

OFFICIAL

**CITY OF LEBANON
ECONOMIC VITALITY EXCHANGE COMMITTEE
Minutes, February 28, 2018
City Hall, West Meeting Room
4:00 p.m.**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Clifton Below (City Council), Chip Brown, Karen Liot Hill (City Council), Dan Nash, Kevin Purcell, Rob Taylor

STAFF PRESENT: City Manager Shaun Mulholland, Deputy City Manager Paula Maville

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:05 p.m. by Ms. Maville.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: January 24, 2018

Rob Taylor moved to approve the minutes of the Economic Vitality Exchange Committee meeting of January 24, 2018 as written. Seconded by Chip Brown.

**The motion passed unanimously.*

III. DISCUSSION ITEM

- **Goal #3**—Develop an intentional approach to business recruitment and retention (with a focus and priority on retention of existing businesses)

A. Business Visit Reports

Ms. Maville said the only business visitation reports left are those of Mr. McNamara and Mr. Whitman. She asked what the next step should be. Mr. Brown said there should be a format to present the information and capture the conversations. Mr. Below asked whom the audience is. He said he learned a lot, and businesses appreciated the outreach. Are they going to see a follow-through? Ms. Maville asked if they can look for resolutions to some of the problems or changes in policies and regulations. Mr. Below said there are concerns about the development process, and Mr. Mulholland has discussed making that more transparent. Mr. Brown said Hypertherm and Fujifilm suggested a website that guides businesses in finding certain types of people. Mr. Below said one suggestion was a promotional piece, especially for spouses. This is not a major urban area, but the cost of housing is relatively high. Mr. Purcell said one theme was that all of the great things about this area are a secret. He said at a recent banquet, he heard that Manchester is the biotech Mecca, but they may have less biotech than the Upper Valley. Mr. Brown said Mr. Taylor should write an article about the tech businesses.

Mr. Purcell said others reported an inability to find spouses. Mr. Brown said people are doing fun things, but no one knows about them. Mr. Purcell said Nicole LaBombard is well connected, and they can facilitate dissemination of information she provides. Mr. Brown said DailyUV is trying to be like a local Facebook. Ms. Maville said it would be hard for the City to have that type of resource. Mr. Nash said the Recreation Department could have a link to a site that is active. Mr. Brown said they could get something like DailyUV with weekly updates and press pieces. They could focus on one subject that is part of Lebanon culture and promote it. Ms. Maville mentioned the Upper Valley Young Professionals. Mr. Brown mentioned Vital Communities. Mr. Mulholland said they need a video to tell their story, highlighting the entire region, front and center on the website and on YouTube, and it needs to change regularly. He said he will talk to CATV and Vital Communities.

Mr. Below asked if area chamber directors hold joint meetings. Mr. Taylor said they do. They are trying to work together more. They have discussed a multi-chamber high-tech council. Mr. Purcell said it would be great if, when staff was asked a question, instead of being told why one cannot do something, staff could propose a solution. Mr. Mulholland said he had a discussion with Planning & Zoning Director David Brooks, who brought up that issue first, especially with regard to economic development. Staff is not always looking at things from the customer's perspective. A new electronic information program that has already been purchased will streamline a lot of the process. Mr. Taylor said he met with Mr. Brooks, and they discussed having a liaison, possibly a chamber member, to act as a mentor to help navigate the system. He said there should be a list of what is required. Ms. Maville said anyone at City Hall should be helping to provide solutions.

Mr. Purcell said retention of existing businesses is the most important goal. He asked if Lebanon has room for new businesses. Mr. Below said they have a hard time accommodating the businesses here that need to grow, and accommodating new businesses is difficult unless they fill a niche they need. Mr. Brown said if they improve the runway for what is here, others will come in. Mr. Below said there will also be spin-offs. Mr. Purcell said every time new housing units are built, his rents go up. Mr. Brown said there needs to be a balance between market-rate and affordable/workforce housing. Mr. Purcell said renovating existing stock is difficult because of code requirements, such as new lead paint standards that must be funded by owners. Mr. Brown said demand for housing is increasing faster than the supply. He asked if there is a fund to provide help with lead remediation via a CDBG.

Mr. Nash said he has advocated for a Building Code Board of Appeals. Now, that is taken on by the Zoning Board, but they do not have any experience with the code, so applicants do not get a fair hearing. He said Concord has a Board of Appeals that includes local architects and builders who have a copy of the code.

Mr. Mulholland said he has an appointment with Tom Goins of DHMC about transporting workers to the area; that requires funding. To create housing for DHMC, they will have to go outside the regular market without worrying about making a profit. If businesses get together, they can create the housing they want. The City can facilitate the private sector doing this. DHMC could create a consortium for ancillary services. Mr. Purcell said he still has vacancies. A study stated that 3,500 housing units are needed here, but there is a segment of the population

that is happy working here but does not want to live here. Ms. Hill said there is pent-up demand for lower-priced units, and there is an oversupply of mid- to upper levels. Ms. Maville said every business on Route 12A is hiring, but the salaries they are paying do not allow the employees to live in Lebanon. Mr. Below said more people will want services as they get older.

IV. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS: Not discussed.

V. NEXT MEETING DATE: Wednesday, March 28, 2018

VI. OTHER BUSINESS: None

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles Glazer
Recording Secretary