

**Town of Woodstock
Economic Development Commission
February 2, 2017
DRAFT MINUTES**

Draft – subject to final approval

I. Call to Order

Mr. Weschler called the meeting to order.

Commissioners present: Tom Weschler, Matt Stover, Keith Anderson, Joe DiNatale, Charlie Kimbell, Gail Childs, and Jason Merrill. Barry Milstone participated by Phone.

Visitors Present: Beth Finlayson, Mary MacVey, Patricia Campbell, Kristi Audette, Rick Eary, Charlie Rattigan, Jill Rose, Meg Brazill, Linda Fondulas.

II. Citizen Comments

Mary MacVey representing the East End Action Group and Sustainable Woodstock mentioned the article in the Vermont Standard this week and noted the funds provided by the EDC were well spent and a development package summary will be written soon.

III. Approval of Minutes

On a motion of Joe DiNatale, second Jason Merrill the minutes of January 5 were approved as submitted.

IV. Metrics

Mr. Weschler presented graphs which indicated the number of visitors at the Welcome Center throughout the year and particular focus on Wassail Weekend indicated visitors were about the same as last year although throughout the summer months there were some significant differences in numbers. Retail sales and other graphs indicated conflicting data. Results from different avenues of publicity are not always easy to calculate.

Review of Metrics and spreadsheets indicate only slight increase in Woodstock and towns considered to be most similar. Wassail Weekend was exciting and a great number of people were here.

Media exposure was reviewed. The Burlington Free Press plans to send a reporter to Woodstock in the near future.

Comparisons to towns similar to Woodstock were also reviewed.

Chittenden County area appears to be the only part of the State that is doing better than last year while most areas have been flat or done worse. Woodstock showed slight improvement.

Discussion included reviewing activities of other EDC's and understanding how they are different.

Communications with other Economic Development Communications, in particular those from towns most similar to Woodstock are important.

IV. Communications Update

Warner Communications

Mr. Weschler noted that the Chamber of Commerce annual meeting Breakfast to take place on February 14, 2017 at the Woodstock Inn. Both the EDC and Warner Communications will make presentations at the Chamber Meeting.

Mr. Weschler presented a quick summary of Warner's progress to date including a 7 month update on articles placed and social media performance.

a. EDC Communications Team

Mr. Weschler presented the communications plan for Vermont Standard articles to be prepared by Stephen D'Agostino and Meg Brazill.

b. Website

Commissioners agree that website development of website is a priority. The Chamber has appointed two members to the website committee and the Commission has two representatives. Two additional members from the community will be appointed by the four current members.

V. EDC Priorities and Direction

Priority goals include: promote tourism and encourage permanent residents for Woodstock. Tom read the statements related to these goals in their entirety.

Considerable time was spent discussing the role of the Economic Development Commission.

1. Everyone is a volunteer busy with other aspects of life. There is no paid staff.
2. Identifying needs
3. Research Solutions
4. Prioritize activities
5. Real Estate
6. Offer / Rally Support
7. Risk Factor

The grant vs. loan element - most are in favor of offering loans because in most cases the money will be returned to the commission for future use. The Brandon EDC that has offered loans has had only one loan not fully paid in return. Grants (in some cases) are more appropriate.

The consensus of the Board is that commissioners see themselves as enablers rather than developers, assisting others to take action while providing financial support, and vision to the possibilities ahead, as catalysts for those who will be developers.

VI. Big Bets Updates

Developing the website and finding a way to measure its readership is focused on generating interest in Woodstock. Conflicting websites can create confusion for potential readers.

A visitor at the meeting encouraged the commission to consider taking advantage of any free internet exposure that may be available.

Tom noted the commission is making progress but there is much more to do.

Charlie Kimbell, former chair of the commission noted that while at times it seems to be stagnate and no progress is being made, his observation is that the board is doing well.

VIII. Grants Requests

Tom Weschler gave an overview of funds on hand, what spending has included and anticipated funds to be received.

WCTV originally applied for \$8,978. The revised request is for 50% of the original amount. WCTV would like to secure additional equipment that will make it possible to stream live events on the community television channel.

Charlie Rattigan and Rick Early were present to discuss their request.

WAMBA has submitted a proposal for \$5,500.

POP Ups requires a grant of \$300.

Author Talks grant request amounts to \$3,016.

Tom asked that members of the commission come prepared to participate in discussion of these requests at the meeting in March.

VIII. Other Business

Joe DiNatale suggested inviting potential business owners who might be encouraged to locate a small shop in Woodstock to the Chamber of Commerce Breakfast as guests of the EDC Brief discussion followed.

Joe made a motion to offer invitations to up to 10 potential entrepreneurs, who may be interested in opening business in Woodstock to attend the Chamber of Commerce Breakfast as guests of the EDC. The motion was **seconded by Gail for discussion. Following discussion the motion failed on a vote of 2 in favor and 6 opposed.**

IX. Adjournment

The meeting was voted to adjournment at 8:25 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Riley