



**Windham Economic Development Committee (WEDC)  
Greater Salem Chamber of Commerce  
Economic Development Committee (EDC)  
Joint Meeting Minutes**

**Tuesday, February 3, 2015 @ 7:30am**

In attendance (WEDC): Mike Oldenburg, Ed Gallagher, Noel Lyons-Baker, Bob Higgins, Lisa Walker, Al Letizio and Ralph valentine

In attendance (Chamber): Laura Scott, Donna Morris, Dick Gregory, George Fredette, Jim Desjardins, and Joe Friedman

The meeting opened at 7:50am and introductions were made

Ed G. explained the strategic plan recently adopted by WEDC. He discussed the background and walked through the major points in the document.

George F. asked if WEDC has made headway/changes over times since formed with perceptions of economic development in the community. Is there still resistance?

Ed G. said yes that that is why WEDC having a Plan is important. The Plan shows that economic development supports the entire town and balances all goals that are referenced in the community surveys of what residents say they want.

Al L. discussed the history of growth in the community and how infrastructure needs play into that. The cost of community services study was mentioned and how different types of development help the community from a tax base/infrastructure payment aspect. WEDC is looking to bring in more revenue that is positive to the Town and meets the needs of the community.

Ed G. feels that bringing balance back to the community will help the education infrastructure issue that the Town is currently having.

Bob H. said that 92% of the tax base in Windham is from residential and wants to move that number. Ralph V. pointed out that in the 2005 Master Plan that the goal was to change this from 92% to 90% and there has been no change in 10 years.

Joe F. disused the history of water expansion opportunities in Windham during the yearly years of the I-93 planning and how the Town did not plan for that infrastructure then. He feels that

without water and sewer it will be difficult to get the high end development that the Town and WEDC says it wants.

Ralph V. reminded people of the infrastructure goals outlined in the Master Plan and how 2x voters said no to studying the issues. There is a disconnect to what people say they want when filling out surveys and then when they need to take those next steps.

Al L. said he thinks that the public is not excited about studies and infrastructure issue because it is not an actual project, it is theory. Those against infrastructure get excited about these things and do a good job of getting them defeated. The way around this is to get the public excited and supportive of a vision that they want and then show them how there are items critical to that success – zoning, infrastructure, etc.

Ralph V. sees it as a lack of leadership and vision.

Jim D. feels it is a function of small town government and since the majority of the public doesn't see something benefiting them directly, they vote against it.

Al L. feels that we need to accept the things that can't be changed (lack of infrastructure, natural constraints, property owners, etc.) and focus on what we can do which was how the land use subcommittee was operating. They focused on possible zoning constraints that are currently in place, which is how Market Square District was developed.

An overview of the proposed Market Square District was done – location, allowed uses, examples of similar developments.

Ed G. said that this is a great opportunity to get the development in this area "right" and create what residents say they want. It creates a magnet to draw other businesses and people from other communities for a bigger benefit than just these 5 parcels.

Mike O. thinks this is a good proposal as it meets what the residents say they want when asked in surveys, doesn't create traffic throughout the community and has job creation for local residents.

Daniel Popovici-Muller, resident, said that the voters are suspicious of proposals that come before them for voting so he felt that it is very important for WEDC to do outreach and education on all their projects and initiatives.

Noel agreed and explained the role of the WEDC Communication's subcommittee and how they are creating a communications plan to make sure that the public is aware of what WEDC is doing, how to find more information, etc.

Joe F. asked about the development potential for the Market Square land and if the Town was going to buy it and be the developer. It was explained that WEDC is looking to make the area attractive for developers and remove barriers to the development, as much as possible, around a common vision. The free market will need to be part of the process. The requirement for private property owners to sell land has never been part of this proposal and they have been kept informed of the work happening.

Joe F. asked if future developers would be required to pay for/building infrastructure. Laura S stated yes as there are no plans at this time for the Town to build this through bonding or TIF districts.

Donna M and George F of the Chamber emphasized the role of the chamber and areas we the two groups can work together.

George F. discussed the April economic development event.

Ed G made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Mike O. seconded it. 7-0 in favor (WEDC members voting)

The meeting ended at 9:05am. Submitted by Laura Scott