a niche.

Dimitri wondered if incentives should be offered to a developer to build to the vision.

Bill said that vision and viability needed to be put together. He stated that the vision approach felt elitist to him and he was bothered by it. He said that the Town had limited commercial area and the Town's ideas may not be able to be carried out.

Janice wondered if a conversation with developers would be helpful as they have a good sense of market trends. Theo stated that last fall LPAC and CDC conducted a conversation with real estate development professionals on residential housing trends and how they affected Falmouth.

Janice felt that the Plan can give clarity to developers as where development opportunities lie. Nathan stated that promoting and facilitating the redevelopment of existing space seemed key.

Bill was wondering if what the FEIC came up with was in conflict with other plans. He thought that the consultant was going to do that.

Nathan stated that there was an opportunity to have the Route 1 North included in a regional transportation effort by PACTS in 2016 as that group is focusing on key corridors such as Route 1.

Nathan summarized the discussion of today:

- We want to develop Route 1 North.
- We want high density as we do not have much commercial area.
- We need to address zoning issues.
- We need to market the good ideas of the plan that are consistent with current zoning.
- We need to expedite development work.

- We cannot forget about infrastructure such as broad band and natural gas.
- There was no objection from the committee on this list.

Nathan stated that possible action that did not list so high had a lot of common elements with the top actions. He felt that this work could be integrated.

The group felt that some of the other actions had not yet been discussed and agreed to schedule a special meeting to do so. This will be done on February 11 at 3:30 PM. Theo will brief the missing FEIC members.

### **3. Other Business**

There was no other business.

### **4. Next Meeting**

The next meeting is February 11 at 3:30 PM.

The committee adjourned at 5:05 PM.

Draft minutes prepared by Theo Holtwijk, February 6, 2015