



# CITY OF CONCORD

*New Hampshire's Main Street™*  
41 Green Street, Concord NH 03301  
(603) 225-8570

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (EDAC)

### MEETING MINUTES

June 25, 2024 @ 4:30PM

City Council Chambers

37 Green Street - Concord NH 03301

#### Attendees:

##### Committee Members:

Mayor Byron Champlin  
Mike Vlacich, Chair  
Jim Bouley  
Bobby Segal  
Sal Prizio  
Chuck Gilboy  
Patrick Tompkins  
Alex Stoye  
Emily Ricard  
Ari Pollack  
Jean Hakuzimana  
Judith Kurtz, City Councilor  
Ali Sekou, Mayor Pro-Tem

##### Staff:

Thomas J. Aspell, Jr. City Manager  
Matt Walsh, Deputy City Manager – Development

##### Public:

Catherine McLaughlin, Reporter, Concord Monitor

1. **Welcome by Mayor Champlin & Chair Vlacich:** Mayor Champlin welcomed those in attendance and thanked them for serving on the Committee. The Mayor noted that the City has made significant progress on a variety of economic development initiatives over the past 20+ years, and stated that he would like to continue that positive momentum. He also introduced Mike Vlacich, who provided a brief overview of his professional economic development experience at the State and Federal level.
2. **Introductions:** Members of the Committee and City staff were introduced. Mr. Walsh noted that Tim Thompson, Assistant Community Development Director, was not present due to an excused absence. Mr. Walsh discussed Mr. Thompson's duties pertaining to economic development, and elaborated on how he and Mr. Thompson will assist the Committee going forward.

### 3. **Comments by Mayor Champlin:**

- a) Mayor's Economic Development Vision & Priorities for Concord: The Mayor discussed the importance of community economic development, and role it plays in the City's overall success. He noted that retention and expansion of existing business is an ever-present goal for the City. He also discussed recruitment of new businesses, but noted recruitment is a secondary priority to retention and expansion of existing businesses. He also emphasized that recruitment efforts must be very strategic, and tailored to what Concord has to offer. He suggested that light industry and biotechnology might be two areas that the Committee may want to explore in the future. He also discussed documenting what makes Concord an excellent community in which to live, work, do business and play, and to promote those elements as part of economic development efforts.
- b) City Council's 2024-2025 Goals and Priorities: The Mayor called the Committee's attention to the City Council's current Goals and Priorities, which were a handout in the Committee's packet. He noted that several are directly, or indirectly, related to economic development. He specifically discussed housing, and its role in economic development, especially in light of the currently tight labor market. He asked the Committee to be mindful of these goals as it goes about its work.
- c) EDAC's Mission and Role in City Organization: The Mayor then discussed the Committee's mission.
- d) Mayor's Visitation Program: Mayor Champlin noted that, as part of the City's focus on economic development, he is reinstating the Mayor's business visitation program. Appointments are currently being scheduled with various Concord businesses representing a cross section of all business sectors. He noted that the visitation team will include the Mayor, Tim Sink of the Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Walsh and Tim Thompson, Assistant Community Development Director. The goal of program is to learn about local businesses and how the City can help them continue to succeed and grow in Concord. The Mayor noted that first visitation will be with Boyce Highlands, which is tentatively scheduled to occur later this summer.

### 4. **Committee Orientation:**

- a) History of EDAC: Mr. Walsh provided a brief overview of the history of the City's Economic Development Advisory Committees. He noted that the City has traditionally maintained an economic development committee in various forms intermittently for several decades. The last economic development advisory committee was disbanded in 2017.
- b) Review EDAC's Current Enabling Ordinance: Mr. Walsh reviewed the enabling ordinance which established EDAC. He noted that the Committee's charge is very broad.

City Manager Tom Aspell supplemented previous comments by the Mayor, and noted that EDAC should be an advocate or champion for economic development initiatives, projects, including infrastructure projects which have economic development

implications, and other City policies with economic development ramifications, and advise the City Council on such items when appropriate.

- c) Review City Ethics Ordinance: Mr. Walsh provided a comprehensive review of the City's Ethics Ordinance, which was a handout included in the Committee's meeting packet.
  - d) Review RSA 91-A (State's Right to Know Law): Mr. Walsh provided a comprehensive review of New Hampshire State Law RSA 91-A, commonly referred to as the State's "right to know" law. A handout about RSA 91-A prepared by the NH Municipal Association was reviewed in detail.
5. **Discuss Future Meeting Topics**: Chair Vlacich opened the floor to discussions about potential topics for future discussion, or areas of interest which the Committee should work on in the future. Discussion ensued.

Bobby Segal suggested that EDAC should meet with developers / businesses to discuss their experiences with the City's development permitting process. Former Mayor Jim Bouley noted that, in recent years, there were three separate City Committees that reviewed the City's development permitting process, and made changes thereto. Mr. Bouley specifically discussed changes to impact fees and water / sewer investment fees on the Heights. Mr. Bouley stated that he felt this area has been sufficiently addressed and does not warrant review at this time. However, Mr. Bouley also noted that it might be appropriate for the Committee to be involved in the upcoming interim zoning amendments per City Council goals, the future Master Plan Update, as well as subsequent regulatory amendments thereafter.

Ali Sekou discussed access for business owners to City government, and assistance navigating permitting and licensure requirements. He also suggested tourism, and promoting Concord as a destination, is an area the Committee may want to explore.

Chair Vlacich suggested the Committee may want to meet with local, state, and federal partners to discuss workforce development / training and the K-12 educational pipeline therewith, as well as workforce housing and childcare. He also suggested meeting with State and Federal partners, such as the New Hampshire Department of Business and Economic Affairs, US Small Business Administration, and others to discuss how these agencies and the City could expand collaboration to further all parties' economic development goals.

Patrick Tompkins suggested that it might be helpful for the Committee to get an overview of historical economic development efforts by neighborhood to help orient the Committee with the City's past and current economic development initiatives.

Mayor Champlin discussed New Americans and their contributions to the local economy. He suggested the Committee should explore how the City can work with New American business owners and entrepreneurs to advance the community's economic development goals.

Emily Ricard suggested that the Committee look at housing and its role in economic development.

Jim Bouley suggested that the Committee meet with Concord Housing + Redevelopment Authority, as they could be an important partner in furthering the City's economic development goals as they are a redevelopment authority with certain statutory powers set forth in State Law. He also noted they could be an important partner regarding land banking activities (i.e. acquiring and holding property for the City on an intermediate basis) to support for economic development initiatives and redevelopment projects.

Sal Prizio suggested that the Committee work to update the City's Economic Development Vision and Community Identity / Brand, and then incorporate both into the City's Economic Development Marketing efforts.

A discussion ensued about Concord's "Brand" and why it is an attractive community in which to live, work, do business, and play. It was noted that the City is the State capitol, and this circumstance is inherently woven into Concord's community identity and brand. It was also noted that the City is at the cross roads of major interstate corridors (I-93, I-393, and I-89), thus making it convenient location to live, work, do business, and play. Easy access and close proximity to Boston (1.25 hours), the ocean / seacoast (1 hour), lakes region (30 minutes), White Mountains / skiing, were specifically noted. The City's high quality of life was also discussed (i.e. quality public and private educational offerings (K-post graduate), low crime rate, arts and cultural amenities, open space and trails (7,000+/- acres / 80 miles of trails), downtown Concord and Penacook redevelopment, as well as the City's Main Street "Complete Street Project" completed in 2017.

Picking up on this discussion, Mr. Walsh noted that many of the items discussed were central to the City's 2005 Economic Development Master Plan, which was incorporated into the Economic Development Chapter of the City's 2008 Master Plan. Mr. Walsh briefly discussed the City's economic base (government, healthcare, finance, law, professional services, arts / culture / entertainment), as well as the City's historically very low unemployment rate, and how both impact the City's economic development strategy. Mr. Walsh also discussed housing, current vacancy rates, and the concept of regional fair share of affordable housing (noting that Concord has consistently exceeded its regional fair share as calculated by the Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission). He briefly discussed key goals and recommendations of the 2005 Economic Master Plan, which included promoting redevelopment in the Opportunity Corridor, housing (with particular focus on market rate housing in the Downtown Central Business District), promotion of arts, culture, and entertainment, as well as quality of life amenities and tax base expansion. He also noted that leveraging of economic development assets (such as the Airport and Parking facilities) were integral to business recruitment strategies. Mr. Walsh suggested that the 2005 Economic Development Master Plan was novel as it contained nontraditional recommendations which pertained to quality of life amenities to promote economic development. However, said recommendation, and investments made by the City to implement it, have given the City a competitive edge in the northeast. Mr. Walsh suggested that an in-depth review of these items would be beneficial as the Committee begins its work.

6. **Future Meeting Dates:** It was the consensus of the Committee to establish a regular meeting date / time of the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month at 5:00PM at City Council Chambers (37 Green Street, Concord). Meetings will be kept to 90 minutes or so.

Meetings were specifically scheduled for September 24, 2024 at 5:00PM and October 22, 2024 at 5PM.

The September 24<sup>th</sup> meeting will focus on a review of the City's Economic Base as well as goals / recommendations of the 2005 Economic Development Master Plan / Economic Development Chapter of the 2008 Master Plan.

Agenda for the October meeting will be determined following the September 24<sup>th</sup> meeting.

7. **Other Business:** No items were discussed.
8. **Adjourn:** Meeting adjourned at 5:42PM.

Respectfully Submitted,



Matthew R. Walsh  
Deputy City Manager - Development