

**PLANNING BOARD
RINDGE, NEW HAMPSHIRE
February 22, 2005
MINUTES**

DATE: February 22, 2005 TYPE: Public Hearing DATE APPROVED: 3/15/05
TIME: 7:00-9:00 PM. Ms. Kim McCummings Chair Person

CALL TO ORDER, at 7:00 PM

ROLL CALL: Kim McCummings, Dick Isakson, James Hoard, Katie Duffy, Roberta Oeser, Dr. Gerald Parker, Paul O'Connor, Jo Anne Carr

APPOINTMENT OF ALTERNATES: Dick Isakson for Dave Tower and Roberta Oeser for Cheves Walling

Kim McCummings opened the Hearing by reading the Legal Notice:

The Rindge Planning Board will hold a Public Hearing, Tuesday, February 22, 2005, beginning at 7:00 P. M., at the Town Office regarding the adoption of RSA 162-G (Acquisition, Development and Disposal of Industrial Land and Facilities). The purpose of this chapter is to authorize the Town to encourage the development of business and industrial facilities acting through a business and industrial development authority or a voluntary non profit corporation.

All persons interested in this hearing may attend in person or be represented by counsel. Please call 603-899-2102 if you have any questions regarding this hearing.

Economic Development Committee Members present for hearing: John Strauss, Chair, Bob Blucke, Kelly Kilcrease.

John Strauss opened the discussion by giving a brief background on the Economic Development Committee. The Committee was formed as advisory to the Selectmen, gathering information on community assets, reports, surveys to try to determine what do the townspeople want for economic development. The committee has been looking into broadband internet facilities as a means to facilitate home based occupations. They have been trying to collect "tools" for economic development for use by the Selectmen. One of these tools is the authority under 162-G. The legislature has granted towns the authority to establish a corporation for the purpose of encouraging the development of business and industrial facilities - the committee is not intended to become the corporation – the Selectmen would determine the appropriate time and project and would appoint members to serve as the board for the corporation.

At this point any projects which have been discussed are purely hypothetical: examples may include re-development of the Famm Steel building to house perhaps more than one business or industrial enterprise. Another example might be partnering with Franklin Pierce College on a commercial venture.

Similar organizations are active in the Monadnock Region: the Monadnock Economic Development Corporation and Monadnock Business Ventures. Mr Strauss emphasized that the Rindge Economic Development Committee, while acknowledging our role in the region, is prioritizing issues specific to Rindge and finds that a local entity is preferable to one which is regional and may have limited resources for a project here.

At this point Ms. McCummings opened the discussion for public comment.

M. Kundert: Has the committee discussed retail in context of lowering the tax base (rate).

Strauss responded that the interest is in diversifying the retail base and strengthening opportunities for retail growth. Example of Famm Steel – could provide an umbrella for several small businesses. The 162-G is not incorporated for the purpose of developing a retail shopping mall or “big box”.

K Duffy: There should be a separate committee for this corporation. It does not appear that retail development is being addressed here, this committee has a limited scope.

K. McCummings: Explained that the Economic Development Committee is addressing other aspects of business development; and no the committee has not done outreach to specific retail entities at this time.

K Duffy: It seems redundant for Rindge to have its own economic development authority where other organizations are available regionally.

J Strauss: Jaffrey has an Economic Development Council. While Monadnock Business Ventures is present, Jaffrey preferred a local council route.

R. Oeser: What would the organization be? A non profit, corporation, voluntary non-profit. And where would the money for projects come from.

J Strauss: Any money spent would require a Town Meeting vote. The corporation would be established by the Selectmen, it has not been determined what the nature of the organization would be. Any moneys granted to the corporation, say for instance from the CDBG program, would in turn be returned to the town either through development projects or subsequent grants for other projects such as start ups. Therefore the investment would directly benefit Rindge, rather than the regional corporation.

J Czekalski: Expressed concern with the process. The Committee should be inventorying Rindge businesses and their needs and developing an economic plan. His concern is the apparent loss of business in Rindge. He also expressed concern for the enforcement of town regulations as engendering ill will.

J Strauss: This question is regarding making some tools available to the selectmen for promoting economic development.

M. Kundert; expressed concern that the proposal is premature. Efforts should be made to bring in restaurants or retail which would appeal to the college population.

K. McCummings: read the letter addressed to the Planning Board from Jack Dugan, President of the Monadnock Economic Development Corporation based in Keene supporting this initiative. The letter is filed with the minutes.

D. Isakson: If the warrant is passed then the Economic Development Corporation *may* be established. He would prefer to see the Selectmen establish the corporation. (they would).

J. Carr: Clarified that the potential expansion of broadband is not the only issue as was discussed earlier. The EDC could facilitate partnerships, especially with the College which has plans for a commercial development. Retail is quite actively growing in town. Last year the Planning Board reviewed approximately 8,000 sq ft of new commercial projects and this year so far the board has about 36,000 sq ft of commercial projects waiting for hearing in March. Rindge is very attractive for development.

L. Cypret: Expressed concern that the EDC should facilitate economic development, and not be “incestuous”.

J. Strauss: Offered that the 162G has a lot of flexibility and would keep a strong connection with the Town. It would be easy enough for another corporation or non-profit to form on its own outside of the authority of 162G and there would be no communication or coordination with the town as part of its articles of incorporation. A separate entity may not have the best interest or influence of the Town.

D. Drouin: Is interested in the viability of the Town Center as the community center. A business non-profit could benefit the center. This committee can function as a conduit up and down from business needs to town government needs.

K McCummings: In response to the composition of the current committee, there are building and construction trades, Franklin Pierce College, Monadnock Community Hospital, Monadnock Community Bank and a cross section of citizens and residents at large.

J. Czekalski: Expressed the opinion that new businesses should be “from here” and be supported by the town.

D. Gutteridge: Raised the question of the \$500,000 bond question for community facilities and open space. It was made clear that this warrant for an economic development corporation is not in any way linked to the bond for open space and community facilities (such as recreation center).

K. Duffy: raised the concern of the selectivity of the committee in terms of projects.

J. Strauss: Responded yes it is selective, of course. The idea is to protect local interests. Route 119/202 corridors is a “sweet spot” for retail development.

K. Duffy wanted to know what other towns have similar corporations. The towns of Hinsdale, Peterborough, Keene, Claremont were mentioned in the letter from MEDC.

J. Leger: Supports the idea of an Economic Development Committee but not to develop an EDC. He expressed concern with the economic risk to the Town and specific organizational elements as the Board of Directors, CEO etc.

J. Strauss: Corrected the point that there is no financial risk in bond rating or liability to the town – that is the purpose of establishing a separate corporate entity. Further, the current committee is charged with advising the Selectmen, and this step is advised by the committee. He agrees that the recommendation comes early in the process, but the timing was driven by Town Meeting scheduling. The Committee fully intends to communicate with businesses, do its research and surveys and draft an economic development plan.

K. McCummings: Stated that in the next 2-3 years the current committee would fulfill its charge. It may be that long before the authority is established by the Selectmen. It is likely that this would proceed as a “tandem process”. But without some specific project there would be no urgency for establishing the authority.

D. Isakson: Expressed concern with how the new corporation would be supported – would there be a request at Town Meeting for administrative support?

J. Strauss: The purpose is not to seek financial support from the town. Grants would be the preferred source of income to start. Regardless of what project might be brought forward, it would have to go before the selectmen before activation of a corporation.

The subject of Famm Steel building was discussed with concerns ranging from the size, liability for hazardous materials, back taxes, allowing the market to drive the process. There are really too many questions for the building to be a practical concern at this point. It would have to be addressed in steps.

At this point K. McCummings brought the Public Hearing to a close.

Meeting Adjourned 9:00pm

NEXT MEETING

March 15, 2005

Respectfully submitted,

Jo Anne Carr