



# Falmouth Economic Improvement Committee

## Meeting Minutes Wednesday, April 3, 2019

Pamela DiPietro-Hale <i>Chair</i>	✓	William Lunt III	-	Andrea Ferrante <i>Council Liaison</i>	✓
Chris Wasileski <i>Vice Chair</i>	-	Edward Pierce	✓	Nathan Poore <i>Staff</i>	-
Brian Bakke	✓	Mindy Schwartz	✓	Theo Holtwijk <i>Staff</i>	✓
Paul Bergkamp	✓				

The meeting was called to order by Pam at 4:32 pm. The new members Ed and Paul introduced themselves.

### 1. Review Draft Minutes of January 30 and February 6, 2019 Meetings

The draft Minutes of January 30 and February 6, 2019 meetings were approved as written by those in attendance at each meeting.

### 2. Feedback on Energy Forum

Pam said she enjoyed the Energy Forum and that she heard a suggestion from a resident who was there that the Town should organize something similar for residents. She said she was not aware of the renovation at the former Nina's store. Theo said that Kimberly Darling has been organizing residential energy expos for several years now. The committee discussed the attendance at the event. Brian thought that the attendance may have been affected by a competing sports event on TV. Mindy was wondering how the program was marketed and suggested that a prize should be awarded to an attendee.

### 3. Thoughts for Future Forums

Theo provided an overview of the five business forums that have been held, where they were, who spoke, and what the attendance has been. There was a suggestion to get more Chamber involvement in the forums. Another suggestion was to conduct a survey to see what businesses were interested in. It was asked what business list was used, and if the chamber could share its business list. Theo said that the chamber in the past did distribute Falmouth events to its members.

Mindy suggested we use the personal property list for business contacts. Theo said that that list was the basis for the business list, but that it typically reached the accounting offices and bookkeepers. He said that Sandra and Kimberly had been instrumental in obtaining property owner, business owner, business manager, and after hours contact information for as many businesses as possible. He noted that this information is already a few years old and there were many returns on e-mails. The committee felt that a survey was a good idea. Questions were suggested for the survey: Did you attend a forum? Did you like it? What topics do you suggest?

#### **4. Thoughts on Structure of the Committee, Responsibilities, Objectives**

Theo passed around the current charge of the committee. Ed was wondering what economic development meant for the community and what the appetite for new businesses is. It seemed to him that business growth was controversial. Andrea felt that the committee should step up its efforts and not back off, and that the committee should find the people in the community who were interested in economic development. She anticipated that there would be a quick Comprehensive Plan revision to address the foundational values of the community. It seemed to her that the community was waking up. She was not in favor of dissolving the committee. She felt that a group of 15 to 18 people was needed. Ed commented on the feedback that was obtained on the Falmouth Center proposal, and the time seemed ripe to build a new FEIC. Brian said that the Chamber is already active, and that the committee needed to find a galvanizing topic. He would love to see stronger businesses in Falmouth.

Andrea said that one topic could be how to attract more business on Route 100, or how to get Cohen, the developer of Falmouth Center, back to the table. Paul said that it may be helpful to brainstorm things that people felt thought could fit in Falmouth. He suggested asking businesses and residents what made sense, what type of industries, etc. Andrea said that there was already a Route 100 list and that that data was not old. She felt the committee could pick up the ball on that. She also said that there were organizational gaps in the Town of Falmouth and that the town needed good communication vehicles. She felt worn out and saw no positivity, and said that things were really bad. She felt that the town was not educating or communicating. She thought that if people saw the e-mails that the Council gets, they would want to get involved. She added that for Route 100 there was interest expressed by three small businesses, but that those businesses needed the new neighborhoods that the Homestead Acres project had proposed as well as walkability. Aroma Joe's had expressed interest, but needed a drive through. Theo commented that businesses in Falmouth seemed to operate quite independently.

Mindy asked what the issues were. Paul wondered what insights were to be gleaned from the Falmouth Center project. He said that some do not see Falmouth as a destination for others, but see it as a community that takes care of itself. Andrea added that Falmouth did not want to become a Scarborough or Freeport, but that she did see opportunities for restaurants, coffee shops, and a hotel. Paul noted that the Falmouth Center developer saw a soccer field as an anchor for its development, along with offices. He suggested that a key question with any development proposal is: what is the attraction of this to the community? Andrea felt that there was a lack of relationship with the Falmouth Center developer, and that it seemed to some fair game to attack him. She felt that the damage that was done should be repaired. She said that she had met several times with the developer. She recognized that there were four councilors who said no to the soccer field portion of the project, and that that meant the developer was out. Ed noted that the developer was local and was still here, but he was burned by the experience, but that he may come back. Andrea said that the developer was a customer. She was worried about Falmouth's reputation, and said that the whole situation was can of worms.

Andrea brought up the size of the committee. She was wondering if the committee should reach out to others. Pam agreed that the committee could use more people. Mindy said that the objective of the committee should not be to only increase the number of businesses in Falmouth, but that the community should look for smart development, as it was not a destination environment. She felt that Falmouth should grow the vitality of its businesses. She felt that there was a need for a laundry, coffee shop, park, community center, and/or amphitheater, but not another Wal-Mart or target. She felt that home should home. She said that people are afraid of growth. She was looking for a cozier, warmer, and thriving Falmouth.

Brian stated that he did not know what flavor Falmouth is. He liked going to Otto's in Yarmouth, but felt that, unlike Yarmouth, there was no community center in Falmouth. He felt the sense of community should be increased. Mindy felt that the committee could help connect businesses. Ed said that it should be asked of local businesses why they chose to have their business here. What was the attraction for them/ Was it the schools? Andrea said it was also open space. She liked the amphitheater idea. She commented that the town spent \$20,000 on human services and she had been interested in getting a wellness committee established. She thought that an event at Community Park might help to bring people together, something like a Common Ground Fair South. She felt there was suitable land for that a Zacharias Farm. Mindy added that the TD Bank parking lot might be a good site too, as it was empty on weekends. She suggested a food truck festival, Falmouth swap meet, West Falmouth Farmers Market, or a concert site. She was wondering what the charge of the committee was. There was a discussion as to what else, besides a copy of the committee's charge, may be helpful for the committee to have. Theo will make printed copies of the Economic Development Strategy report and put all materials in 3 ring binders. Four people requested a binder.

The discussion went back to if more people should be part of the FEIC effort. Paul wondered what type of people might be good. Ed said that everyone wants a say in galvanizing issues and suggested that the committee focus on such issues. Theo suggested that the committee follow what is happening at the Council level, because it seemed that the galvanizing issues were part of its agenda. Andrea mentioned the communication ideas that the Council had recently been discussing. She said that a key question was how we do business as a town and suggested that businesses should be treated as customers. She said there was a role for the committee to help bring civility back. She commented on a recent letter to the editor of The Forecaster regarding Route 100, where he expressed disappointed that the community was unwilling to embrace new development there, to dovetail with a major road investment that is being made there. Andrea said that an effort should be undertaken to identify Falmouth's vision and identity. The committee wondered where other interested people could be found.

## **5. Other Business**

Theo reported that Falmouth had recently been upgraded by Moody's to its highest status: Aaa. There is just one other Maine community that has achieved that. He noted that Falmouth also has Standard and Poor's highest rating. The committee felt this was very good news. It was commented that this meant that Falmouth was a healthy place for businesses, and therefore also a healthy place for residents.

## **6. Next meeting**

The committee is scheduled to meet again on April 17, 2019.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:58 PM.

Draft minutes prepared by Theo Holtwijk, April 12, 2019