

BI-Town Economic Development Committee
Monday, March 6, 2017
Meeting Minutes

Present: Heidi Taylor, Kelly Pawlak, Sharon Cunningham, Brendan McGrail, Ken Black, Laura Sibia, Gretchen Havreluk

Others Present: Ann Manwaring, Chris Mays, Jake White, Merrill Mundell, Scott Murphy, Craig Ohlson, Senator Becca Balint, Diane Snelling and Greg Boulbol-NRB

Meeting called to order at 10:05 am

Sibia gave background on the Committee to start the meeting. Bi-Town was created in 2009 due to season vulnerabilities that were effecting both Wilmington and Dover. Diane Snelling from the NRB came to discuss the Act 250 permitting process, and concrete suggestions and feedback would be a tremendous help to her.

Snelling stated that she acknowledges that there are problems and concerns regarding the Act 250 process and she wants to find solutions to help create collaboration between Act 250, NRB and ANR. Currently ANR has a 2-year process improvement plan that is being implemented. New management expectations have been created, and electronic filing is being worked on.

Havreluk spoke to the preliminary data for 2015, and how all the staff changes that have occurred is part of the processing delay in some cases. Snelling commented that due to the significant retirements a couple years ago that made a difference in how things get done. She is working on a way to get all ANR permits to the "finish line" by the time Act 250 permits are due. There are still permit specialists available for each district through ANR.

Mundell-ANR permitting staff was cut back 50% in the wastewater department, which has stalled the process, which keeps businesses from wanting to move to Vermont. Business owners and homeowners don't want to wait a year to get permits. Snelling commented that management needs to be improved to help with the collaboration of ANR, NRB and Act 250.

Manwaring-Legislature fees change every 3 years for ANR and NRB. When fees vs revenues are compared, it determines the size of the staff, which could mean fewer staff if revenues are short.

McGrail-Any way to compel districts to improve their processing time? This is being worked on. The Springfield office took the largest hit with all the retirements.

Pawlak-A lot of project expenses are research. Whether it's a large company like Mt Snow or a small one, it is a large expense. There needs to be a balance so smaller applicants are getting such a hit.

Snelling- has been researching the Valley Trail issues and doesn't understand what the process has been other than it's been stop and go. White commented that the Trails Committee didn't know where to go or what they needed to do. They asked for opinions and got contradicting statements. White and Gannon commented that Rebecca Chalmers from ANR came down to do a walk of the trail and she was late, only went a mile before she had to leave, and then wouldn't commit to coming back. They finally asked state rep Manwaring to help them get another ANR staffer to come down, and they were great.

Snelling commented that she has spoken with the Secretary and Deputy Secretary and they are aware that there are issues in the wetlands area. There needs to be a consistent standard in the process.

Sibilia-In a year, what is it you hope will be different?

Snelling hopes the circumstances will be different. In 6-7 months, hopefully a new process between ANR and ACCA will be in the Legislature, and continue to locate areas with issues and correct them.

Mundell-maybe email is getting in the way. A lot gets missed or misunderstood through email. Snelling agreed and thinks maybe going back to the "old school way" of sending letters should be looked at.

Meeting adjourned at 11 am