



**Town of Camden
Minutes of the Meeting of the
Camden Economic Development Advisory
Committee
August 26, 2013, 5:30pm**

PRESENT: Chairperson Deb Dodge, Pete Brown, Martin Cates, Peter Gross, Robin McIntosh, Meg Quijano, Lowrie Sargent, Development Director Brian Hodges.

ABSENT: Ellis Cohn, Staci Coomer, Kipp Wright.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:30pm.

1. Approval of Board Minutes

Pete Brown made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 22 meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Peter Gross. It was unanimously approved.

2. Select Board and Committee Goals/Workshop

Update from July 23 presentation

Deb Dodge gave an update on her July 23rd discussion with the Select Board.

Affordable Housing Committee

Deb told the group that the Affordable Housing Committee will complete the Lupine Terrace project and then the committee is recommending that it discontinue its work. She noted that one suggestion had been that affordable housing could become a function of CEDAC. Peter Gross suggested that an appropriate first step might be for Camden to rethink how it handles affordable housing. Martin Cates told the group that his recommendation would be to establish a short-term committee along with a facilitator to research workforce housing, with the committee made up of representatives from the Planning Board, CEDAC, a realtor, a builder, etc. This could work toward a needs assessment to help the Town set future direction.

CEDAC Goals

Next the group discussed their goals for upcoming work and set the following priorities:

1) Provide leadership to keep the Downtown Master Plan moving forward

1a) Partner with the Opera House Committee regarding economic impact analysis, third floor construction, and capital campaign

2) Develop entrepreneurial incubator space

2a) Complete a building inventory to assess available second floor spaces in the downtown.

3) Market Camden to target audiences, conducting the necessary research on how best to reach specific markets.

3a) Work to attract high-tech and internet-based companies (Does Camden have the infrastructure in place to support such companies? If not, research what needs to be done?)

3b) Explore more opportunities for Recreational/Active Tourism

4) Present quarterly progress reports to the Select Board in October, January, April, and July.

Discussion points were as follows -- With regard to item #1, leadership on the Downtown Master Plan:

Brian reported that Jim Damicis of Camoin Associates has been hired to do a needs assessment for the Opera House. In this process the Opera House will be evaluated as to its impact on the community and what it needs to be in order to generate income for the Town. Deb suggested that we ask the Opera House Committee how CEDAC can support getting economic impact study completed. She noted that the Opera House is an integral part of the Downtown Master Plan, so in that sense it works into the committee's goal.

With regard to #2, incubator space:

It was noted that the building inventory that was done prior to the Downtown Master Plan has some infrastructure information in it. Meg offered to ask members of the Camden Downtown Business Group who may have unused second floor space around town and what a business may have for needs to use such a space.

With regard to #3a), attracting high-tech companies:

Part of this process for CEDAC will be to research what high-tech companies are looking for in terms of infrastructure and entrepreneurial space.

With regard to #3b), explore Recreational/Active Tourism opportunities:

Members talked over the comparison between eco-tourism and recreational / active tourism. They noted other committees to be brought into this effort such as the mountain bike group, Megunticook Rowing, the Ragged Mountain Redevelopment group, etc. Pete Brown brought up the ACE resources that may be available.

3. Tax increment financing

Update from August 6 Select Board TIF recommendation

Deb Dodge said she had presented CEDAC's recommendation for use of TIF funding at the August 6th meeting of the Select Board, and that the Board had approved CEDAC's recommendation for use of the \$30,000 in TIF Funds that are currently available to repair the downtown dam. In addition, they had approved CEDAC's recommendation that future TIF money be allocated toward the local share (approx. \$123,000) of the MDOT Downtown

Improvement Grant. She said she had told the Select Board that renovations at the Opera House will also be looked at for TIF funding down the road.

New and/or amended TIF: Knox Mill, Tannery, other properties

Brian Hodges described the TIF cap limit that is set on the total amount of acreage allowed to fall under a TIF District. A similar limit is set on the percent of a municipality's valuation that can be included in TIF. He noted that a designated downtown TIF is not counted toward these caps. With regard to the acreage limitation, Hodges said that currently we are at .41% which is not close to the 2% acreage limit. In the valuation area however, we are closer to the 5% cap, standing currently at 3.2% of original assessed value.

The group discussed the question of whether to add the Knox Mill into the Downtown TIF District. Pros and cons were reviewed. Pros included the fact that acreage and valuation caps would not be impacted; that including the Mill in the Downtown TIF would be consistent with other strategies supporting the downtown; that TIF revenues could be used to support other improvements across all of the downtown; and that this process would be streamlined since it just involve amending the existing downtown TIF.

Cons included: that TIF revenues from the Knox Mill would not be able to be applied outside the downtown area (such as the Tannery); that a case would need to be made to the state office on why the Mill wasn't originally included in the Downtown TIF District; and that there could be confusion over the inclusion or non-inclusion of the Camden Hills Villa in the district.

Following this discussion, the committee felt that the Knox Mill should be included in the downtown TIF. The process would be to amend the downtown TIF to include the Mill. More detail would be collected prior to going to the Select Board with a recommendation from CEDAC.

Downtown Master Plan – Maine DOT Grant

The list of projects to be accomplished through the Downtown Enhancement Grant was reviewed with the intention of setting an approach to the projects prior to receiving the funds. Several permissions and approvals would need to be obtained prior to starting the work. There was some discussion on who would be managing the projects. Hodges said that these would be locally administered projects, and that the Town would work with an engineer to develop timelines, checklists, and the layout for each project.

Meg Quijano and Pete Brown offered to serve on a committee to review the master list of projects and to formulate an approach for what we need to do prior to receiving the funds and how the tasks would get carried out.

The “southern gateway” to Camden was discussed (Stop & Go area), along with the possible purchase of land along between Conway Road and John Street to assist in making that five-way intersection safer for vehicles and pedestrians.

Lastly, the Comprehensive Plan Committee has asked CEDAC to review chapter 11 of the Comp Plan. This chapter will be emailed out to committee members for review.

Public comment/questions

There were no public comments.

Adjourn

Pete Brown made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Peter Gross seconded this motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Next Meeting

The next CEDAC meeting will be held September 23.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Brace
Recording Secretary