

FINAL

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2021 – 4:00PM
City Hall – Council Chambers
51 North Park Street, Lebanon**

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: William Dunn (Chair), Dan Nash, Johanna Cicotte, Andrew Key,
Councilor Karen Liot Hill (Vice Chair), Councilor Doug Whittlesey (remote), Chip Brown

MEMBERS ABSENT: David Newlove, Kevin Purcell

STAFF PRESENT: Planning and Development Director David Brooks

1. CALL TO ORDER:

- The December 8, 2021 Economic Development Commission meeting was called to order at 4:05 PM

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- A. October 27, 2021

Amendments: Page 2, Line 12: change Mr. Dunn, to Mr. Brooks.

***Motion by Dan Nash to approve the minutes of October 27, 2021, as amended.
Second by Karen Liot Hill.***

**** The Vote on the MOTION was approved (7-0).***

3. NEW BUSINESS:

- A. Business Retention & Home-Grown Success –
B. Setting Goals for 2022 –

The Commission discussed items A & B concurrently.

Mr. Dunn explained that years ago the Economic Vitality Exchange Committee created listening tours. These tours consisted of small subcommittees speaking with local businesses regarding how the City can be of assistance of them. This information was then distilled down into key focus items. He asked the Commission if it would consider taking these listening tours up again in 2022.

Councilor Liot Hill explained that, at that time, the subcommittees met with approximately 20-30 businesses. This project could be taken up by the Commission in the first quarter of 2022. It helps businesses to feel valued and appreciated. It is also a chance for the City to promote things it's doing or encourage certain resources.

Mr. Dunn noted that the kiosks in the City have been wrapped in informational artwork.

Councilor Whittlesey, remote, stated that having an overarching goal for surveying businesses will be important. Councilor Liot Hill explained that the listening tours have generally been more conversational, and open-ended. The listening tours could be Phase I of the project and could then be followed up on with a possible survey in Phase II. The groups could also create a handout with information and potential resources for subcommittees to give to businesses.

The Commission discussed the Local Upper Valley app and promoting it within the City.

Mr. Dunn read updates from Tracy Hutchins, including the Commission hearing from Charlie French at the UNH Cooperative Extension on a scope of work for a business retention item at its next meeting; the Upper Valley Business Alliance is hosting a Great Gift card Giveaway through the Local Upper Valley app; and there is a local workshop on December 15, 2021, regarding the vaccine mandate for employers over 100 employees.

6. OTHER BUSINESS (*this item was taken out of order*)

Mr. Nash noted concerns regarding proposed zoning changes for landscaping in the downtown areas. He believes the proposal creates conflicts between the Zoning Ordinance and Site Plan Review Regulations relative to landscaping and other requirements and would undermine the downtown concept of being dense and walkable. Mr. Key agreed that this could create a real conflict with creating a walkable/urban landscape. Green space can still be created in parks and other areas of the landscape.

Councilor Liot Hill noted that the City Council adopts zoning changes. She suggested that the EDC could vote on a resolution of a recommendation for changing the language.

Chet Clem, remote, noted that it is concerning to have conflict between the proposed zoning ordinance and the site plan/subdivision process. This is counterproductive to economic development.

Mr. Brooks stated that zoning allows owners to build to the property line in the downtown district, but not all do. If there is an area open along the perimeter of the property, staff has always recommended that there should be some landscaping. He agrees there needs to be clarity in the site plan and subdivision regulations, but that it is not a zoning issue. There needs to be more guidance to the Planning Board as to what landscaping and site improvements are appropriate in the downtown district. The zoning describes what can be done with the property and the site plan/subdivision regulations describe how to do it. The proposed amendment language for the site plan and subdivision regulations can be brought forward to the Planning Board at any time. He suggested that he could draft edits to Section 6.2 of the site plan regulations, to show that some areas of the City need clearer guidance on the perimeter landscaping guidelines.

The Commission agreed to review the draft language from Mr. Brooks at its next meeting.

Mr. Nash commented on waiving impact fees for workforce housing. Councilor Liot Hill stated that the City Council has identified housing as a major priority. There will be a strategic planning retreat on January 26, 2022. Items such as this could be brought up at that meeting, and she hopes that the EDC may champion certain items that come out of the discussion.

Mr. Dunn reminded the Commission that it should submit any input on potential redevelopment of the parking lots behind City Hall to Mr. Brooks before the next meeting.

Mr. Dunn asked that the Commissioners also consider 2-3 businesses they would be willing to visit on a listening tour and questions to ask during those visits, promotion of the Soofa signs and the Local Upper Valley app, and to review the Parks & Rec newsletter.

Mr. Brooks asked that any issues the Commission has with the Planning Department staff should come to him.

4. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

- A. Inventory Opportunities/Determine What's Missing
- B. Apply Success of Lebanon Downtown District Elsewhere
- C. Think Regionally
- D. Creation of Subcommittees

5. NEXT MEETING DATE: January 26, 2022 (Joint Meeting with Downtown TIF Advisory Board)

7. ADJOURNMENT.

Motion by Dan Nash to adjourn.

Second by Councilor Liot Hill.

** The Vote on the MOTION was approved (7-0).*

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude