

8:02 am to 9:12 am

Chairperson: Rich Pelletier

Vice Chairperson: Keith Cobbett

Commission Members: Riché Colcombe, Kim Opperman, Bob Nash,

Town Administrator: Laura Buono

Planning Director: Robyn Payson

Planning Board: Susanne White

Chamber of Commerce: Amanda McDonald

Supt of Schools: Jennifer Crawford

Select Board: Rich Pelletier

Water/Sewer Dept: Dana Clow

Excused: Amanda McDonald

Public: Kevin Anctil, Augie Ros, Augie Ros Jr., Jennifer Schamel

Guest: Mike Tardiff, Brian Groth

Election of Officers

Chairman

Riche' Colcombe made a motion to nominate Rich Pelletier as Chairman. Susanne White seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Secretary

Riche' Colcombe made a motion to nominate Robyn Payson as secretary. Bob Nash seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Vice Chairman

Laura Buono nominated Dana Clow as Vice Chairman. Kim Opperman seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Minutes 3/18/26 Susanne White made a motion to approve the minutes. Riche' Colcombe seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Brian Groth

Business Resource Specialist with the NH Department of Business & Economic Affairs.

Mike Tardiff said last time we met we discussed the tools available to Hillsborough and the question was how do we get the news out about Hillsborough. Part of that conversation was to reach out to our friends at the state so Brian Groth, who covers Hillsborough and Merrimack counties, he is a liaison to businesses at the state level. They are described as the "boots on the ground". He spends a lot of time visiting businesses, talking with them about their needs and referring them to state resources. They work with entrepreneurs starting up to large corporations.

His team, which is the Business Resource Team; there's five of them across the state. They also have a Business Development Team whose focus is on recruiting businesses from out of state. So you might think of Business Resources as retention of businesses that are currently here and the Business Development Team as recruitment, bringing new businesses in.

They all have some specialized offices within our division. We have the office of International Commerce; they help businesses with import/export issues, foreign trade zones, and guidance with tariffs. They also have a grant program called the "Step" grant, and that's available to businesses up to eight thousand dollars to recoup 80% of the cost of export related activity. The goal there is to increase the amount of exports the New Hampshire is doing.

They also have "APEX Accelerator". It's a federal program and each state runs their own version of it and the purpose of that is to help companies access government contracts. So they are very helpful in navigating that process and procuring contracts and how to search for them and how to present yourself to be in the position of the awarded one. We also have the "Tax Cutter" Program.

He said the Economic Revitalization zones established by the town are administrated by his office.

He wanted to talk about what we are doing here with the ERZ's. He said there is legislation to expand the program and add additional funds. It's primarily about job creation. You create jobs and you get a tax credit, with a limited amount available for capital investment. The legislation will expand the capital investments that can be made. We hope that passes because it is a very important program.

He said he knows we have established a TIF district.

Mike Tardiff said we are waiting for that developer that is the right fit. The Town made some changes in zoning as well. We are trying to use all the tools that are out there. He is hoping that when someone is doing their initial investigations Hillsborough rises to the top. He said he wanted to know how we could get with the BEA staff to know that we have these opportunities as well. We are making sure that everything is on the website and it is clear and understandable what all of the tools are and how they overlay. One of the hopes of having Brian here is to make that connection.

Brian Groth asked if the website was in development. Mike Tardiff said the work is being Planning Commission is helping put more content on the website.

There was discussion about the EDC Page of the Town website.

Brian Groth said for the website is that you first have to understand what you are selling as a community, what are the unique qualities that define the town, and what properties are available to be part of that community. The website should convey that clearly and he recommends if its possible to have the cooperation of property owners to be willing to have their properties listed or highlighted on the website and clearly identify what uses are available, what utilities are

available to make it easy for anybody looking at sites to assess what the site is capable of. He also recommends on the municipal level having a single point of contact, somebody who is used to dealing with people, sort of a sales role. But the idea is if somebody does knock on your door that they are welcomed and they have sort of an advocate within the town that can help them understand the process because you might put all of this work in to attracting investment and if they show up and find a difficult atmosphere to work with it might work against all of the work you have done. He said before he was with BEA he was the Town Planner for the town of Hudson and he worked for the Rockingham Planning Commission before that so speaking from experience, he was in that role in Hudson, and he knows what it's like. When development applications came in he made sure they were doing what they needed to do and that town staff did what they need to do and not put up any roadblocks. The idea is to keep the process running smoothly. So the question for this committee is what are you selling. What are the characteristics or unique qualities of Hillsborough and properties that you have, how can you portray that image?

Kim Opperman said he thinks we are the sweet spot between Concord and Keene with better quality of life, better recreational facilities, working ion better schools, we are a nice safe community. It's a nicer respite than living in Manchester or maybe even Concord.

Laura Buono said our location is key because we are a regional area, the regional hub. The many services we offer support better communities, and we have professional individuals, even our Police Department, Fire Department and our Planner, the knowledge that they have is all there and we need to market that better. I'm interested in hearing if you have a solution or some sort of suggestions on how to get people or businesses to contact the town vs individuals. We always ask them if they have called the Planner. Sometimes people want to be that key person whether it is the property owners or the business owners that request that to bring the town into it because sometimes that doesn't happen and we talk about that here and nobody knows the ins and outs of everything and what people have to go through but the town. That's one part that I think we need to fine tune.

Robyn Payson said she is the one businesses approach, and I guide them through the process. We have a very positive process, and her Planning Board is very good at taking into consideration the regulations and zoning but also everything is a path to approval. It's not as though it is an adversarial relationship there.

Brian Groth asked if the town had engaged any professional brokers in the area. That may be a good next step because 99% of the time property owners have commercial property will engage a broker on the other side of the coin people looking for sites are engaging commercial brokers. Creating those relationships is very helpful because it gets it on their radar and they're the ones that are most often the first and confidential point of contact for a company looking to move or expand. A lot of this is relationship building. Work with the Chamber of Commerce or just personal relationships you have. He said he sees this as being a good spot for small and mid-level manufacturing or branch offices. It might not be a broker but it is an excellent place to start. Once you have brought the website to a place where it meets your vision I would start promoting it in local and regional networks you might participate in.

Dana Clow asked if you run into a conflict by listing available properties on the website and run into a conflict when owners engage a commercial broker to represent them. Does that create any kind of problem?

Brian Groth said as long as people are in agreement having it be there you are ok.

Dana Clow said you basically get permission from the owners to list on the website.

Brian Groth said or you can promote the ERZ and TIF districts specifically and maybe highlight properties that could be developed. Do it on a district wide basis and you can promote and sell the TIF districts and the ERZ's if you don't want to get granular and have specific listings.

Susanne White asked if there was a regional commercial broker association that the town could link to.

Bob Nash said there is the New Hampshire Association of Realtors. They have their multiple listing service. They have a commercial division. He said Dana brought up a good point if you are going to specify one commercial broker every other commercial broker is going to rear their head in about five minutes. You just have to make yourself available to the commercial community.

Laura Buono said you were talking about engaging commercial brokers plural so she didn't take that as engaging one.

Riche' Colcombe said what she has done is contact the property owners that have some large parcels to talk to them about whether they are planning on building or selling or if they are looking for anything in particular and that is how she developed the relationships with the brokers that she has so that is why she reached out to Brian Groth. How do we get businesses that are calling the state to have your department say Hillsborough has property Hillsborough's got land available. She said she didn't think they ever finalized that conversation. That is what is happening with some of our big pieces, so she does stay in touch with some of those brokers and the owners. She asked what the state's budget for business resources is, what is your budget to operate on.

Brian Groth said he didn't know the exact amount, and that budget was for personnel.

Riche' Colcombe asked how you advocate to bring businesses from out of state and into New Hampshire.

Brian Groth said the Development Team has a budget between seventy-five and one hundred thousand dollars. The budget is for participating in trade shows but also to getting access to the companies from out of state that are looking to expand. The website is a good opportunity for Hillsborough to show all of its opportunities in one place. The recruitment team is aware of Hillsborough it just depends on the market activity and where people are trying to locate. That's why he thinks in a place like Hillsborough relationship building is key and its not just bringing in business from outside, it's checking out the businesses you have in town currently. The worst

thing that could happen would be for a local business that is expanding and having great success to move to another town. It goes back to relationship building.

Riche' Colcombe said she has been working with that with a few different properties.

Mike Tardiff asked if Brian Groth had an example of a town that's identified available properties and does a good job staying on top of that as part of their economic development website and outreach. He said he knows it takes a lot of work and you have to keep up with it. And you have to get access, and you have to get property owners to say its ok and that is why I think sometimes it is not successful in small towns.

Brian Groth said that is the difficult part. The more information you are populating the more maintenance it requires. He said he would find some examples to send. He said these Economic Development websites landing pages require maintenance. You are marketing your town and sending a message and depending on what state that page is in you could be marketing a different message. Towns that build a great website but some years go by and everything's outdated that communicates a certain message. Whoever is going to be responsible for maintaining this thing will be doing a reasonable amount of work to keep up.

Riche' Colcombe said she has been reading some old town reports with the beginning of the Economic Development Commission that started in 2009. The Economic Development Commissions that were back then in 2013 said they needed more volunteers for their Ambassador Program whereby each Commissioner tries to meet with three businesses a month to ensure we can assist them. We also had Robyn attend an Economic Development Academy through the University of NH and we engaged Civic Plus to help us create our brand and combine it with economic development. So we had been doing this back when we started. It seemed to have faded away. In 2017 there was the Business Retention and Expansion Program with UNH. Then after that it doesn't seem to have gone any further. She had printed these town reports to discuss that at a future meeting to find out if we can revitalize the initiatives that were put in place from 2009 and 2010 and so on.

Brian Groth said it would be a good idea to start that engine with UNH.

Mike Tardiff said that was an effort by UNH that was tried and true. Your best customers are your existing customers so to reach out to them. He said using the website to broadcast what we have been doing has been an important emphasis. It takes a lot of effort on the part of volunteers to do that and coordinate. It's a great effort, it's hard to keep that momentum up.

Kim Opperman said he had a thought of how to get our TIFs with the realtors. So what if we had an evening meeting and we invite the people from the TIF and the local brokers. We get them all in the same room so they can get some idea then all we would have to do is have a list and then we get feedback afterward and if Robyn had a list of brokers in town that know the people. It would be changing all the time. If we just had a simple list of brokers that are interested and property owners that are interested that would solve a big part of our problem. They just see Robyn because she is proactive and can get it right out to them. He said he had another concern about this state, every time he talks to people about New Hampshire, nobody around the country

knows about the tax advantages of New Hampshire compared to all of the national advertising we see for Florida and Texas and those places are growing like crazy. I'm not saying we want to grow like crazy but we have a lot of benefits over those places.

There was discussion about the benefits of New Hampshire.

There was discussion about the national resources in New Hampshire.

Brian Groth brought some information about their recreational campaign. He talked about the NH Business Gateway program. This links to Hillsborough's Town Website.

Mike Tardiff asked what we can do to get higher on the state's list. Are there other contacts at BEA to help us raise our visibility here with the state.

Brian Groth said recruitment is driven by the needs. If they need to be in the Nashua area, we are not going to be able to convince them to come to Hillsborough. As far as raising your profile with the state, if you want to explore promoting the recreational assets with Janel Lawton through the Office of Outdoor Recreation Industry Development.

There was discussion about promoting the Town through the website and by having an open house for property owners and brokers to highlight what the Town has.

Brian Groth made some suggestions about improving the EDC page of the Town Website. He will send some examples.

Riche' Colcombe asked that there be 15 minutes added to the meeting to discuss the history of the goals of the EDC and what she found in the Town Reports to see if there may be some things that are worth revisiting.

There was discussion about this.

There was discussion about a TIF on Henniker Street.

Riche' Colcombe said the Laundromat for West Main Street will likely not happen because the owner passed away. She also said the luxury car development is likely dying.

Robyn Payson reported that the bar and grill that was going into the former Volvo place will not be going in due to water/sewer fees.

Riche' Colcombe is trying to find an occupant for the Rite Aid building.

There being no other business, Susanne White made a motion to adjourn. Kim Opperman seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned 9:12 am

Respectfully submitted,

Robyn Payson, Planning Director