

Minutes from 12/5/24 Economic Development Committee Meeting

Agenda

- Sharon Parsons and Barbara Sullivan on the history of Sunapee harbor and the founding of SHR
- Patrick Clapp, Board Member of SHR on economic development in harbor

Attendance - In Person-Pat Balch, Rick Blackshaw, Dan Bonin, Kellie Durkee, Cory Flint, Phil Harrell, Lisa Hoekstra, Tony Marino, John Quackenbos, Pam Shughart, Pete Smith. The meeting was held at Prospect Hill Antiques from 5:30-7:30pm.

Sharon and Barbara walked the committee members through the history of Sunapee harbor and Patrick Clapp walked through SHR's latest thinking about development. Committee members asked a lot of questions to understand what Sunapee harbor was at one time, why SHR was founded and what SHR would like to do to facilitate economic development.

Key Themes:

1. Preserving and Developing the Harbor:

- The driving factor behind the founding of SHR was concern about protecting the harbor from residential and condo development in the 80s. SHR succeeded in its original mission to protect Sunapee Harbor from residential developers, but SHR would like to see economic development and is open and flexible to working with business owners to make it work. For example, SHR is open to selling their buildings to business owners.
- Vision for a vibrant harbor with stand-alone businesses that can thrive year round and don't need subsidies.

2. Business and Economic Development:

- Need for year-round businesses, such as small boutique hotels, event spaces, and local shops since currently we have a very short summer season.
- Expanding the season through events, upscale art classes, and community-driven activities.
- Combining properties like Woodbine Inn and Stacy's into a retail or community center.
- Mixed-use development could be key

3. Zoning and Regulations:

- Current planning and zoning regulations hinder redevelopment due to non-conforming properties.
- Suggested easing zoning restrictions on setbacks, height, and parking to encourage new businesses.

4. **Community Engagement:**

- Importance of involving younger generations and diverse voices in the planning process.
- Need a local chamber of commerce dedicated to marketing the harbor year-round (Sugar River Chamber of Commerce cited as an example).

5. **SHR Organizational Structure and Funding:**

- Exploring the possibility of becoming a nonprofit to secure funding and grants for development projects.
- Two biggest challenges for SHR in developing the harbor: zoning restrictions and local politics
- SHR would consider selling certain properties to help support local entrepreneurs
- Deed restrictions to properties one idea to enable local entrepreneurs to succeed and preserve the area's character

Action Items:

- **Business Development:** Attract businesses such as boutique hotels, restaurants, and shops.
- **Zoning Reforms:** Advocate for changes in town ordinances to loosen restrictive building codes.
- **Nonprofit Consideration:** SHR could consider forming a nonprofit to access funding and maintain community-focused development.
- **Marketing & Events:** Host more year-round events to drive continuous traffic to the harbor as opposed to two months of peak season as it is currently.
- **Community Involvement:** Engage younger community members and create a clear, actionable development plan.