

COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
October 24, 2006
UNOFFICIAL MINUTES

The first meeting of the Commission on the Future of Economic Development was called to Order by Chairman John Goodrich at 9:12 a.m. on Tuesday, October 24, 2006 in the Calvin Coolidge Conference Room at the Agency of Commerce and Community Development in Montpelier.

Members present: John Goodrich, Chair, Kevin Dorn, Fred Kenney, Sen. Hinda Miller, Hope Crifo, Staige Davis, Mary Lintermann, Mary Niebling, Rep. Bill Botzow, and Dawn Terrill.

Members absent: David Mount and Carl Spangler

Observers: Doug Hoffer, Public Assets Institute; Frank Cioffi, GBIC; Sam Matthews, CVEDC; Paul Cillo, Public Assets Institute; Dave Mace, Steve Cook, Mike Quinn, Ellen Kahler, Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund; Jim Saudade, Dan Smith, GBIC; Bill Noyes, Denise Diehl

Introductions by members were made.

Kevin Dorn reviewed the statute that established this Commission. The statute described general issues but also gave license to look at other things not listed.

Fred Kenney, Executive Director of the Vermont Economic Development Council, said VEPC had started to develop a 10-year plan for economic development and Senator Miller suggested the Commission look at what Fred had accomplished thus far as a starting point.

Mary Niebling asked if the Commission had a budget. Kevin said the budget of \$60 K has been allocated through VEPC for this fiscal year, but not going forward.

Chairman Goodrich asked Fred if he had planning data for the “next phase” regarding economic development. Fred answered that he did have this, along with regional efforts and a data base of all people involved. This will provide a basis for a consultant to go forward. Denise will e-mail documents to Commission members. Mary Lintermann suggested this is good preparation to start a process. Fred interjected that this document gives options for the input process.

Dawn Terrill asked who the “team” was that developed the material. Fred responded that the team consisted of Jeff Carr and Paul Cope.

Mary Neibling asked if is normal to do updates from previous ten-year plans and Fred responded that it is normal to go over accomplishments but could not do this back to 1996 because the planning program for VEPC ended.

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Bill Botzow asked where are we going and what do we want to achieve? He did see it in documents that have been given to the Commission.

Kevin said the Commission should have a robust discussion on where we are first. Next we can decide where to go; weed out the redundancies and establish guidelines.

Bill Botzow stated that we always need carts and horses. The “beginning” of any Commission’s goal or purpose seems to go away very quickly. Chairman Goodrich thanked Bill and agreed with him.

Kevin Dorn next presented a PowerPoint document outlining the spectrum of economic development activities being provided by public, private, and non-profit entities in Vermont.

Broke for a 20 minute lunch at 11:30 a.m. and reconvened at 11:50 a.m.

Mary Niebling had a benchmarking question regarding how many jobs had the Department of Economic Development created? Kevin answered that many partners, like Regional Development Corporations, the Small Business Development Center and the Vermont Manufacturing Extension Center, are working on this. Mary went on to ask how we measure our progress in this area; assistance to businesses, what are we targeting?

Staige Davis stated that Kevin’s presentation was fabulous. Asked how does Vermont measure up in comparison to other states? Mike Quinn, Commissioner of the Department of Economic Development, answered that Vermont falls slightly below median and the measurement is “per capita.” Concerning the total budget for economic development, we fall about 48th.

Kevin started a discussion on what is economic development and what is not. He indicated that almost everything impacts on economic development. The Department of Finance and Management is to prepare a Unified Economic Development Budget and that will be an interesting document which will help us in our discussions on where should be invest resources.

Staige Davis asked as a percentage of the State budget, where are we? Mike Quinn said that there is no complete answer on this. Funding seems to be done differently for each region.

Chairman Goodrich suggested that Denise send phone and e-mail address to all Commission members. He asked that the guests at this commission meeting introduce themselves (guests are noted on first page of notes). The first report of this Commission is due to the Legislature and to the Governor on September 15, 2007. At this time, this date is when the funding will end for the Commission.

Dawn Terrill said there have been many economic long-term studies and reports. She felt the Commission should focus on:

1. The Role of this Commission versus that of the Agency of Commerce and Community Development; and
2. the Commission needs to produce a document that discovers where Vermont needs to go, what to change – a virtual Marketing Document.

Staige Davis agreed with Dawn. What can be deliver to make a difference? In the VEPC Report of 2002 there are nine tenets. How can we produce something that shows progress?

Mary Neibling wanted to see time spent on the “vision” for economic development and also wants to see some group development to take place.

Mary Lintermann said she came from a planning background and suggested that the next plan will not be a report but a “process.” There has to be something that shows this is a continuing process. With regard to getting to know Commission members, Mary suggested they define “what is economic development”?

Bill Botzow said he wants a successful outcome; a document that is nimble and adjustable. Some questions he feels the Commission should answer are:

1. Who is the target audience?
2. What will success be?
3. What can we build on?
4. Key elements to be successful?

Bill agreed that vision is important and there should be no judgment on the past. We should leave room for unexpected perspectives. Vermont needs a broad infrastructure; housing, cultural life, economic development to name a few important elements.

Hinda Miller wanted the Commission to step out and be bold thinkers. She feels we have a niche in the U.S. and global economy. Hinda agreed that economic development is not so easily defined any more speaking about ecological economics, GPI, all kinds of things.

Hope Crifo strongly felt the Commission should do “visioning” on Vermont economic opportunity and if you don’t plan, it won’t happen. Her example was high speed internet.

Chairman Goodrich said he hears comments about the Vermont Brand. It resonates. Vermont has been designated as the “smartest state,” lately; is know for its great workforce and quality of jobs. Vermont is a special place because of its environment. Most people recognize you need these things but also good jobs. We need to generate economic development viability.

Senator Miller stated that Vermont is changing and we have to welcome everyone.

Rep. Botzow stated that there are many “Vermonts.” Our regions differ and there are opportunities and challenges in each of them. Jobs are for increasing wealth – make certain that it is broad based and that it works for most citizens. Vermont’s greatest asset is tradition. He reminded the group that we do our best work together!

Mary Niebling suggested that the Commission talk about different ways that have been used to bring groups together.

Fred suggested the three levels:

1. Visioning/goals/objectives/specific actions;
2. Process – how to get through it; and
3. Identifying two or three major issues.

Mary Niebling wondered if a consultant laid out costs for #1-3 process. Fred answered yes, but there are also different ways to get there – demographic jurying. Mary asked if costs could be lower and Fred answered that they could be lower.

Dawn strongly urged that the Commission get to businesses or their representatives and also to ask for an extension of time from the legislature to produce this document. Staige agreed with Dawn that 10 months is a short time. Hinda Miller suggested you educate the legislature of the total vision that this could be a living organism. “If you don’t engage the legislature, it won’t work.”

Mary Lintermann’s dream is to create a living document to support a vibrant economic Vermont. Public input should be in first-person/education. Dawn echoed that there is a huge gap in educating legislators. All roads lead to economic development. Legislators should be more informed nationally and globally.

Bill Botzow said we need to eventually address external factors such as creating an instrument to get from here to there and to go forward. There will be another group in a few years and how do we transfer our work to them?

Chairman Goodrich suggested concerning external factors that continuity is very important. Also, that globally, Vermont is not all that special and is not an island. We need to provide an interim projection of where we’re trying to go to the legislature.

Commission went on to discuss dates for meeting and whether or not to hire a facilitator. It was decided that the next meeting needs a facilitator. Suggestions were put on the table (later Paul Costello was selected to be at next meeting on November 16 at the State House, Room 10).

Staige said “they never made a statue of a committee,” so let’s do something different; let’s think about a different process. How should we proceed? Survey Monkey is an

idea; public process is a good idea. Staige believes the Commission can deliver by September 15, 2007.

Mary Niebling felt the Commission needs to use “what does economic development mean to us” in an exercise on getting to know one another with the facilitator.

Hinda suggested that the Commission look outside Vermont and gave an example of an article on Chicago redevelopment that someone sent her. Sam Matthews, an observer, suggested taking a look at the “Ireland Experiment,” as presented by Bruce Lisman to the AIV Board.

Dates for future meetings:

November 16 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., Room 10, State House
December 11 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., Place to be determined
January 10 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Calvin Coolidge Conf. Rm., 6th Floor, Agency of
Commerce and Community Development
February 12 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., place to be determined
March 12 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., place to be determined
April 9 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., place to be determined
May 14 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., place to be determined
June 11 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., place to be determined
July 9 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., place to be determined
August 13 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., place to be determined
September 10 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., place to be determined

For next meeting on November 16:

1. Make an effort to attend,
2. Send ideas for agenda to John/Denise
3. Confirm room (State House, Room 10)
4. Paul Costello is facilitator (confirmed)
5. Review Fred’s documents (sent via e-mail)
6. Brainstorm on a consultant
7. Brainstorm on public input organizations
8. Fred to send Consultant RFP as example (sent via e-mail)

Adjourned at 1:05 p.m.

