

Woodstock Economic Development Commission

June 1, 2017

Commissioners Present: Mica Seely, Gail Childs, Nick Ferro, Charlie Kimbell, Barry Milstone, Tom Weschler, Keith Anderson, Michael Mahlik, Jason Merrill, Joe Dinatale.

Visitors Present: Rachel Shields, Samantha Cronin, Meg Brazill, Jill Davies, Sonya Stover, Alita Wilson, Serena Nelson, Susan Inui, Geraldine Fowler, Beth Finlayson, others.

1. Call to Order 7:00 PM

2. Citizen comments

Rachel Shields spoke briefly about EC Fiber in Woodstock. The timeline for bringing EC Fiber to Woodstock will not be as soon as earlier reports indicated. The grant application previously submitted is hereby withdrawn. Rachel Shields introduced Samantha Cronin, who is also working to bring EC Fiber to communities. An update will be presented as soon as more information is available.

3. Approval of 5/4/17 meeting minutes

Minutes are not yet available. Approval was tabled.

4. EDC Budget Update was presented by Tom Weschler.

5. Grant Application Presentations

\$50,000 set for grants \$6,000 has been granted and \$44,000 remains.

Grant applications will be presented this evening but no discussion or decisions will be made this evening. There will be another round of grant requests later this year.

a. Pentangle Arts Fundraising Consultant – Alita Wilson

Alita Wilson presented a request for \$25,000 which will allow Pentangle to hire a fund raising consultant. Ms. Wilson described the request and indicated that the Board of Directors for Pentangle believes the proposal meets the objectives, of EDC grants. Further, Pentangle events attract thousands of visitors over the year and these visitors provide economic stability to the town and village through shopping, eating in restaurants, etc. Town Hall is not up to code. Efficiency Vermont recently awarded a grant for \$50,000 which will be used to retrofit energy efficiencies recommended in an energy study conducted in 2010. This grant will be received in four installments between December 2017 and December 2019. Pentangle is proposing a renovation that will make the building more accessible. The project is estimated to cost 2.5 million dollars and Pentangle expects to partner with the Town for the project, and Pentangle hopes to raise funds for its responsibility through private donations. Discussion included ownership of Town Hall, with Pentangle as a tenant, etc. Pentangle expects the consultant fee will total \$100,000 with the other \$75,000 would be raised through the capital campaign. The \$25,000 requested this evening would be only to hire the consultant.

The history of the partnership between the Town and Pentangle over the years was explained. Without support of the Town, this renovation could not be accomplished. In response to EDC questions, Ms. Wilson indicated that Pentangles lease is on a month-to-month basis and that they are currently negotiating with the Town for a long-term lease prior to the start of construction. The EDC asked Ms. Wilson if Pentangle would accept a loan; she responded that a loan would not work for Pentangle at this time.

b. North Chapel After School Program – Geraldine Fowler and Susan Inui

Presented a request for \$9,500 for an after school program children from elementary school facilitated by trained adults the North Chapel of the Unitarian Universalist Church is looking to collaborate with other organizations in town. Program may be held at the Library.

Ms. Inui referred to studies and read from an article noting that studies indicate that it is proven when town organizations are involved with the education system, towns are more successful and juvenile problems are fewer.

Many Woodstock children who are of elementary school age go to the Library after school; however there are no programs once they arrive at the library.

Economic efficiency and coordinated programs build resilience and capacity of the youth.

The gap has been identified as in pre-school children and children from 4th to 8th grade. North Chapel looking for a way to provide community service. A pilot program for children and parents consisting of Yoga / mindfulness was conducted for four months. This was enjoyed by children and parents where they could come together; it worked out to be a wonderful opportunity.

A network of instructors has been established. If the grant is approved the funding will provide seed money and give North Chapel time to look elsewhere for grants to maintain activities and the program. Another grant has been secured which will provide funds for additional training for instructors over the summer.

Also aware EDC is looking for ways to provide seed money which will give North Chapel time to look elsewhere for grants to maintain activities and program. The program is anticipated to provide local economic enrichment as an end result. Enrollment will be flexible to allow drop ins as well as regular. About 20 children currently go to the Library after school.

Following a period of questions and answers the discussion ended.

c. Chamber of Commerce Flowers – Cary Agin and Beth Finlayson

Request for \$5,000 to maintain flower baskets through the summer. Cary Agin requested this as a possible grant at a previous meeting. He is not present this evening. Ms. Finlayson did confirm that, while she is in favor of the EDC making a contribution for the flower baskets, this is not her application and that the Chamber of Commerce does ask for contributions from business owners. Mr. Weschler asked the Select Board members present to explain short term vs. long term beautification programs. This may be changed in the coming year with some provision for beautification in the next budget. Ms. Finlayson noted that the Chamber will continue to privately fund raise.

d. Chamber of Commerce / Woodstock Inn Bandstand

Gary Thulander has spoken about the proposal in various venues with people of Woodstock. An estimate of \$150,000 with \$60,000 seed money from the EDC. \$30,000 this year and \$30,000 next year. It is a plan for a project over the next few years. Visitor stated opinion that this would represent a major change to the green and should be noticed and discussed at a public meeting prior to vote. Following questions and answers the discussion will continue at another time.

6. Warner Communications

On a motion of Mr. Weschler, seconded by Mr. Dinatale, The EDC voted on whether to extend the contract with Warner Communications for six months. Motion failed with only Mr. Weschler voting in favor. Mr. Kimbell had already left the meeting and did not vote.

7. Website

Based on review of submitted RFP's, website build is likely to cost about \$60,000. There will also be ongoing maintenance and content generating expenses that are intended to be covered by website revenue. On a motion of Mr. Dinatale, second Ms. Childs, the Commission voted to approve up to \$30,000 toward the design of a for the EDC/Chamber Website. Motion approved with all in favor except Mr. Kimbell who left the meeting.

8. EC Fiber

EC Fiber has modified their selection process for prioritizing buildout of EC Fiber based on concentrations of interested subscribers. Decisions will be made at the end of June. George Sadowsky indicates that EC Fiber interested in extending line south from 12/Pomfret Road, along Prosper, and south along Church Hill to South Woodstock to complete a redundant service loop.

On a motion of Mr. Milstone, seconded by Mr. Weschler the Commission voted to hire Samantha Cronin with the assistance of Rachel Shields to promote EC Fiber subscriptions to homes along the indicated route. Motion approved unanimously.

9. Big Bets

a. Village Commercial Space effort

Mica Seely, Nick Ferro, Joe Dinatale, Michael Malik, and the commercial spaces subcommittee are working with owners of street side spaces to promote rentals, remove brown paper from storefronts, discourage large chain stores, and encourage displays and popup stores.

b. Loans

Mr. Milstone, Mr. Merrill and Mr. Weschler are working on loan documentation and a draft will be presented to the Select Board as well as the entire Economic Development Commission.

10. Other business

T. Belisle provided brief Wireless Woodstock update indicating that it would be online shortly.

11. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:12 pm.