

**Town of Woodstock
Economic Development Commission
Meeting Minutes
April 13, 2017**

DRAFT-Subject to approval

Commissioners: Barry Milstone, Tom Weschler, Keith Anderson, Mica Seely, Gail Childs, Joe DiNatale, Nick Ferro, Matt Stover, Jason Merrill. Absent: Charlie Kimbell.

Citizens: Ann Quasman, Meg Brazil, Michael Malik, David Sleeper, Travis Hellstrom, Rachel Shields, Cary Agin, Sally Miller, Mary MacVey, Beth Finlayson, Gary Thulander

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM

2. Citizen comments

Cary Agin requested reconsideration of the EDC paying \$15,000 for the lights at holiday time and the flower baskets in the summer time. Mr. Agin offered his opinion is that the Chamber of Commerce should not have to request \$400.00 from each village business every year. Discussion followed and it was recommended that Mr. Agin ask to have the request placed on a future agenda as an item for consideration as a grant. Mr. Agin will be welcome to make a presentation at that meeting.

3. Approval of 3/2/17 meeting minutes

On a motion of Mr. Weschler, second Mr. Anderson the Commission voted to approve minutes of the meeting of March 2, 2017. Motion approved.

4. Budget Update

Not available. Mr. Weschler will forward information when it becomes available. The next quarterly funding is expected soon, as well

5. Communication Update

- a. Warner Communications - Report from Tom, Keith and Barry.

Kristi Audette reported that a survey has been sent out to hospitality industry businesses and results are being provided to Warner. Keith indicated that Warner next few months developing more content for marketing and website than simply pitching story to other writers. More backstories.

Jason –Warner need to be more careful about vetting potential bloggers. Most recent blogger seemed just this side of scammer.

- b. EDC communications team

The communications sub committee meets every two weeks. They are trying to move forward quickly with a lot of “good stuff” going on. Meg Brazill and Steve D’Agostino are working with Tom and Barry on the communications subcommittee and making strides in promoting EDC exposure. Next articles focusing on grants and grant guidelines and on economy throughout the

state. Commissioners agree that the EDC needs to be visible through the Vermont Standard as well.

Ms. Brazill noted that she attended a meeting organized through the Vermont League of Cities and Towns in an effort to see what is going on elsewhere and to make connections for Woodstock's EDC interests.

c. Website

Joint Chamber and EDC website moving forward. Site will also be a resource for residents to gather information. There will also be separate social media presence for each group with their own persona. Website group is also discussing and looking to unify all social media outlet. RFP has been issued to about 15 companies

d. Public commenting from commissioners

Barry noted some instance where the EDC was incorrectly referenced as taking a position in letter to the editor and rumors on the street. Commissioners should be careful to assure that they are not communicating on behalf of the EDC and any EDC comments for publicity, verbal or in the newspaper, should be from Tom or Barry co-chairs.

6. Commission membership

Previously the Commission agreed to three year terms, staggering the ending dates in order to provide a few of the Commissioners terms ending each year.

Matt Stover, Nick Ferro, Tom Weschler and Charlie Kimbell's terms expire in June. Charlie noted that he wishes to be reappointed, Tom was encouraged (strong arm twisting) to voluntarily request reappointment. Matt Stover will be moving on due to other responsibilities.

Barry Milstone introduced Michael Malik who is interested in working with the Commission. Michael briefly expressed his interest in the EDC and summarized his background.

Commissioners agree on the need to recruit. A letter to the editor is planned for the Vermont Standard soon and the communications group should also mention this in their report to the Vermont Standard.

The Select Board expects to take action on membership at their meeting in June.

7. EDC Project and Funding Process

Matt Stover presented an outline for the process from to identify Big Bets and making decisions forward (attached), working through development of a plan to final decision to fund the project.

Commissioners agree a comprehensive process is important and a time line needs to be established.

The process must be clear and the commission focused.

A steering committee has been organized and discussion included the format and possibly working with a consultant.

The rubric developed for grants is not necessarily the same the EDC will use for Big Bets. The commission needs to generate an inventory of ideas to invest in, and prioritize what will be brought

8. Grant Guidelines

Barry Milstone distributed draft update to grant guidelines and they were reviewed and discussed. The commission agrees there should be some edits and further discussion to be continued. Commissioners agreed that five minute applicant pitch appropriate but with vote on a subsequent night. Commissioners agreed to review grant guidelines and provide comments by next Thursday with final approval to be contingent on revisions and discussion/vote by email.

8A. Loans

Barry Milstone began a discussion around revolving loan program. Much discussion followed and Barry made a motion, seconded by Gail Childs, for the Commission to commit \$100,000.00 to a revolving loan fund to be enhanced from a percentage (TBD) from the quarterly Options Tax revenues pending an acceptable set of guidelines. The establishing of a loan fund and the amount of the loan fund was approved unanimously. Tom and Barry will present to Select Board for approval. More discussion will follow and will address possible cap to fund.

Loan subcommittee to include Jason Merrill, Tom Weschler, Barry Milstone, Charlie Kimbell who has experience as a banker, local banker or loan officer, and Town representative such as attorney.

9. Big Bets

The Board agrees that a time line needs to be developed by committee for working on each idea. Each item should include community meetings and project development. There is a consensus of the Board that it is important to fill community store fronts that are vacant. Success of EDC requires more work being done outside of meetings with the meeting being a reporting vehicle.

Ms. Childs reported on her work contacting individuals who have properties to rent. High rents and discussion with property owners would be a good topic for a brainstorming session. Commercial real estate big bet team, will circulate list and individuals should indicate where their interest is and be prepared for discussion at the next meeting. The EDC cannot solve all issues but must make a plan, and find a path to move forward.

a. River Loop Trail update

Tom reported that a group has formed which will meet next Monday to determine if it is a possibility to move forward. This may be a 3 phase project: 1. center to east end, 2. east end to the river, possibly 1-2 trails. Phase 3 how to get across the river.

Mica is working with the group, funding will be needed, A consultant, engineering and land owner permission will require time and funding.

If it goes forward this will be a project of many facets.

b. Optimist Center

At the March Meeting Travis Hellstrom presented a proposal. EDC needs to decide if it should be funded. This would be a co working space with many locations possible. Mr. Hellstrom was present to discuss an update to his original presentation information.

Consideration of this proposal is moving forward. There are 5 properties under consideration. Rental fees were described. The available space in the village center is so much more than locations further on Central Street. Personal funds will be used. Courses and workshops will be. Mr. Hellstrom is asking EDC to cover the first year rent, and operating costs. Updated information indicates the operational expense will be covered by the business owner. Travis includes 24 business consulting scholarships in his contribution and agreed to provide at least some of those to EDC for distribution. Discussion followed.

The consensus of the Commission seems to be in favor of supporting this type of venture at least the concept is good. The proposal has been revised and will be revised again and resubmitted to the Commission so members will be able to review it for a week before the next meeting.

c. East End Planning Study

East End development package was supported through a grant. Sustainable Woodstock would like to move it forward, documenting guidelines and revisions. \$10,000 package to develop the area as a unit would be the request. The EDC would consider this as its Big Bet effort since the East End has already been identified as Big Bet. Meeting with GMEDC resulted in identifying the need of further study to configure the area and as a summary of the study already supported by the EDC.

A vision statement has been developed and is under revision.

A previous grant produced a study, to move forward to plan for the future a \$10,000 grant has been requested for the next step. This proposal is to consider this as part of EDC's East End Big Bet.

The current proposal would be a supplemental effort to the former study that would consider the overall development of the East End within the context of a vision for best use of the area. The study would consider, among other things, the development capacity of the area by grouping individual parcels into a larger project. An RFP is ready to be sent out.

On a motion of Mr. Stover, second Ms. Childs, the Commission voted to review the vision statement draft prepared by Mr. Sleeper and the RFP and give feedback within the next two weeks with plans to discuss and vote at the next meeting. Motion approved, unanimously.

d. Commercial Space effort

Mica, Joe, Gail and Nick are the volunteer sub-committee to work on this effort.

10. Other Business

Matt spoke briefly about funding events, infrastructure, etc.

Need very clear process and outline for future action to be specifically outlined.

11. The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 PM