

Essex Economic Development Commission (EDC)

Regular Meeting Minutes

March 7th, 2024 8:00AM

Town Hall 81 Main St., Essex Junction, VT, and Zoom

Draft Minutes Submitted by Clerk Ken Signorello, March 8th, 2024

Approved 3/21/24

Attendees

Commission Members:

Present: Nick Fukuda Vice Chair; Ken Signorello, Clerk; Ta Tanisha Redditta

Remote: Rebecca Robinson, Chair; Melissa Stewart

Staff: Jean O'Sullivan; Tammy Getchell

Public: Irene Wrenner, Sam Anderson, GBIC

Meeting called to order by Robinson at 8:00 AM

Updates to the Agenda:

Signorello requested to add

Discussion on Annual Report EDC Content

Discussion on Now budgeted Economic Development Study

Discussion on presenting the Child Care Zoning regulation update resolution

Motion to Approve amended agenda by Robinson, Second none (3,0) Fukuda and Stewart not voting - arrived late.

Public Comment: None

Motion to approve Minutes from 2/15/24 by Signorello; Seconded by Redditta; Approved (3,0) Fukuda and Stewart not voting - arrived late.

Partner Updates: Sam Anderson GBIC - Stated that Global Foundries will be the beneficiary of a total 1.5 billion dollar Chips award to be split between the EJ and NY locations. The state contributed 4.5 million dollars via the [Vermont Trains] program. There will be an addition of 400 new hires at the Essex Junction plant.

Anderson noted changes to Vermont Child Care legislation specifically the new payroll tax. The tax starts on July 1st. The payroll tax is 0.44% for employers and 0.15% for employees and 0.11% for self employed individuals.

Signorello pointed out that Global Foundries is no longer located in the Town but still has an impact on the Town.

Fukuda and Stewart joined the meeting at 8:09.

Explore Essex

Getchell explained that Parks and Rec will be taking on the responsibility for the Community Day. Getchell will be working with local non profits to get them involved. Getchell asked the EDC to engage local businesses in the Passport program, possibly forming an advisory group and make suggested changes to the program to make it more engaging to businesses. She said the passport program dates are set for two weeks September 21 - October 5th. These dates are set. The event will wind up with a barn dance.

Robinson noted that only Salt and Bubbles, Kala Silver was the only business advising last year and wants more.

O'Sullivan plans to make contact with local businesses to try and get more involvement.

Robinson asked if someone from EDC was needed.

O'Sullivan is hoping to get someone from EDC to help develop and advertise the Passport Program to businesses and get a few to participate in the planning.

O'Sullivan reminded that Fukuda's term has another year.

Fukuda volunteered to solicit businesses.

Robinson said she would help.

Getchell said she could help too but there is not enough staff to run the Passport program on its own.

Signorello suggested an **action item be added to the next agenda to make EDC participation in Explore Essex official.**

Next Steps on Childcare Zoning Resolution

O'Sullivan said the resolution is slated for the presentation to the Planning Commission for March 14th.

Robinson said that she could be there but wanted to make sure Signorello gets the credit for the work done.

Signorello wants support from Representative Rey Garafano and will make that contact.

He said he wants supporting data for the Whereas clauses in the resolution.

O'Sullivan said she would provide data on numbers of facilities and lets kids grow data on childcare needs.

O'Sullivan said she will also provide information on family leave and the new ChildCare Tax.

Signorello wants Robinson to be the point person and hopes that all commission members could be there to support the resolution.

Reading File

Vermont Forest Action Plan - Signorello included because the State is focusing on economic aspects of forest and that Essex is mostly forested and has a lumber mill.

Annual Report

Signorello noted

- that the EDC did not approve this content;
- that there was basic information missing such as members of the commission and
- that there were activities listed the commission did not do, but probably were things the community development department did do and should have been listed in that section.

Robinson said that next year the EDC will get the opportunity to review and approve the content and better delineate EDC activity from Community Development activity.

Economic Development Study

Signorello noted that the just approved budget includes funds for an Economic Development Study. There was one done in the past, 2018.

O'Sullivan said she would include it in the next packet reading file.

Signorello noted that there is an action item in the town plan to update this study and that the EDC was not contacted on this effort up till now.

O'Sullivan noted that until the budget was approved there was no need to involve the EDC and that the next step will be to put out an RFP for the Study.

Signorello said he'd like the EDC to be involved in developing the RFP or approving the RFP and that an **action item be added to the next agenda to authorize such participation.**

O'Sullivan said she would check on how the RFP process will work.

Anderson confirms that the 2018 report needs to be updated and that the \$35 allocated should be sufficient.

Next meeting is on March 21st.

Will be at the Browns River Maple sugar house for the next Business Outreach.

Stewart asked about the work plan and her specific task. Robinson said that connected with O'Sullivan would be the next step.

O'Sullivan made a staff report

Attendance has been checked and stipends will be updated.

There will be a visit from the VT house commerce committee. Hope is that a tour of the light industrial area can happen. Notes that these committees rarely get to interact with businesses outside of testimony.

Kurig will be bringing in 120 new employees.

There are still some issues with local businesses collecting LOT.

O'Sullivan said the town has asked the VT Tax Department to contact online retailers about this.

She says the Tax Department says they are too busy to send out a performance letter.

O'Sullivan wants information on LOT part of a business welcome package.

O'Sullivan will be meeting with the Energy Committee and Mike McCarthy from Sun Commons.

She hopes to add something on child care tax to the web site.

Notes that the town website will be updated and deciding what EDC content will be.

Robinson wants to create an EDC social media presence.

Robinson Moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Stewart (Approved 5,0)

Meeting adjourned at 8:56 AM.

Meeting recording available at <https://youtu.be/tWosLsWKov8?si=roqE72-SZE-hTAQM>