

Falmouth Economic Improvement Committee

Meeting Minutes Wednesday, July 3, 2019

Present:

Pamela DiPietro-Hale <i>Chair</i>	√	William Lunt III	-	Janice De Lima <i>Council Liaison</i>	√
Chris Wasileski	√	Edward Pierce	-	Nathan Poore <i>Staff</i>	-
Brian Bakke	√	Mindy Schwartz	√	Theo Holtwijk <i>Staff</i>	√
Paul Bergkamp	√ phone				

Others attending: Chris Chicoine, Cole Chicoine

Pam started the meeting at 4:30 PM. Chris Chicoine explained that his son was a boy scout who was attending this meeting as part of his badge requirements.

1. Review Draft Minutes of May 1 and 15, and June 19, 2019 Meetings

Upon a motion by Chris and second by Brian, the draft minutes of the May 1 and 15, and June 19, 2019 meetings were unanimously approved as written by those in attendance at each meeting.

2. Continue to discuss program, panel, date, and location for Fall 2019 FEIC Business Forum(s) and Input for 2019 Council Retreat

Pam stated that at the last meeting the group started to review the concept prepared by Paul regarding forming a Falmouth Business League, and that the task for today was to develop a proposed committee task for review by the Council at its upcoming retreat.

Janice asked if the local business organization that had been proposed a few years ago had gotten off the ground. Chris said that it had not gotten off the ground. Janice recalled that that proposal had a strictly local business focus and did not include any franchise businesses. She thought that the current League proposal needed to have grassroots support and could not just be the FEIC.

Pam wondered what direction the committee wanted to go in: going the more traditional route of organizing forums or taking the League concept on as a special project.

Mindy said she loved the League concept and the overall structure of it.

Chris liked it too and saw opportunities for mentorship of new talent and saw this as way to nurture that.

Mindy said that the League could also help businesses that are already here. She felt what was missing in Falmouth was a sense of community.

Chris Chicoine asked if there was a local chamber. The group said yes.

Janice asked which FEIC members were also chamber members. Chris Wasileski said that his company was a member. Some replied that Chamber membership was expensive and that was hard to see the value of that.

The group unanimously agreed that it would be good to let the Chamber know of the League idea and seek its input.

Paul explained that the concept had three buckets. One was to have businesses that align with the Town values. He said that the Council has already an initiative underway to articulate those values. Second, was to create a business network that could feed on itself through sharing of best business practices and dialogue. Third, expansion of businesses could be helped by retired businesspeople who could share tips on business practices.

Paul also envisioned a Falmouth directory where any local resources that exist could be listed.

Chris W. commented that this could also be a web resource and that he saw great value in a senior executive resource. Paul added that the internship connection could also be part of this directory. Mindy felt that this fit well with the STEM forum and that the League could also work with local scouts.

Pam asked about the alignment with Town goals and where the Council was going with that.

Paul commented that the Council realizes that it cannot play with development proposals. He envisioned the Town developing a profile where new businesses could be measured against to see if they fit. He felt that some Portland businesses may be ready to come to Falmouth, and that the profile would help to do outreach in that regard.

Mindy felt that the committee's position statement would need to be revisited. Pam said that the Town vision and values part should be in there. Paul said that it was clear that Falmouth did not want to be like Freeport.

Janice thought that it was good to tie any committee recommendations back to the Economic Development Strategy.

Pam said that the plan had an action matrix that could be referenced.

Chris said that it was also good to state what the committee is already doing. He mentioned that the committee in the past had an interest to review the zoning ordinance and that there was a question of that was role for FEIC.

Janice said that the group can always make recommendations if it wants to.

Chris felt that pro bono newsletters may be a good idea and that experts could be found to help with that.

Pam wondered if implementation of the League idea could fit under the Town umbrella.

Theo replied that the Town cannot make specific business recommendations – as envisioned in the directory - as that was also an issue with the local business group. He wondered if therefore the League should be set up outside the Town's purview.

Mindy mentioned that SCORE offers some similar services, but that she did not want to a whole program, but just do a 1-hour session of a topic of her specific interest.

Janice wondered if there was any data available that stated how many Falmouth residents are also business owners, and if there was a culture of entrepreneurship in Falmouth. Such data might support the idea to grow your company here, she thought. She wondered if there were any statistics on local entrepreneurs.

Chris wondered how many telecommuters were in Falmouth because of its quality of life. Brian felt it was a lot. Pam said that another attraction is the proximity to the Jetport.

Janice said that there are also a lot of artists here, and that more galleries might be a good idea.

Mindy wondered if there had been design competition held in Falmouth. She felt that Route 1 needed a town center in the area of Bucknam and Depot Roads. She felt that such a center could be on both sides of Route 1.

Theo gave a quick Route 1 history.

The group then circled back to the main topic. Pam said the group needed to connect with the Council and the Chamber.

Janice said that a question was also if this effort should be run by FEIC.

Pam wondered if there was staff support for such an effort.

Theo said that the first issue is to get the task in the Council work plan and have Council support for it. It was also unclear to him how active FEIC members wanted to be.

Paul stated that a series of forums would help the committee to hear if there is an echo in the business community, and that such could help determine the League's priorities and first deliverables.

Pam said that it was important to follow the direction of the Council.

Paul envisioned that the League concept could be brought to life in early 2020. Brian stated that it meant that more people should be brought on board.

Pam asked if the committee can recruit volunteers.

Mindy asked where the Council stood on its resolution. Janice said that the new Council had not discussed the execution of the resolution. She recommended that FEIC members invite other business owners to come to its meetings.

Chris Chicoine felt the first mandate of the committee was to solicit input from the business community.

Theo mentioned that in the past the committee had made some specific invitations to business owners who had gone through the site plan review process, but that the committee can invite anyone to sit in on any of its meetings.

Pam said that the next forum could be held towards the end of the year.

Chris Chicoine suggested asking what other towns do, and if they already have a similar business league.

Janice said that South Portland had such an organization, but that it was a business collaboration.

Mindy saw the League as a supportive, community-focused group.

Pam said that it was important to hear from the Chamber.

Chris Chicoine felt that Falmouth's issues were not unique. Mindy thought it was a good idea to do some research. Paul felt that it was also a good idea to invite others to come to the meetings.

Pam said that the Chamber could be invited to the next meetings, assuming its leadership is available.

Theo said that he was not here on July 17, but that he would ask Nathan if he could to fill in for him.

3. Other Business

Theo reported that the 7/8 Council agenda had an item of interest to the committee on West Falmouth Crossing. He encouraged the committee to subscribe to Council agendas, so it was aware what issues are being discussed by the Council.

Pam said that the committee rotate checking on Council agendas and reporting on that at the committee.

Janice that there may be timing issues with that.

Theo stated that the FEIC typically meets on the Wednesday before a Monday Council meeting and he Council's agendas do not get posted until the Thursday before. There are two aspects of this, he said, one is for the committee to be aware of the issues, and second it is for the committee to offer comment on issues, where appropriate.

Janice said that there needed to be a deeper understanding by the committee of the issues and what is proposed with development projects.

There was a suggestion made to have a regular Council liaison update on the FEIC agendas.

Janice urged the committee to invite other businesses to come.

Cole Chicoine asked what young people can do to help with this. The committee responded that it was important for it to know what young people wanted and what ideas they had. Such information may help young people find the careers they are interested in.

Chris Chicoine asked how many of the attendees were paid. Theo replied that he was paid as Town staff. Janice replied that she only gets paid to attend Council meetings and not committee meetings. The others said that they did not get paid.

4. Next Meeting: July 17, 2019 4:30 PM

The meeting adjourned at 5:51 PM.

Draft Minutes prepared by Theo Holtwijk, July 8, 2019 rev. July 18, 2018