

FINAL

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, JULY 9, 2025 – 4:00PM
Council Chambers – City Hall – or remote via Virtual Platform
MINUTES

EDC MEMBERS PRESENT: Andrew Key, Dean Cashman, Councilor Chris Simon (City Council Rep), Councilor Tim McNamara (City Council Rep), Dan Nash (Chair), Brendan Callahan, Eric Stacy

EDC MEMBERS ABSENT: Chip Brown

STAFF PRESENT: Deputy City Manager David Brooks

1. CALL TO ORDER:

- The July 9, 2025, Economic Development Commission meeting was called to order at 4:00pm.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- A. June 11, 2025

Motion by Councilor Simon to approve the meeting minutes of June 11, 2025, as presented.

Second by Mr. Callahan.

**The Vote on the MOTION was approved (5-0-1), with Councilor McNamara abstaining.*

Mr. Key entered the meeting at 4:05pm.

3. NEW BUSINESS:

- B. Discussion of Building Permit Review Process – *The Commission discussed this item at this time*

Leigh Hays, Chief Building Official, explained that the Department switched to OpenGov permitting software and spent a significant amount of time reviewing the building permitting process to make sure the permitting software reflected how the Department operates. Applicants now use the software to submit an application to the City and the Building Code dictates that the plans and documents submitted demonstrate how the project will be compliant with the State Building Code. The Department has added in the zoning and Planning Board review processes based on this. There are a couple of RSAs which restrict building permits from being issued if they would create a zoning violation. He explained that he cannot issue a building permit that would create a zoning or Planning Board regulation violation. To ensure this, the Department communicates using a zoning review and then a technical review of the submittal. Comments are reviewed by the Building Inspectors who then compare the submitted plans to the Building Code requirements prior to issuing a Building Permit. After all the inspections are completed, a certificate of completion or certificate of occupancy is issued, based on the type of project.

Mr. Stacy asked if construction could begin before a permit is issued. Mr. Hays stated that a permit must first be issued. Mr. Stacy expressed concern with the permitting process. On April 28th, he submitted an application, and his administrative intake review was completed on May 27th. During that time, he was unable to do any work. He stated that he believes the system is mis-designed.

Mr. Stacy asked if wiring diagrams are required for each application. Mr. Hays stated that this depends on the scope of work for the project. It is up to the discretion of the Building Inspector. Mr. Stacy stated that this is harmful to an applicant's moving forward in the process expediently. Mr. Hays stated that the Department is trying to do the best that it can for the City to help ensure that work moves forward in a timely manner. It is much easier and more cost-effective to catch a problem at the beginning than it is to have to redo a project because it was done incorrectly.

Mr. Hays stated that, per Section 107.3 of the 2021 IBC, as adopted by the State of New Hampshire, the Building Official shall examine or cause to be examined the accompanying submittal documents and shall ascertain by such examination whether construction indicated and described is in accordance with the requirements of this code or other pertinent laws or ordinances. Mr. Stacy stated that, if the diagram was not required to be submitted then it would not need to be examined. Mr. Hays stated that this is based on the scope of the project at hand. The Building Official has discretion to determine what information is needed or not based on the project.

Mr. Stacy asked if the Building Official could use their discretion to determine that an application to bring an apartment up to code would not require a wiring diagram, which likely requires no discretion at all, instead of delaying the upgrading of a service by five weeks. There should be a way to fast-track simple applications. Mr. Hays stated that Staff works to do so.

Councilor McNamara stated that this does not feel like an issue for the Commission. Mr. Stacy stated that this is an issue for the Commission if the people who are doing economic development work cannot get the work done because of the way that the process operates.

Chair Nash asked the Deputy City Manager and Building Department if there is a way to refine the process, as it does appear to be harming economic development in the City. Too often it seems that the officials are chasing a “perfect” permit. A reasonable timeline of simple applications should be explored. Mr. Hays stated that the Department tries to issue permits as diligently as possible. In January there were 57 new applications, 61 in February, 97 in March, and 161 new applications in April.

Deputy City Manager Brooks stated that there is a lot of logic that can be built into the OpenGov system. Depending on the project, steps may be turned on/off in the review process. Much of this comes down to how the applicant fills out the Information. Staff continues to work to refine the system. Chair Nash suggested reviewing metrics of the applications submitted.

Mr. Key stated that he has noticed the OpenGov system is a move forward as it should streamline the process. He asked if the utility connection permit is new. Mr. Hays stated that it is new to the Public Works Department. Mr. Key suggested making the permits more trade-oriented so that each trade can focus on their specific items. The utility connection permit seems like a redundant step. Mr. Hays stated that, on the Building Department side, the electrical, plumbing, and mechanical work has been divided out based on what the State requires for licensing requirements.

Chair Nash suggested having public access to the permit process, unless there is a reason to prohibit it.

A. Discuss Potential Zoning Amendments for Fall 2025

Mr. Stacy discussed his proposed amendment to make projects “EV capable” instead of “EV ready,” due to the technology evolving so quickly. Sherry Boschert, Lebanon Energy Advisory Committee, stated that the LEAC EV Advisory Committee meets tomorrow and she will bring up this topic at that time. The Committee is interested in making things easier on developers to build housing and making it more convenient for residents to get EVs and use them to meet the City's goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The hope is to do these at the least cost for everyone. LEAC has written its own amendments on this topic that have been submitted to the City Council for review. One of the differences between LEAC’s proposal and this suggestion is that the existing regulation does not require installed electric vehicle chargers, just EV ready ones. She stated that she will be hosting a webinar on July 28th geared toward developers regarding low power level 2, as is being proposed in LEAC’s amendment.

Deputy City Manager Brooks stated that, with respect to this particular section of the Zoning, there are at least three different competing zoning amendments. It is up to the City Council to determine if it will take these up. The City Council agreed that all of the proposed amendments to this section should be included in the review by the Planning Department in the fall. The review will see which amendment rises to the top and is brought before the Council next year.

4. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:

The Commission discussed potential future agenda items such as the amendments to the EV parking regulation, including comparisons between the three proposed amendments.

5. NEXT MEETING DATE:

- A. August 13, 2025

The Commission agreed to meet on August 13, 2025.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

None at this time.

7. ADJOURNMENT.

Motion by Mr. Cashman to adjourn the meeting.

Second by Mr. Key.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 5:03PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude