

Woodstock Economic Development Commission
Draft Minutes
June 7, 2018

Commissioners present: Julia Cooke (phone), Joe DiNatale, Charlie Kimbell, Michael Malik (phone), Barry Millstone, Mica Seely, Tom Weschler

Commissioners absent: Courtney Lowe, Jason Merrill

Visitors Present: Sally Miller, Beth Finlayson, Ray Bourgeois, Carol Cunningham, Beth Crowe, Dan Webb, Jayne Webb, Jon Spector, Jill Davies, Jeffrey Kahn, Sonya Stover, Jordan Engel, Malena Agin, Tesha Buss, Mary Riley, Laird Bradley, Macy Lawrence

I. Call to Order

Mr. Weschler called the meeting to order at 7:02.

II. Approval of Minutes

On a motion of Mr. Milstone, seconded by Mr. DiNatale the minutes of May 3 were approved as submitted.

III. Citizen Comments

Mr. Kahn stated that it was a terrific start for the revitalization project. He learned some things and was listened to. It was good to have EDC members present. He was wondering if, for Round Two, there is a business component (maybe a separate one.) He also asked the EDC to consider modifying approach to funding, i.e. flower baskets are now a Chamber initiative, but maybe the EDC could commit to funding them. Mr. Weschler commented on the recent EDC/Chamber meeting that explored who does what. Mr. Kahn offered that many people think that the EDC is sitting on a lot of money and should loosen up a bit. Mr. Milstone stated that the EDC has distributed over \$300K and committed \$100K to a loan fund. Mr. Kahn had questions about website ad structure and hoped that the EDC would help Chamber. Mr. Weschler stated that at the recent meeting all agreed that the Chamber was important. Ms. Stover was there at the request of Travis Hellstrom to see if EDC members will be on the visioning group which currently includes Amanda Merk, Geraldine Fowler, Mr. Hellstrom and Alita Wilson. Mr. Kimbell asked if Trustees or Select board have endorsed the project yet. None are on the steering committee, but they are looking for new voices. Ms. Davies said that the Select Board will endorse when they are looking for money.

IV. Financial Report

Mr. Weschler presented that recent receipts are up about 5% annually. The last quarter was up 3% from 2017.

V. Grant Presentations

- a. **Discussion of Process** – Mr. Weschler mentioned that rubrics are available on website. They favor grants that are beyond the initial stage and will boost projects to a new level, as well as grants that have skin in game. Not ongoing support. The Economic Resources subcommittee will do additional due diligence before the next meeting.
- b. **Holiday Pop-up, Vermont Crafted Goods** – The application was withdrawn at the request of the applicant. She has found another space.
- c. **Student Employment Program, Woodstock Job Bank** - Ms. Crowe presented. The Job Bank looked at types of frequent requests and found most were citizens that needed small jobs, so they started a new program – Bit Time – to work with area students which they launched in March 2018. The need outpaces who is available. Only 7 students are on list now. The grant money is to get interest from students and educate them about work responsibilities. \$20/hr is same as the Thompson Senior Center. The Job Bank is non biased, so they don't do background checks. Students are contacted through parents.
- d. **Sunday Jazz, Gallery on the Green/ Encore Designer Consignment** – Mr. Webb (Gear Traders) presented the application. The recent first event was well supported. They put out tables and chairs.

The next performance will be on July 1. Events happen rain or shine; performers are protected under the porch of 1 the Green.

- e. **Bookstock 2018** – Mr. Engel presented. Bookstock (BS) is in its 10th year, and budget has grown significantly. Authors want to come and present. It's a feather in cap for BS and Woodstock that we can put together a major literary festival with 800-1000 participants, all free. 30% are non-Vermonters.

Mr. Milstone asked what the plan is to grow budget? Mr. Engel stated that BS is able to raise more money because of visibility. They see a small growth each year. Listen to the community because the EDC could help promote Woodstock as arts destination.

Ms. Cooke questioned the amount for the keynote author. How do they choose?

Mr. Weschler asked if word is getting out beyond Woodstock? Mr. Lawrence said that definitely in VT. WCTV produces 30 programs for BS which are carried by 13-20 stations around the country.

Mr. Bradley says that BS is exactly the type of program that is hard to quantify but important to community.

- f. **Rainbow Playschool Expansion** - Ms. Buss and Ms. Agin presented. The grant will allow Rainbow to double their toddler program and create a birth program along with 5-6 new jobs. They have waiting lists on all buckets. Rainbow is planning a robust fundraising drive to make the building ADA compliant and Net Zero including solar panels.

Mr. Weschler mentioned that the community grants are only 21% of total funds. Rainbow said that they will take anything.

Ms. Finlayson stated that daycare is critical to economic development in this community.

Mr. Kimbell asked if the total project amount include purchase? Answer, the amount does not include purchase, but significant improvements.

It was asked if it is affordable? They hope to hold the increase to 3% annually, and fees are currently under the state average.

Mr. Engle felt that the availability of childcare is an important factor in attracting families.

- g. **East End Eats** – Applicant was not present but Mr. Milstone read letter she had submitted to commission.

It was asked if Sustainable Woodstock made money on last event? Ms. Miller offered that SW did not intend to make money so no fees were charged.

Mr. Kimbell asked who controlled EE Park use? Ms. Miller stated that SW has asked the Trustees to treat it like the Green.

VI. Chairman Report

Mr. Weschler reported that the meeting between the EDC, Chamber, and Select Board was a good session; they explored opportunities for further collaboration between Chamber and EDC. It was a healthy conversation with good follow up coming.

Ms. Riley thought that the meeting was informative and congenial, and the moderator was great.

VII. Coordinator Report

Ms. Miller made some comments on the report that she submitted to the commissioners. She will continue to gather information about grants and other finances as well as outreach to the community.

VIII. General EDC updates

- a. **Promotion / Website** – Mr. Weschler reported that the website is making great progress. It's been operational for 3 months. Page use is up by 47% vs. same period 2017, and the number of sessions is up. The website is now integrated with Instagram and Facebook. We have a digital media coordinator; Katie Berdan will blog regularly.

Mr. Weschler reminded the commission that EDC is a business so it needs to get revenue. The website has a six-person oversight group with 2 EDC, 2 Chamber and 2 public members - Tayo Skarrow and Patrick Fultz. All are active and contributory.

It continues to need a sales person. Only \$6K has been sold to date, but significantly more is possible.

- Plan to have it be a more of a Woodstock concierge. Already adding “Best of.”
- b. **Economic Resources** – Mr. Milstone reported that a draft of housing study has been received. The group is still working on loans and will be meeting with Bar Harbor Bank & Trust soon. Ms. Cooke said that the second grant writing session went well. She feels that they help people understand what we are doing. (She also commented about negative comments from local people about \$10K grant.) Ms. Seely thought workshops were inspiring and successful.
 - c. **Civic Revitalization** – Ms. Seely reported that the project is moving along. The first of two planned community outreach meetings was yesterday and very successful, first on the green then moved to Procopio. She felt it was widely attended with people who felt heard and that they felt engaged. They planned to outreach to business, but have a limited budget to get them there. About 55 attended.
The next step is for Dubois and King to send notes to the subcommittee who will brainstorm and give feedback. DK will provide existing conditions and a preliminary plan. Then the Select Board, Trustees and History Center will vet ideas followed by another session to get opinions and assess to small group who will prioritize.
Ms. Riley had a number of questions. What is under consideration? Who will be providing funds?
Ms. Finlayson said that outreach went to downtown businesses and it was well advertised.
 - d. **Recreation Assets** – Committee is becoming active and will be talking about a multi-modal path east from the East End park and back on River Rd. Their next meeting is planned for Tuesday 12 at 8:00. They will invite Preston Bristow who chaired the VCRD Trails group in 2006.

IX. General EDC updates

- a. **EDC 2018-19 Plan** – The commission is obligated to look at a plan for the next municipal fiscal year funding. Mr. Weschler asked commissioners to be involved; need to present a rough framework in July. Ms. Miller put together a starting draft. The commissioners have homework.
Ms. Riley stated that the four priorities from VCRD twelve years ago including Merger, East End, Bike Path should not be forgotten.
- b. **\$10,000 State Grant** - A year ago Matt Stover had suggested that the EDC provide some incentives to move here – for every child get \$14K per student.
Ms. Cooke did not think it was a good idea without making significant gains in what we are doing for current existing businesses especially younger folks. People understand why but unilaterally grumbling about not supporting local businesses.
Mr. Weschler suggested that people check out the VPR program about remote workers who want to come to Vermont. People are coming but wouldn't it be good to have them to come here?
Ms. Cooke would like to make sure we are doing things for existing businesses. Lots of people don't know what we are doing and how money is being spent. It's foolish to spend that money without commensurate recognition. Nice to have a message like “Come here because we support our own.”
Mr. Milstone thought it was a good time to leverage the exposure. We need PR for people here, and this EDC has done tangible things for people here.
Ms. Cooke stated that we need to message more clearly that we are supporting our own. National media eager to show innovative ways small are dealing with issues. How do we garner media support? Is there a more creative and interesting way to promote especially to publicity.
Mr. Kimbell said to look at the fine print, but it is still a sexy proposal. The State is trying to help local people but that doesn't make the headlines.
Mr. DiNatale said the effort to coordinate education with jobs needed is something that the State should promote.
Ms. Cooke said that the EDC should explore new paths for new opportunities that are more sexy. If there is enough interest to carry the conversation to publically, a meeting should be warned to talk about it.
Mr. Milstone is concerned about the timing to work on the current publicity. (Ms. Cooke doesn't think so.) A group will be meeting to continue to the conversation around the state grants.
Mr. Lawrence said that affordable housing should be added to the mix.

- c. **Other** – Mr. Weschler will be resigning effective as of end of August as chair and member of commission. He asked commissioners to consider role of chairmanship which will have the responsibility of leadership, but Ms. Miller will be doing more day to day. So less time! He suggested a rotating post.

X. Adjournment

On a motion from Mr. DiNatale the meeting was adjourned at 9:22.

Respectfully submitted,
Sally Miller
EDC Coordinator
June 12, 2018