

Woodstock Economic Development Commission

2/4/2016 Meeting
Town Hall, Woodstock, Vermont

MINUTES

- 1) Call to Order: 7:00pm
EDC Members: Joe DiNatale, Barry Milstone, Keith Anderson, Charlie Kimbell. By Conference Call: Gail Childs, Nick Ferro. Absent: James Zillian, Tom Weschler, Matt Stover.
Public: Beth Finlayson, David Brown, Bob ____.
- 2) Citizen Comments: No Citizen Comments were offered.
- 3) Review Minutes of 1/7/2016 and 1/12/2016. Charlie noted that on the 1/7/2016 meeting that item #5, paragraph d) had a sentence to be corrected as follows: "The commission raised concerns about it becoming an annual request, something the commission had decided it did NOT feel was appropriate for use of the options tax funds." With that one correction, Joe D. moved that the minutes be accepted, seconded by Barry M. The minutes were approved by voice vote.
- 4) Review Existing Initiatives:
 - a) RFP for Public Relations. Keith reported that because of no written responses to the RFP that we would extend the deadline to March 15th and then market the RFP to the firms he is familiar with in Vermont as well as the 9 firms that had responded to an RFP issued by the Vermont Department of Economic Development. Gail suggested that we include two firms in Boston – PAN and 360 Marketing. Rebecca Widness, a PR Professional with family in Bethel, continues to be interested, per Keith. Though not approved by the selectboard, the EDC had established a budget of \$12,500 per quarter to fund a PR effort.
 - b) RFI for Telcos. Charlie reported that four of the five Telcos had indicated that they plan to respond to the RFI by the 2/15 deadline. Charlie and Joe shared information about the underground conduits in the Village that they learned at a meeting with EC Fiber board delegates and Phil Swanson, Town Manager. Phil indicated that he would invite the EDC to a meeting with the person recent contracted to connect the Congregational Church to Comcast using an established conduit.
 - c) Parking Study/recommendations: Barry Milstone shared the results of his research with some specific suggestions to be presented to the Village trustees. Some of the major themes that emerged:
 - i) 603 public parking slips in the central business district (CBD) vs 675+ just 4 years ago.
 - ii) Current parking slips would not be adequate if commercial properties were fully utilized.
 - iii) The Village nets \$55k per year, on average, from parking revenues that are absorbed in the general budget. Not restricted by state legislation any more.
 - iv) The Village has two funds related to parking: \$32,508 Capital Reserve Fund dedicate to Parking Facility and \$125,147 in governmental funds committed to Parking facilities, for a

total of \$157,655. There has been virtually no adjustments to these funds in the past 4 years.

- v) The numerous parking studies have several workable suggestions that should be revisited and a long term plan should be created and managed specifically for parking.
- vi) The history center is interested in working with the Village to make its lot available for additional parking spaces.

The commission, but voice vote, authorized Barry to present his findings and suggestions to the Village trustees. The commission was invited to provide Barry with input on the slide deck, and Matt Stover was volunteered to apply polish to the slide deck.

- d) Funding approvals for January. The commission expressed a desire to have the recipients of grant funds report back to the commission on the use of those funds. The Town Treasurer and Town Manager will control disbursements to the groups and managing the bank account, but the EDC has responsibility for making sure those funds are used for the grant purposes. Charlie to take up the topic with Phil Swanson to ensure a smooth process.

5) New Business.

- a) Awnings for Village Establishments. Joe DiNatale presented an idea to encourage an improvement to the appearance of the CBD by working with an awning company to provide significant discounts on new awnings on commercial buildings. He felt it would be a good use of options tax revenues to split the reduced cost of the awning with the building owner/tenant as it would be a visible use of the funds and would make an immediate and impactful improvement to the appearance of the village. Joe solicited feedback from the commission. The commission supported the spirit of the idea and identified issues that would need to be addressed in order to formally consider the proposal: - the specific amount of money requested from the options tax fund, the potential recipients (applicants), how the project would meet the test of the rubric for community projects. The commission encouraged Joe to complete a formal application for the commission to consider.
- b) Next round of funding requests: Following the schedule established previously, February is the month to receive new funding requests, to then be considered at our March meeting for presentation to the Selectboard in April.

6) EDC Organizational Structure: Charlie asked the commission to consider four positions to be more formally established within the EDC:

- a) Chairperson: Need to establish the appointment/election process of chairman to ensure a smooth transition from one chair to the next.
- b) Woodstock Council Facilitator: Person to organize meetings of the Woodstock Council and maintain communication with the group about EDC initiatives.
- c) Chamber Liaison: The Woodstock Chamber would like to have a member of the EDC attend its monthly meetings to establish and continue a dialogue. Joe expressed interest in this.
- d) Scribe/Administration: Taking minutes, preparing agendas, keeping track of the moneys approved and the funds remaining. It was suggested that the EDC engage a town employee to provide these services and that it is included in our budget. Charlie to pursue with the town manager.

7) Adjournment: Motion to Adjourn at 8:45pm. Approved by voice vote.
Submitted by C. Kimbell.