



Town of Warren, Rhode Island

Minutes of the Economic Development Board

The Town of Warren, RI Economic Development Board met at a Regular Meeting on February 16, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. at Warren Town Hall. The presiding officer was Karen Dionne. Board members present were Sara Volino, Walter Conklin, Tyler Dixon, Kathleen Tucciarone, Keith Phillis and Jessica Pflaumer. Mark Lombardi and Ben Terry were absent. Stephen Smith was in attendance. Kristin MacDonald was present at the meeting to serve as Secretary to the EDB. Gareth Eames and Kate Michaud were also in attendance.

1. Review and Approval of Minutes from the Regular Meeting of January 25, 2016.

The minutes from the regular meeting held on January 15, 2016 were reviewed by the board via email. A motion was made by Mr. Dixon to approve the minutes with the following correction. The section in agenda item two regarding RWU should read: "...the ultimate goal would be to collaborate with RWU students or some other group." The motion was seconded by Ms. Volino, and all members were in favor.

The board welcomed new members Keith Phillis and Jessica Pflaumer to the EDB.

2. Meeting with Town Planner, Kate Michaud; Town Manager, Jan Reitsma; and Zoning Official/Building Inspector, Gareth Eames, to discuss ways in which the EDB and other groups can position the town for new economic growth.

Mr. Eames asked the EDB to help create and implement a survey to address zoning issues. He said that the survey would help recognize and catalog problems which is the first step to identifying the resources to address and eventually solve problems. The proposed survey would involve the observation of both industrial and residential areas throughout town. Mr. Eames noted that the survey would help him go from a reactive to a proactive approach to zoning violations and would give him a data set to use as a starting place in approaching problems. He said he would help the EDB design a checklist which would be used to record obvious zoning issues based on casual observations around town. Also, Mr. Eames and Ms. Michaud recommended that the EDB work to produce an inventory of vacant storefronts and commercial spaces in town.

The board discussed the possibility of involving RWU students or high school students in this process. The board agreed that both developing a survey for zoning violations and creating an inventory of vacant commercial spaces are the first steps in a process that

could potentially involve students and community members. Mr. Phillis suggested that possibly RWU law students could be helpful in reviewing zoning ordinances. Mr. Dixon, Ms. Tucciarone, and Ms. Pflaumer will work together on the survey/inventory project. Mr. Dixon and Ms. Tucciarone are scheduled to meet with Mr. Eames, Mr. Reitsma, and Ms. Michaud at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, February 18, 2016. The work group will report on their progress at the March meeting.

Mr. Eames left the meeting at this time.

3. Discussion on plans for the Spring Business Forum.

The board discussed plans for a business forum. Ms. Volino stressed the importance of hosting an event that is attractive to business owners that are not already involved in merchant and community groups. The board discussed whether the forum should be a simple meet and greet or be organized around an agenda with a speaker or a guest panel. Ms. Michaud suggested a speaker from the Small Business Association (SBA) to discuss financing opportunities or grant opportunities. Ms. Pflaumer suggested that a speaker from The Center for Women & Enterprise. Ms. Michaud commented that Tiverton hosted two successful business forums that were organized around a speaker with an opportunity for business owners to network. Mr. Conklin stated that the board would need to proactive in reaching out and contacting business owners. In response Ms. Pflaumer suggested that each board member could contact ten business members to see if there is a common need or interest that could be addressed at the forum. In conclusion, Ms. Dionne suggested that September would be a more reasonable time for the business forum. This would allow the board more time to reach out to business owners. This item will continue to be discusses at future meetings.

Ms. Dionne said she will request business cards for EDB members.

4. Discussion of work plan/work recommendations to Town Council.

The discussion of this agenda item is postponed until the March meeting.

A motion was made to adjourn by Ms. Dionne, the motion was seconded by Ms. Tucciarone, and all members were in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristin M. MacDonald
March 20, 2016.

