



Falmouth Economic Improvement Committee

Monday, August 15, 2016 Minutes

Attendance:

Name	Present	Name	Present	Name	Present
Sandra Lipsey	-	Dimitri Balatsos	√	Pam DiPietro-Hale	-
William Lunt III	√	Chris Wasileski	√		

Councilors Present: Karen Farber, Caleb Hemphill

Staff present: Nathan Poore, Theo Holtwijk

Others present: Colin Ellis

The meeting was started at 5:30 PM.

Attendees introduced themselves.

1. Discuss future of FEIC with Council representatives

Theo gave an introduction to the agenda topic.

Karen wondered what the FEIC wanted envisioned working on now that the Economic Development Strategy was completed. She said that in the past the committee, thanks in large part to Anne Theriault, was involved with Shop Falmouth. She stated that the Council had trouble seeing some of the Plan's tasks as Town tasks, but saw them more as ones for a business association.

Dimitri asked what the role of the Long Range Planning Advisory Committee (LPAC) was. He wondered if there was overlap with FEIC.

Bill said that the Council only assigned 2 or 3 tasks from the Plan's list. He felt that the FEIC could present the Council with a sense of priorities for all of the tasks.

Chris agreed that the assigned tasks to FEIC seemed small and wondered if that meant that the FEIC's usefulness had expired.

Bill stated that he originally thought the FEIC would move more into ordinance issues, and still thought that might be a good idea, but these issues seem to be assigned to the Community Development Committee or to staff.

Dimitri felt that implementation of the plan was the crux of the matter and that a possible task could be to oversee its implementation.

Bill felt that taken the pulse of the business community could also be a good role for the FEIC and could help to tie all of it together. Dimitri felt that such a role would be difficult and would involve surveys. He felt that it was more useful to come up with a plan or initiatives and ask the business community for its reaction.

Caleb wanted to make sure the FEIC would still use the plan. The committee said yes.

Bill stated that it was helpful that the FEIC had members with different perspectives and approaches as that all added strength to the group.

Karen clarified that LPAC works on land use issues. She recognized that the FEIC had also identified working on large vacant properties and felt that maybe there was a role there for the group.

Nathan said he made a quick list of the 36 tasks that the Council had selected an assigned. He said that 7 committees had been assigned one or more tasks.

Karen thought that this may mean that the implementation of the plan has become standard operating procedure. She felt that a lot of progress had been made on economic development since the creation of the committee and was wondering how the remaining task of the plan might be assigned. She did not think that the FEIC should be a subcommittee of LPAC. She did not see the FEIC taking on any ordinance issues.

Chris saw value of the FEIC in taking the pulse of the community and groups like FEDC to find what issues people have. He saw it as informal data gathering.

Karen was wondering if the chamber was a resource for the FEIC for that. Chris replied that he saw the chamber more in hosting after hours gatherings where businesses talk about their products.

Bill thought that the FEIC should be kept, but should have just 5 members.

Nathan noted that the assignments of the economic strategy tasks was comprehensive and had a lot of crossovers. Perhaps the FEIC could be the committee that did overall review of these tasks and work with the other groups that had assigned tasks.

Bill thought that meeting with the other implementers might be helpful.

Karen thought that joint meetings might be productive. Nathan suggested that “liaison” type links could be made based on FEIC member interest. Bill felt that each person may have their own impressions and that a group effort may more productive.

Dimitri said that the purpose of the committee was to attract business and increase the tax base. He was wondering how the Town was going about that and if anybody was thinking about that. He felt it was a 24/7 task to make Falmouth as attractive a place to do business as possible. Dimitri wondered: Is the Town advertising? Is it reaching out to other networks?

Karen said that was part of Nathan and Theo's jobs and that all elements contained in the economic development strategy are helping to make Falmouth more attractive. She cited as one example the recently completed broadband study for Falmouth that shows excellent coverage in the growth area of the community. Nathan gave some additional examples of efforts by the Town. Dimitri wondered if the FEIC could be a resource to staff. Bill suggested that information could be brought back by the committee to the Town. Nathan felt that committee members were well connected in the community and that it would be helpful to bring information back to staff.

Karen asked if a reduction of the number of required FEIC members should be pursued. She suggested that the FEIC review the remaining plan tasks and make a recommendation back to the Council as to what to do with them. She felt that the individual interest of the members should guide who tracks the implementation of what issue as joint meetings with other committees may be hard to schedule.

Nathan said that staff can let the FEIC know when which committee is scheduled to take on a specific item.

Bill says that this is the same approach that the Portland Water District Trustees use.

Bill recommended that the FEIC be set up with 5 regular members and 2 alternates.

Chris felt that any FEIC member can attend any other public meeting as a member of the public.

Bill felt that this meeting had been very productive.

Chris hoped that more FEIC members could be recruited.

Karen suggested leaving it up to the FEIC if its daytime meeting time should be revisited or not. It was recognized that meeting during the day may involve work conflicts that business members may have.

Karen suggested meeting again in early October and that she was glad to see so much interest from the FEIC to continue its work.

The committee adjourned at 6:28 PM.

Draft minutes prepared by Theo Holtwijk, August 17, 2016