

Economic Development Commission

January 5, 2017

DRAFT – subject to final approval

1. Call to Order – Meeting Format

Mr. Weschler called the meeting to order.

2. Introduction of New Commissioner

Following an exchange of New Year wishes, Jason Merrill, new board member, was introduced and welcomed.

Commissioners present: Tom Weschler, Barry Milstone, Keith Anderson Nick Ferro, Joe Dinatale, and Jason Merrill.

Visitors Present: Beth Finlayson, Stephen D'Agostino.

The co-chair format of Mr. Weschler and Mr. Milstone is relatively new and Mr. Weschler commented that Past chair and still member Charlie Kimbell has worked tremendously to bring the commission to where it is today with the activity that has taken place and the mission of the Woodstock's Economic Development Commission going forward. Mr. Weschler invited commissioners to give Jason Merrill a brief statement about the Commission. Brief statements followed.

Mr. Weschler presented the financial report. \$197,000 remains in the ECD fund.

3. Warner Communications – 6 month update - Coverage began in July 2016.

Warner participated in this meeting electronically. A summary of press releases, web site traffic and other articles that have been published were reviewed. There has been an increase in traffic on the Chamber of Commerce website and follow up articles which have been found on social media.

Meeting dates to follow were set tentatively as January 17th in person and on January 31, for a phone meeting.

Chamber of Commerce meeting will take place on February 14, 2017 at 7:30 AM. Confirmation of Warner Communications representatives' attendance at the meeting will follow.

Preliminary plans for the next 6 months were briefly reviewed and will be finalized in the discussions and meeting scheduled for the remainder of January.

4. Citizen Comments

Beth Finlayson summarized the Weather Channel visit to the Village of Woodstock. It was a positive experience and has produced additional following. Commissioners complimented Beth for her good work.

Nick Ferro reported that there is now employee parking available for business employees in the Mechanic Street parking lot.

Joe Dinatale noted the priority goals include: encourage tourism and encourage permanent residents in Woodstock.

5. Approval of December 1, 2016 Meeting Minutes

On a motion of Barry Milstone, second Joe Dinatale, minutes of the meeting of December 1, 2016 were accepted as written. Vote unanimous.

6. Grants requests

- a. Modified criteria for grant applications were mentioned briefly but not specifically discussed. The commission needs to determine the best role for the EDC
- b. Three times a year grants will be reviewed the timeline, objectives, etc. will be communicated to the public at the March meeting of the Select Board.
The March EDC meeting will be the discussion date for the grant requests.
- c. A notice must be made public that the deadline is January 15, 2017 for the next round of grant applications. The process of selection and ranking the applications was reviewed.

7. Communications / PR

- a. Warner Communications update was covered earlier in the meeting. Additional discussion about the next six months will be confirmed later in the month.
- b. Vermont Standard Column / writer
After Conversation with the Vermont Standard a monthly column in the paper could be arranged, however commissioners consider it important to have coverage more often. There are two writers who have submitted proposals for writing for publication.

On a motion of Joe Dinatale, second Nick Ferro, Commissioners voted to approve up to \$5,000 for six months to establish an EDC column in the Vermont Standard and also for a meeting minutes writer. Motion approved – vote unanimous.

The proposals will be reviewed by commissioners. Discussion will continue.

c. Website update, EDC committee members

Two Chamber members, two EDC members and two citizens at large should be appointed to form a committee to update navigation of the website with new design to achieve certain objectives and determine what content should be published and what will bring success.

Two names were suggested to be the citizens at large. The four members appointed from the Chamber and the EDC are expected to meet to determine who will be the citizens at large.

Barry Milstone moved to nominate Tom Weschler and Keith Anderson as EDC representatives to the Website Committee. Motion approved – vote unanimous.

d. Minutes / Meeting time

Suggestion was made to consider moving meetings to Wednesday evenings for a minutes writer to be present at the meetings.

8. 2017 Goals and Plan

What is the specific goal for 2017?

The process is for suggestions to be submitted, discussed and determined.

9. Big Bets updates / discussion

Nick Ferro has begun some preliminary work but he is not ready to submit specifics at this time. Other suggestions from past meetings were briefly reviewed:

- a. Commercial space ombudsman – filling empty business space, being in touch with out of town owners.
- b. Recreational spaces - access to the river, etc.
- c. Infrastructure improvements - make public spaces more inviting
- d. Entrepreneurial strategy – encouraging community participation
- e. Retention / conversion – revitalize facilities – element of risk is involved.

Should the commission focus more on business or infrastructure?

Need to set a hard deadline to set presentations to one another to avoid continual discussion without showing results. The EDC must set priorities.

Following discussion of a motion and deadline and amendments a final motion was put forth.

On a motion of Joe Dinatale, second Barry Milstone the Commissioners voted to set the target as March EDC meeting for submittal of draft Big Bets proposals. Motion approved – vote unanimous.

10. Other Business - None

The meeting was voted to adjournment at 8:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Riley