

**Watertown Empire Zone
Joint Informational Meeting With Watertown City Council and Town Board of
Watertown**

February 4, 2004

EZB Members Present: Chairman Peter Clough, Peter Sovie, Phillip Gaffney, William Welbourn, Robert Lawlor

EZB Members Excused: Stephen Mitchell, Joseph Butler, Jr., Laurie Foster-Nortz

City of Watertown Officials Present: Mayor Jeffrey Graham, Council Members: Stephen Bradley, Timothy LaBouf, City Manager Mary Corriveau

Town of Watertown Officials Present: Supervisor Joel Bartlett, Council Members: Susan Dandrow, David Prosser, Town Clerk Catherine Rich

Camoin Representatives Present: Robert Camoin, Zone Coordinator Andrew Davis

Mr. Davis opened the meeting for the Watertown Empire Zone Development Policy by listing items on the agenda that would aid the group in developing a policy. Agenda items included plan overview, summary of findings, geography, industry, thresholds and take back provision. He outlined the various plans that had previously been done by various agencies such as the National Main Street Study, The Streetscape Plan, Behan Concept Study, Gateway to Commerce & Technology Plan and the Black River Corridor Adjustment Strategy.

Mr. Davis outlined a number of goals that should be strived for while developing the policy. Developing high-quality employment opportunities, enhance stability, foster a cooperative approach and maintain “small town” quality of life were listed as important goals.

Mr. Davis discussed the geography now in the zone and the area where the group wanted to focus on for future zone boundary amendments. Mr. Davis displayed graphs outlining industries, telecommunications, tourism, agriculture & natural resources, retail, transportation & utilities, F.I.R.E. (finance, insurance, real estate), health services, education & workforce development and government as well as graphs that listed annual employment levels and salaries. He stated that the ultimate goal of creating jobs and investment supersedes all specifics of the Development Policy.

Mr. Davis distributed copies of maps indicating 10/15 minute drives from the center of the City.

Mayor Graham remarked that the purpose of the zone is to channel business to specific areas in an effort to revitalize the tax base in the city and town and he stated that he was hesitant to embrace the 10/15-minute concept.

Mr. Camoin asked for confirmation from the group that the zone should be kept in the city and town.

The group concurred that it should be kept in the city and town. However, the board would be open to exceptions under certain circumstances, only when the attribute about a certain parcel was not available in the city or town.

Mrs. Corriveau asked if the town was looking to push development into certain areas within the town.

Supervisor Bartlett explained that the 75-25 rule almost always dictates where the zone can go. He explained that they use footprints of buildings instead of the land size in an effort to conserve acreage. He also explained that the applications drive the process and boundary amendments.

Mayor Graham discussed the issue of older industrial properties being vacated and questioned if the town and city shouldn't start looking at redeveloping those sites instead of finding new locations. He commented that the more the board could keep it focused toward community redevelopment, the better.

Chairman Clough remarked that he would like input from the three new Council members in an effort to avoid repeating the problems of the past and referred to the Coffeen Street disagreement.

Mayor Graham responded that if it is application driven, you end up with the spot zone and then you get the neighborhood complaints. He stated that he feels that areas should be developed. He also commented that the Council should not micromanage the board and if common sense is used, it would avoid the past problems.

Mrs. Corriveau referred to the Coffeen Street issue and explained that the Council, at that time, didn't want to put the zone benefits into an area that would be developed anyway.

Discussion continued on the Coffeen Street issue with Mayor Graham commenting that if Coffeen Street has empty lots near the top of the hill that could be made a focus, but not individual parcels. He also remarked that if the zone were being used as a redevelopment program, there wouldn't be a lot of arguing over the minor points.

Supervisor Bartlett remarked that we don't want to lose the goal of job creation, not job retention and suggested that the zone sticks to the principle of job creation.

Mrs. Corriveau responded that while she doesn't disagree with this, she did use Ponderosa as an example of what could happen if when they are moved, they decide to move into another township that is closer to the installation. In a case such as that, the zone should be used for job retention and for the tax base.

Discussion centered on the fact that if the state changes the rules to require 100 jobs, it will supersede anything that this group does. It was agreed that letters should be sent to the state by Camoin Associates and the municipal officials outlining their concerns.

Mrs. Corriveau remarked that the state should look at the population in the area where the zone has been designated for and take that into consideration and develop a sliding scale.

In discussing exceptions to the city and town, Mayor Graham remarked that if natural terrain factors limited where something could go, he could understand an exception. However, there aren't too many circumstances where industry couldn't move into the city or town.

Discussion centered on the current boundary, which includes Crowley's in LaFargeville and the fact that the Town of Orleans never came forward with any monies to help with the administration costs. It was mentioned that Mr. Hagemann was supposed to have taken care of this. However, it didn't happen. In addition, it was explained that the zone couldn't sell the benefits.

After discussion, the group agreed that the minimum requirements would be the creation of at least one job or a 10 percent expansion of a company's job base- whichever is higher- and at least \$10,000 in investments to be eligible for zone certification. In addition, any exceptions would be for the administrative board to interpret how the rules apply and to handle each case on an individual basis.

Concerning the take-back provision, the group agreed that if a business doesn't meet 75% of its one year job growth or investment projections, which could be above the minimum requirements, by December 31st of the second year of certification, the board's new policy would make it possible to decertify that business. This doesn't mean taking away the acreage every time. This provision allows the board the ability to decertify, not necessarily being required to, in every instance.

Mr. Davis will supply a draft copy of the policy prior to the next meeting.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 10th.