

February 24, 2014

**TOWN OF STERLING
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

A meeting of the Economic Development Committee (EDC) for the Town of Sterling was called to order at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, February 24, 2014.

Those in attendance were:

Mr. Donaldson – Chairman

Paul Rehrig – Secretary *pro tem*

Brian Kindorf

Michael Pineo

Mr. Donaldson made a motion to appoint Paul Rehrig Secretary *pro tem*. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kindorf and voted unanimously in favor.

Mr. Donaldson introduced Sean Hamilton and members of the Clark University Capstone Project. Sean Hamilton was in attendance regarding Sterling's power as it relates to commercial and industrial businesses, and plans for future capacity.

The first order of business was Mr. Hamilton giving an introduction about the Sterling Municipal Light Department (SMLD). He mentioned one issue in that previously the Planning Board turned away potential business by not sending them to the appropriate contacts within Sterling. Sterling could use a better face to potential businesses, a handout/brochure would help. Rates are very competitive. Sterling has empty land and buildings. Some businesses turned away by by-laws (e.g. regarding storage of machinery). Town not making enough compromises. SMLD is currently focusing on reliability, looking to meet the needs of potential customers, e.g. off-peak offering to help lower rates.

Mr. Donaldson asked if SMLD could share their business list, Mr. Hamilton said yes. Mr. Rehrig asked if he could share negatives that he has heard from businesses regarding Sterling. Mr. Hamilton reiterated being turned away, rates, anti-industrial reputation. Mr. Kindorf inquired how people reach SMLD and Mr. Hamilton replied people/businesses come looking for capacity, e.g. power, sewer, etc. and ask about other aspects of town. Mr. Donaldson asked for SMLD to send people to the Economic Development Committee for assistance. Mr. Rehrig reiterated the need for a brochure. Capstone project members chimed in and mentioned they could provide help in that area. Mr. Hamilton mentioned the need to walk potential businesses through the process (e.g. interact with which committees, which sites, power capacity, zoning, etc.). Mr. Hamilton said, "Why Sterling?" and then answered 30% renewable, lots to offer; future natural gas could be key.

Mr. Donaldson mentioned Mr. Patacchiola's research that town meeting is required to disband Industrial Development Committee. Mr. Pineo stated town clerk doesn't think so, EDC needs to check about absorbing responsibilities.

The second order of business was the Clark University Capstone Project (Phase II). IT was discussed about what the deliverables should be. An example regarding Shrewsbury was mentioned. Ideas were database analysis (what can we learn?), what are good fits for Sterling, draft brochure, website blueprint and grant opportunities. Mr. Donaldson stated, now is the time for EDC to get known; e.g. brochure, website, etc. Lindsay Lucarelli mentioned we shouldn't be comparing Sterling to other towns now to what Sterling is like now, but what town was like us (e.g. Westford, MA). The Capstone team agreed to focus on website, brochure and analysis. They will prepare a proposal and get back to Mr. Donaldson. Mr. Donaldson stated don't be afraid to think outside the box. Mr. Rehrig added, separation of Sterling facts vs. myths would be good to include.

Another topic of discussion was started by Ms. Lucarelli. She mentioned ideas regarding social/community events that can showcase and attract new business, and possibility of a decentralized website/info source (Holden example).

Motion to approve previous minutes by Mr. Rehrig and seconded by Mr. Kindorf.

Motion to adjourn by Mr. Donaldson and seconded by Mr. Pineo. Meeting adjourned ~8:05 pm.

VOTED: To adjourn.

Adjourned as voted.

Paul Rehrig, Secretary *pro tem*