

Woodstock Economic Development Commission

Draft Minutes

September 6, 2018

Commissioners present: Charlie Kimbell, Courtney Lowe, Julia Cooke, Joe DiNatale, Mica Seely, Jon Spector

Commissioners absent: Jason Merrill, Michael Malik, Barry Milstone

Others Present: Sally Miller, Geraldine Fowler, Jill Davies, Virginia Dean, Ray Bourgeios, Macy Lawrence, Clint and Antoinette Hunt

I. Call to Order

Mr. Kimbell called the meeting to order at 7:02. New member Jon Spector was welcomed to the Commission.

II. Citizen Comments

Community Visioning RFP

Geraldine Fowler, Woodstock resident, presented an RFP written by a number of local nonprofit leaders. They are asking the EDC to take the visioning project on as an EDC project and are requesting that they allocate \$30,000 for the project. The Commission suggested that it go to the Resources committee for them to review before the next meeting.

III. Approval of Minutes

On a motion of Ms. Seely, seconded by Mr. Lowe the minutes of August 2 were approved as submitted with one typographical correction.

All approved.

IV. Financial Report

Ms. Miller presented the year-end financial report from the municipality. For the fiscal year end revenues were up 6% from FY 2016-17. Mr. DiNatale asked where money is being held and who is getting the interest?

Ms. Miller presented three accounts to be closed as grantees are finished with the projects.

Town Acct.	Name	Grant Amt.	Expenses	Balance
E-5093-004	Bluff Island Music	5,000.00	2,650.00	2,350.00
E-5093-007	Welcome Signs	5,000.00	3,375.08	1,624.92
E-5093-013	Pop-Up Co-Working	300.00	241.10	58.90

After discussion – Mr. DiNatale motioned and Mr. Spector seconded to return un-used funds to the general account.

All approved.

V. Chairman Report

Mr. Kimbell reported that he and Ms. Cooke will alternate running the commission meetings. They will try to keep the Chairman comments brief during the meeting.

VI. Coordinator Report

Ms. Miller reviewed the coordinator's report. The coordinator's report will now be attached to the agenda when it is posted to the Town website. Ms. Miller circulated a thank you note from Bookstock.

VII. General EDC updates

a. Promotion / Website

Mr. Lowe reported that the website is building content and improving. Ongoing content is being provided with the Digital Marketing Coordinator. She will be producing a newsletter that goes out weekly with upcoming events. There will also be a monthly newsletter.

The community website committee is talking about improving the calendar and possibly working with Vermont Standard to incorporate both calendars. They are still looking for someone to do sales for advertising and will follow up with Standard about sales, too. Invoicing is problem and may need to come from the website committee. They are reviewing a new contract for going forward and are trying to decide which enhancements to make. They would like to keep the site developer to make adjustments and do ongoing maintenance for an additional six months and have asked Origin for a proposal. In the meantime, they are paying an hourly fee for maintenance. Performance reports will be quarterly.

A complete picture will be presented to the EDC at next meeting.

Mr. Kimbell noted that, "The finer we can tune the instruments; the more beautiful the music will be."

b. Economic Resources

Ms. Cooke reported.

Rainbow Playschool – The committee had reviewed the letter submitted by Rainbow outlining their intended uses for a \$50,000 grant for their relocation and expansion. It will be used mostly for renovations and permitting. The Resources committee recommended funding the project.

Ms. Cooke made a motion to approve \$50K for Rainbow Expansion. Mr. Spector seconded the motion.

Mr. DiNatale thinks project has merit, however, he questioned what is more likely to draw visitors on a more consistent basis to our town and add more residents to our town. Is it a worthy expenditure and is there a need? The economic value of the proposal was discussed.

Mr. Spector commented that there are four things to think about - jobs, education, housing, and quality of life. This proposal definitely affects quality of life. He sees the one time of expense of \$50K being an investment in the future.

Some discussion about access to sledding hill.

Mr. Kimbell pointed out that the \$50K is only part of the \$750 total budget (including purchase of the property.) The idea is for the EDC to help jumpstart the fundraising. The EDC wants to make sure that other funds are in place and committed before EDC funds are dispersed.

Ms. Cooke commented that Rainbow has been in the community a long time with good reputation and thinks it will have big impact.

After further discussion the motion was amended to ask Rainbow to show matching funds before any EDC funds are dispersed.

Vote – All approved.

Empty Storefronts – EDC Storefront Incentive Grant Program (SIGP)

Ms. Cooke read the proposal.

In order to fill empty storefronts in the "metered district" in Woodstock Village, the Town will provide financial assistance to a tenant according to the following:

1. The space has been vacant/unoccupied for 180 days or more.
2. The prospective tenant is not operating the same business within the metered district already and is not a national chain.
3. The prospective tenant has signed a lease with the property owner, said lease to be a minimum term of 365 days.
4. The Town, from the Economic Development Fund, will provide the tenant with a grant equal to \$2.50/square foot, limited to the footprint of the retail space being leased (excluding additional space rented from the property owner that is not used directly in the business) within 30 days of the execution of the lease.
5. The Town, from the Economic Development Fund, will provide the tenant with an additional grant equal to \$2.50/square foot as described above after the tenant has operated the new business in the space for 180 days.

The Resources group is asking for approval for up to \$20,000 annually from EDC.

Additional considerations:

Vacant storefronts indicate that there are issues with the property.

\$2.50/s.f. is current average. We don't want to reward bad faith landlords.

Resources committee will re-visit s.f. after stick policies of Trustees.

The project will provide EDC will good coverage and also help us identify issues.

Let's see if it works. It would be great if it does, if not, we haven't lost anything.

Ms. Seely loves it, but wants to check the actual s.f. costs. She also thinks that it will help let landlords know the EDC wants to help them.

Mr. Lowe asked if there are other towns around the State with the same problem. Mr. Kimbell doesn't know, but assumes there are pockets.

Discussion about what defines a national chain? Mr. Spector suggested it be defined as more than 10 stores. He also thought it was important to monitor rents.

After further discussion, Ms. Cooke motioned to approve up to \$20,000 for the EDC SIGP subject to terms and conditions described. Mr. Spector seconded.

Ms. Seely asked to review the program in 6 months, especially to see if its promoting bad behavior.

Vote – Six approved, Mr. DiNatale vote against.

Housing –

Ms. Miller reported. Over 325 completed surveys have been received to date. The consultant expects that we will get to 500 in the next couple of weeks and the survey will be closed at that time. The final report should be available shortly after that.

The next grant cycle proposals are due September 28. There is another grant writing workshop on September 25, at 6:00p.m. at the Optimist Center.

c. Civic Revitalization

Ms. Seely reported Dubois + King submitted an existing conditions report and a group met with Trustees and Select board to review it. The goal is to go back to public with possible solutions and to gather input on the report.

Ms. Seely just got draft from D+K today. Ideally the next public outreach meeting will be held at the end of October.

d. Recreation Assets

Mr. Kimbell reported that was a follow up meeting on River Loop Trail. The proposed route was walked by committee members who were very excited about the possibilities. They have an encouraging nod from Billings Farm and have also checked with Town about the biosolids. The next step is to start talking with property owners.

The commission discussed whether to support a Municipal Planning Grant application. The grant would update the 2000 Riverwalk study with a revised plan, new trail details and an updated budget. Grants are available for up to \$22,000.

Ms. Cooke moved to approve up to \$2,200 in matching funds contingent on receipt of a MPG. Ms. Seely seconded the motion.

All approved.

VIII. Other Business

None.

IX. New Business

There was discussion about the use of conference phone. Ms. Spector will bring some technology to test at next meeting.

Mr. Kimbell reported that progress on 49 Central St has been good, but he is not sure what happens next. Mr. Spector saw it as a one-time opportunity to do something. Consensus was to invite their representatives to talk with EDC. Ms. Miller will be in touch with them.

X. Adjournment

On a motion from Mr. Lowe the meeting was adjourned at 8:28.

Respectfully submitted,
Sally Miller
EDC Coordinator
September 10, 2018