

Town of Sheffield Economic Development Committee

Minutes of 10/7/09 meeting.

Attendees: Jim Kelly (later in meeting), Kevin Schmitz and Rene Wood.

Others present: Joe Kellogg, Town Administrator

This was the first meeting of the committee, which is actively seeking additional members. Organizationally the committee decided it would do without a chair and R. Wood would keep minutes. Minutes will be distributed by email.

Following an initial discussion of the committee's charge and member's views on same, two items were identified for Berkshire Regional Planning Commission for Local Technical Assistance per a request from the Board of Selectmen:

- Development of a "How to Do Business in Sheffield" brochure
- Setting up an Informal Project Review process which applicants can use prior to filing special permit applications or other documents

Both efforts were seen as benefiting the Town, Town boards/commissions and applicants. Committee members felt both would assist an applicant entering into the special permit process to be more informed of what information was required as well as provide reasonable timelines and help applicants avoid getting into the permitting process and then discover that their application is incomplete or contains errors.

Goals identified with both projects were: to support the permitting process, reduce or eliminate unexpected expenses to applicants and promote a continued reputation for Sheffield as a town that welcomes businesses while adhering to its permitting process.

R. Wood will bring this before the Board of Selectmen on November 16, 2009.

Additional discussion focused on larger technical assistance grants, which may be available from BRPC in mid-to late-November. Two ideas were discussed:

- Creating an inventory of space, structures and other resources available to new or existing businesses. This would assist someone looking to start a business in town or an established business wishing to relocate/expand. This inventory database could be paper based to begin with, such as the property listing outside the Assessors Office, but would be most useful as an online database accessible from the Town's website.
- Creating an online database of the businesses in town, products/services and contact information. Doing so may encourage business – to – business networks and trade.

Finally it was agreed that the efforts of this committee are not to solve business problems but to help make the process of doing business in Sheffield more streamlined, consistent and fruitful. Easier and friendlier were also cited as worthy goals. It is up to the businessmen and women, currently in Sheffield or considering coming to Sheffield, to make their business decisions. It was felt not knowing what is expected and inconsistent application of "rules"

from any board, inspector or person in a position to make a decision impacting a business are the hardest issues for a business to deal with.

Given the committee's minimal current size, subcommittees were discussed as a way to get things done and involve people in the community who may be willing to commit to a limited time commitment.

Next meeting: Wednesday November 4th at 5PM; 2nd floor conference room.

Respectfully submitted by Rene Wood