

# ECONOMIC CORPORATION OF NEWPORT

Sugar River Bank Community Room  
10 Main Street, Newport, NH 03773

## Minutes of June 11, 2021 – Full Board

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mark A. Pitkin, Interim President; Terry Dorr, Treasurer; Richard Bates, Secretary; Donna Mahair, Bruce Jasper, Paul J. Brown, Ella Casey, Robert Collins, Donna Mahair, Hunter Rieseberg

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Brendan Minnihan, John Hooper

**STAFF PRESENT:** Christine Benner, Economic Development Coordinator

**CALL TO ORDER:** President Pitkin called the meeting to order at 8:01 am.

President Pitkin announced that Mr. Rieseberg had stepped down as President of ECON as of June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021. He thanked Mr. Rieseberg for his service to ECON and the community. As Vice President, Mr. Pitkin is filling in as interim President until the official voting today of the Executive Board.

**REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES: May 17, 2021** – *Motion to accept minutes of May 17<sup>th</sup> meeting by Mrs. Casey, second by Mr. Jasper. The Board voted 8-0-1 with Mr. Collins abstaining. Motion passed.*

*Mr. Brown entered the meeting.*

**FINANCIAL REPORT:** Mr. Pitkin shared that Mr. Rieseberg provided a letter stating that due to a conflict of interest and improved transparency, the Town will stop providing accounting services within the next 90 days. *After further review and discussion, motion to accept the financial report by Mrs. Casey, second by Ms. Mahair. The motion passed unanimously.*

**AMENDMENT TO BY-LAWS IN REGARDS TO A MAXIMUM NUMBER OF DIRECTORS OF BOARD:** President Pitkin stated that there has been a significant number of community members interested in serving on the Board of ECON. It is due to this and a desire to get more individuals involved, the Nominating Committee is suggesting an amendment to the By-Laws in which the maximum number of elected officials would be 13. The amendment would state:

*There shall be a minimum of nine (9) and a maximum of sixteen (16) Directors for the Corporation, which shall include the Town Manager, one Town Selectman, and the Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce who shall be ex-officio Directors. All Directors, with the exception of the Town Manager, Selectman, and ED of the Chamber, shall be elected by the Board of Directors at their annual meeting: provided those elected shall include at a minimum two (2) members for a three year term, two (2) members for a two year term, and two (2) members for a one year term. Board members will be elected*

*based upon their experience and expertise in one or more the following areas: Business, industry, banking, finance, law, real estate, land development, government, culture, and education. Each Director, so elected, shall continue in office until he/she dies, resigns, or his/her successor has been elected and installed; provided any Director who misses three (3) consecutive meetings of the Board of Directors may, upon a majority vote of the Directors present and voting, be removed from office; provided further, any Director may be removed for cause by two-thirds vote of the Directors present and voting; and provided still further, the Board of Directors may, by a majority vote of the Directors present and voting, fill a vacancy with a temporary Director, who shall serve until the next annual meeting.*

Secretary Bates suggested staggering the terms only this first election cycle. Moving forward, then, the terms would be 3 years so that at any single time there wouldn't be a majority of positions to fill. Ms. Mahair stated this is how the Chamber fills positions. If an individual chooses not to serve out their full 3 years, a substitute is elected to fill the remaining time of the term. *Treasurer Dorr motioned for the ECON Board to move to 3 year terms effective 2022. Second by Mrs. Casey. The motion passed unanimously.* The amendment to the By-Law will be moved to the By-Law Committee for further discussion.

#### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS NOMINATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS:**

The Nominating Committee presented their report which included all expiring terms as well as new candidates that applied for Board membership. Mr. Mark Pitkin, Mr. Bruce Jasper, and Mr. Paul Brown have expiring terms in 2022. Those with expiring terms in both 2020 and 2021 include: Mr. Terry Dorr (2020), Mr. Richard Bates (2020), Mr. Robert Collins (2020), Ms. Donna Mahair (2020), and Dr. Brendan Minnihan (2021). To accommodate these 10 vacancies, the Nominating Committee proposed the following slate:

- Mr. Bryan Huot of LaValley Building Supply for a 3 year term, expiring 2024
- Mr. Terry Dorr of Dorr Mill Store for a 2 year term, expiring 2023
- Mr. Richard Bates for a 2 year term, expiring 2023
- Ms. Kate Luppold of the Library Arts Center for a 2 year term, expiring 2023
- Mr. Steve Smith of WCNL for a 2 year term, expiring 2023
- Ms. Jennifer Opalinski of Sugar River Valley Regional Technical Center for a 2 year term, expiring 2023
- Ms. Donna Mahair of Petal Patch for a 1 year term, expiring 2022
- Mr. Robert Collins of Collins Electric for a 1 year term, expiring 2022
- Mr. Joe Blair of Sturm Ruger & Co, Inc. for a 1 year term, expiring 2022
- Mr. Gary Dudman of Eichenauer Inc. for a 1 year term, expiring 2022

Discussion on the completed applications followed. *Mrs. Ella Casey made a motion to accept the slate of Directors presented by the Nominating Committee for the ECON Board. Second by Mr. Rieseberg. The motion passed unanimously.*

The Nominating Committee then presented their slate of suggested Officers, all for 1 year terms.

- Mr. Mark Pitkin of Sugar River Bank, President

- Mr. Bruce Jasper of Elliott Jasper Shklar Ranson & Beaulach, Vice President
- Mr. Terry Dorr of Dorr Mill Store, Treasurer
- Mr. Richard Bates, Secretary

Discussion followed. *Mr. Paul Brown made a motion to accept the slate of Officers presented by the Nominating Committee for the ECON Board. Second by Mr. Collins. The motion passed unanimously.*

**CORPORATE RESOLUTION FOR ECON BANK ACCOUNTS:** Discussion on those currently listed as authorized signers. *Motion by Mrs. Casey to change those signers to include the now President, Vice President, Treasurer and Mr. Paul Brown, Finance Director for the Town of Newport and local resident. Second by Secretary Bates. The motion passed unanimously.*

**DES UPDATE ON ASH LANDFILL:** President Pitkin shared that he has made this property a priority in the last few weeks. Since stepping in as Interim President, he has read over all agreements and previous correspondence with the state as well as met with the DES Commissioner and his team. Noted by his research, President Pitkin stated that ECON is the first, and only, nonprofit in the state of New Hampshire to own a landfill and it was in an effort to preserve the image and brand of Newport, that ECON took over ownership of the landfill so the community wasn't known as a "trash town". But it needs to be noted, that the only reason ECON agreed to take on this liability was because of the 30 year agreement and trust available. The state, however, has since changed that agreement to a "rolling 30 years" and has halted any draw downs on the trust until financial assurance can be established. President Pitkin shared with the state that an invoice for the past 5 years of service is owed to the Town but the Commissioner asserted the funds cannot be released until such assurance is noted.

Ms. Mahair left the meeting at 8:54 am.

Mr. Rieseberg stated that the debt to the Town is not contingent on the state reimbursement; the money for landfill maintenance is still owed. Mr. Collins asked why it would take the 5 years for such an invoice to be created and shared. President Pitkin read the Services Agreement originally signed by then Town Manager, Dan O'Neill. According to the agreement, invoices and needed reports should be provided by the Town on an annual basis. Mr. Rieseberg stated that reports were automatically supplied to the state and to ECON but the Town would be happy to provide those reports now as well. President Pitkin stated that there is no denying ECON owes the Town for the monies listed in the mentioned invoice. *Motion by Treasurer Dorr to formally recognize ECON's responsibility to the Town of Newport to pay the invoice for services provided in the maintenance of the Ash Landfill. Second by Mrs. Casey. Passed 8-0-2 in favor (Mr. Rieseberg and Mr. Brown abstained).*

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR UPDATE:** Mrs. Benner updated the Board on all newly awarded grants including the AARP Community Challenge grant that will help the Town install new signage on all trails and recreational assets as well as two private grants that will assist in the building of a Community Garden, addressing both food insecurity and healthy lifestyles for Newport residents. Upcoming grants include: Community Development Block Grant for a new wastewater pump station that services all of our major industry, planning grants to address the housing shortage, Eversource Community grant, Joint Promotional Program grant through the State of NH, and a Bank of America

Charitable Foundation grant. *A motion was made by Mrs. Casey to allow Mrs. Benner to apply on behalf of ECON for the Eversource grant, the Joint Promotional Program, and the Bank of America grant. Second by Vice President Jasper. Motion passed unanimously.*

Mrs. Benner stated that within the School to Work portion of her duties, she has seen great progress with “project based” internships to account for COVID restrictions at local businesses. Ruger recently partnered with Christine and the Sugar River Valley Regional Tech Center to bring the Business I students in front of Ruger leadership. The students were “hired” to create a new locally focused logo and marketing plan and recently presented their findings and suggestions in a formal setting with all Ruger leadership. She is working with Eicheneaur to do something similar this coming fall.

As part of her efforts to rebrand and market both ECON and the community as a whole, Mrs. Benner suggested building a new website that better captures all that is Newport, both commercially, residentially, and from a tourist perspective. She suggested: StayWorkPlayNewport.com or VisitNewportNH.com. Together with this new website, she would like to work on a printed book with matching digital version to present to businesses and new residents, social media and online ads, and ads in various NH tourism and business magazines. The Joint Promotional Program grant would help with these efforts.

Closely following with this marketing effort, is the expansion of our trail system. Last meeting the Board agreed to allocate \$15,000 for a trail study of the possible Sugar River Trail towards Sunapee, along the Sugar River. With an additional \$5,000 pledged, Mrs. Benner stated that the Engineer could get started. *Mrs. Casey made a motion to pledge an additional \$5,000 to this trail study making the total funds allocated by ECON \$20,000. Second by Mr. Rieseberg. Motion passed unanimously.* Mrs. Benner will bring the Engineer’s proposal and qualifications to the next meeting.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN:** The discussion to create and assign responsibilities on new EDSP Subcommittees was tabled to the next meeting, when we have our new Board Members in attendance.

## **INITIATIVES/PROJECTS/REPORTS**

### **A) INITIATIVES**

- **Creation of ECON II:** Discussion followed. Mr. Brown stated that this is the time to do it with many new members coming onboard as well as new initiatives being brought forth.
- **The remaining initiatives were tabled for next quarter’s meeting.**

### **B) PROPERTIES**

- **Ash Landfill:** Discussed earlier, will be focus of the next quarter’s Board meeting.
- **Smith House & Barn:** Tabled to next meeting.

Both Vice President Jasper and Mr. Collins left the meeting at 9:54 am.

## **OTHER BUSINESS:**

- Discussion on the best times for morning meetings followed. It was agreed that 7:30 am works best for the majority of the Board.

- The Town has drafted a 10 year lease for the Town's usage of the Ash Landfill property for both the shooting range and use of the storage building on the premises. Mr. Rieseberg stated that he will forward for review at the next meeting. *Motion was made by Mrs. Casey to authorize Mr. Pitkin to sign on behalf of ECON. Second by Secretary Bates. Motion passed unanimously.*

**ADJOURN:** *Motion by Treasurer Dorr to adjourn at 10:20 am, second by Mr. Brown. Motion passed unanimously.*