

Economic Development in Lubec

the “Dollar Store” campaign:

Nowhere have I seen any expression of thought from an investor's point of view. Why would a business be interested in opening a year 'round retail store? What is the size of the customer base, even including Campobello and Whiting? These are questions that the investor would research – they're not about to commit to anything based on “Facebook opinions” or the voiced desires of a few people who are inconvenienced.

Why is online shopping not cost effective (comment from November 29 Board meeting)?

Things potential residents and investors want to see:

- a viable community population – year round residency sufficient to maintain infrastructure and in the case of business, a sufficient customer base to at least break even in winter.
- The dreaded “zoning.” Yes – it can be onerous and counter productive, but that is up to the governing body and the community to see that laws and ordinances serve the community as a whole. Done right, zoning encourages growth by allowing prospective investors to plan and evaluate with some expectation of future stability while preventing damage to existing assets. In towns like Lubec, with a heavy investment in tourism, it is essential to protect the attractions that draw our customers. This does not in any way prevent establishing traditional businesses. It simply places them in suitable locations. The most attractive towns that I have visited have acknowledged the potential conflict between main stream commerce and the more attractive “old town” businesses. They place the former in shopping centers with good traffic control and set them apart from the tourist area. Everybody wins. The 2010 Comprehensive Plan includes suggested land use etc. but to my knowledge no action from the Planning Board, Economic Development Committee, or Select Board has addressed it further. Any progress has been piecemeal and haphazard.
- A professionally administered and efficient local government. Although there has been tremendous improvement since I have lived here (full-time 2009), much remains to be improved. Some examples:
 - Board meetings -
 - meeting minutes should be available online. They are not only for the required, official document but for citizens and potential citizens to review activities and have a way to trace how events originated. They are used by researchers to study rural municipalities and many other projects. They are **public records** and although technically only required to be visible at a designated location, it is in our interest to have an open and easily accessible government. It is also important that our part time and remote residents are able to stay apprised of developments in our community.
 - A simple survey of Maine town web sites shows that there are no practical reasons for not having online minutes and agendas. Nearly every one that I reviewed had minutes going back several years, and many were searchable. In the philosophy of open government, the default position should be to make documents and activities accessible (also review accessibility requirements for web site et al) unless there is a legitimate reason not to. In the case of minutes and such, there is not.
 - Agendas -
 - should be published a minimum of x days prior to meetings in order for people to decide to attend or not. There should be an item at the beginning to allow for

additions or deletions by vote. Additional means of informing the community should be employed for known “hot button” items

- Action Items -
 - When I was on the Board, I suggested that an “Action Item” heading should be carried on all agendas and minutes. Any item requiring future action should be defined, assigned to an individual, and when feasible, a due date at minimum. Such items would then remain on the agenda and minutes and reviewed for status until final disposition. Although all on the board nodded their heads in agreement, no action item was assigned to do this and activities are still not tracked. Two that come to mind are signs for Stockford Park/Sculpture Trail and the monument for Rev. Stockford. These and others are issues that the Select Board is ultimately responsible for. If they were assigned to a committee, where is the record of this? How are they tracked? My conclusion is that they are not – there is certainly no readily available way of finding out.
- Meeting Conduct -
 - Again, meeting conduct has, for the most part, greatly improved. However, it is not difficult to find examples of parliamentary procedure breakdown. The Chairperson is responsible for not only keeping order, but for reminding members that they are elected to serve, and that every resident's request should be addressed seriously and respectfully. There have been demonstrations of contempt, dismissive attitudes, and even resentment toward legitimate citizen requests. Perhaps instead of reciting the pledge, the Chair should instead remind the board of its duties and obligations, that even though there might not be people physically present, the entire world can see them and observe their behavior.
 - More than one person talking at a time, technically, should never happen. I say “technically” since we're all human, and an occasional lapse of formality is understandable. However – especially when a motion is being debated – parliamentary procedure should be strictly enforced. Any item that is approved for the agenda deserves to be treated with full formality. No person should be speaking without the Chair's permission. All issues should be clearly defined – there are plenty of examples from past meetings of digression, confusion, and multiple voices not being heard. Besides failing to resolve an issue in an optimal way, such behavior observed by residents, potential residents, or potential investors present an unprofessional and poor picture of our Town's government.
 - Spectators – open, public meetings are required by law. However, observers are not to speak unless specifically invited to do so. This rule is frequently overlooked and further contributes to lack of focus.
- An open and welcoming community
 - LOSE THE PFA stuff!
 - It's amusing once or twice, but gets old fast. The town was created by PFAs. So far, Lubec is part of the United States. Any U.S. Citizen can come to Lubec and live here without showing a passport or any local's permission. “I was here first” doesn't matter. Everyone who is a permanent resident can vote and each vote counts the same.
 - Change is inevitable. We are either declining or growing. If I could freeze everything “as is” maybe I would, but I can't, and neither can anyone else. We **can** however, **guide** it to some extent.
 - Besides the aforementioned planning, zoning, etc., we can market our community to people

we think would best fit our concept of the future. That, of course, requires cooperation and lots of conversation – no two of us will agree entirely – but we can recognize the need for younger people (study the demographics of Lubec and the State as a whole. Ages, working skills, future job market etc.), new skills, respect for our history, etc.

- Instead of resenting and mocking people because of their lack of familiarity with tradition, welcome them and educate them. I've heard there's a Welcome Wagon now, but who knows about it? Add to it with welcoming events, orientation socials and other such. Yes – hosted by locals and newer residents as well. Provide a copy of “the Lobster Coast” to every family moving in (I'll donate).
- Reach out to the tourists and invite them to join us all year. Create package visits in winter for them to “test the waters” and see if residency is really their cup of tea.

To be continued...