



Angus Jennings <townmanager@hampdenmaine.gov>

Retaining the Community and Economic Development Director

1 message

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I feel it necessary to contact all the Town Councilors to address a pending vote on the elimination of the Town's current Community and Economic Development Director. Having served on this Council for a period of six years, I am well aware of tight budgets, but am also well aware of the necessity and need in this community for Economic development.

Each and every one of you councilors have strongly expressed, during your councilor campaign, for the need to bring new business into this community. We have worked diligently to accomplish this to make this community a "Business Friendly Community". This action has virtually come to a "stand still" since the planner, Bob Osborne, was placed on a part time bases last year by this Council (I'm the only one who voted against this) and eventually resigned. Since then the Economic Development director has had to play the role of Town Planner, one which he is neither "trained for", qualified, nor wished to do. It seems to be an incompatible position. Economic development has consequently suffered and opportunities possibly missed.

At a Planning and Development meeting on June 1st, our current Town manager proposed that he hire a full time Planner. He feels, because of the absence of one, "with corresponding training and education, has resulted in work of the planning department not getting done". **I agree**, because as I have already said, Dean Bennett did not have, nor is trained as a planner. He was only filling in that role until a full time planner could be hired. (\$40,000. was retained by Sue in reserves for a part time planner which was never hired). I even stated, many times, when Sue wanted to cut Bob Osborne's hours, that we needed a full time planner and that it was a huge mistake to not have one and to add that responsibility to the Economic Development Director. I was chair person of the Economic Development Committee, at that time, and worked closely with both Bob and Deane and was well aware of all the work which was and had to be done.

However, I disagree with Manager Jennings that a Town Planner can serve in the role as an Economic Development Director. This would be making another huge mistake as was

making Deane the Planner. This community, without question, needs to have a separate Community and Economic Development Director that works with a Town Planner.

Let me remind this Council of some of the success stories we have had, either directly or indirectly, because of this Director and a Town Planner.

Anglers Restaurant, Rite-Aid relocation, Katahdin Trust, Central Maine Diesel, Wights Sporting Goods, **Hamlin Marine Expansion**, Rawcliffe Car Wash, Mclaughlins Seafood, **Emera Maine**, Apostolic Church.

Retention of Dennis Paper and food products and their expansion. Development of the rear phase of the Business Park. Initiation of Lafayette Hotels purchasing the Old High School. Extensive collaboration with Chevron, the Attorney General, the DEP, and Hamlin Marine in our acquisition and development of Turtle Head Park. Meetings with Hampden Triangle land owners to discuss potential collaboration resulting in the Fiberight project being borne.

These are just a few of the many accomplishments which have resulted because we have had a Community and Economic Development Director. They did not "just happen". They were a result of many, many, hours of hard work and because we are "**Business Friendly**". No Planner, and I repeat, no Planner, could possibly, nor can by himself, accomplish this and also do his job. To eliminate this position, in this community, would be like "cutting off" one of your legs. Let's do that and hobble around.

To save a few dollars (only a penny or so on the mil rate) would be, in my opinion, not only a travesty to this community, but contrary to everything this Council and this Community has worked so hard to accomplish-to become "**Business Friendly**". If we're worried about the budget, why not utilize the money from the Emery TIF. That's allowed for economic development. Utilize the \$40,000. Sue reserved for a part time planner, or scrap the \$15,000 to repair a few Xmas lights on the poles. Or how about his Council forfeiting their \$30.00 per meeting paycheck. That's about \$15,000. per year. Don't forget you voted also to fund about \$80,000. for a mostly empty bus to pick-up a few citizens.

If you are concerned about business development in Hampden, as you say you are, then do the "**right thing**", keep the Economic Development Director. Let's not take a step backwards!

Bill Shakespeare, Business Owner, and Concerned Citizen.

