

MINUTES
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS/ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
Meeting of Tuesday, January 29, 2019 – 8 a.m.
Conference Room A

Present: Councilor Suzanne Phillips, Chair; Councilors Lee Pratt and Ronald Shepard.
Also Present: Town Manager, Ephrem Paraschak; GEDC Director, Tom Ellsworth; Executive Assistant, Jessica Hughes.

1. Current Business

A. Review long term plan referred by Town Council.

The Committee reviewed the long term plan referred by Town Council and asked that staff prepare a vehicle replacement schedule for the next three years. Councilor Shepard shared that he was concerned that a good portion of roads in the road construction list are in a development, and that more focus should be on more traveled main town roads. Town Manager Ephrem Paraschak commented that more focus will be on efforts with MPI (Municipal Partnership Initiative) projects with PACTS (Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System) funding. Councilor Shepard further commented that the Town needs to invest in building maintenance. Councilor Phillips commented that the Town should consider a facilities maintenance position to manage the municipal center and all Town buildings. The Committee also commented that cemeteries should be laid out/planned and will need to be re-evaluated in the next two years. Councilor Phillips added that she will invite the GEDC (Gorham Economic Development Corporation) members to the next CIP/ED Committee meeting.

B. Economic Development Corporation Update from GEDC Director, Tom Ellsworth.

GEDC Director Tom Ellsworth shared that business attraction and retention are the cornerstones of the GEDC; 70-80% of day-to-day activities are for business outreach. From a retention standpoint, Helical Solutions choosing to stay in Gorham when expanding was a significant success. Helical owners said that their relationship with the Town played a large part in their decision. Helical owners are currently working through local and state permitting, and bringing in the infrastructure for natural gas. Tom Ellsworth added that Shawn Moody's Narragansett Development District business park will help attract new business. Tom advised that Gorham currently has 39 vacant commercial buildings, equating to 10,000 square feet available. There is a possibility that the land across from Gateway Commons will be available for sale in the future, which has already received some interest from prospective buyers. Recent successes have been with the former Tots N' Teens retail space, which was converted to a restaurant and pizzeria. Former Gorham Growl space has been converted to a retail space for Erin Flett textiles and home goods. From a lending standpoint, the Town could fund more loans from the Revolving Loan Fund. Currently, there is \$1 million available, which was funded from TIF (tax increment financing) revenue over the years. The goal for 2019 is to loan \$250,000 to businesses. Tom will be meeting with Gorham Savings Bank representatives to partner with a local business owner on a potential \$75,000 loan opportunity. Town loans are typically offered at an APR slightly less than the market rate. Currently there are three vacancies on the Revolving Loan Fund Committee and they meet as needed. Tom further said that the South Gorham area has potential for further development;

however, traffic will be a significant issue, which could be alleviated by the turnpike spur connector. The Committee discussed and commented that the Town could reach out to the owner of the land across from Gateway Commons, Carl Rhines, regarding price if the Town Council wanted the Town Manager to look into the opportunity. The Committee further commented that if the Town could have DEP approval of the entire land, it could help prospective buyers purchase lots more quickly and with less hassle, as they would only need site approval with the Planning Board. The Town having control as the developer allows the Town to maximize building occupancy vs. buildings sitting vacant.

2. Other Business

No items were discussed under 'Other Business.'

3. Schedule next meeting and discuss agenda items for next meeting.

The Committee advised that they will schedule the next meeting at a later date, and that Councilor Phillips will reach out to GEDC members to invite them to the next meeting once a date and time were confirmed.

4. Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion was MADE by Councilor Pratt, SECONDED by Councilor Shepard and unanimously VOTED to adjourn at 10:16 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Hughes, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager/HR