

Woodstock Economic Development Commission

Draft Minutes
Special Meeting
October 11, 2018

Commissioners present: Charlie Kimbell, Courtney Lowe, Julia Cooke (phone), Joe DiNatale, Jon Spector
Commissioners absent: Jason Merrill, Mica Seely, Barry Milstone
Others Present: Sally Miller, Jeff Kahn, Mary Riley, Beth Finlayson

I. Call to Order

Mr. Kimbell called the meeting to order at 7:03.

II. Citizen Comments

None

III. Town of Woodstock, Village Green Lighting Grant Request

At the request of Phil Swanson, this application was included as a community grant and presented at the October 4 meeting. The request is for \$17,666 to complete the lighting around the Green. Total project costs are \$65,716. The application was continued to gather additional information.

(The following information was sent to commissioners prior to the meeting.) Mr. Kimbell reported on his conversation with Phil Swanson.

1. The project proposed by the Resort was to replace the 8 existing light poles and fixtures around the Green at no expense to the Town, made possible by private fundraising of \$40,000 and the contribution of labor by the Resort's Master Electrician to do the wiring and some basic cement work by the Town Highway Crew.
2. At some point the project morphed to increase the number of lights around the green, now with 14 lights in 8 locations.
3. The expanded project requires laying new conduit, approximately 125-150 feet, to power new light locations.
4. The Resort does not have a Master Electrician on staff and the digging, laying of conduit and pole installation is beyond the skill set of the Woodstock Town Highway Crew, requiring that work to be put out to bid.
5. The Town issued an Invitation to Bid on August 24th. They placed an ad in the newspaper and reached out to local contractors who have done work for the town in the past. No local contractors bid on the work. Two contractors from outside the area did submit bids for the work and were within \$100 of each other. Phil Swanson has challenged different aspects of the quotes, particularly the cost of laying the conduit as their prices were very different at \$6/ft vs \$2/ft. The winning bid was \$24,996 from Twin State Utilities in Bristol, NH.
6. Since the contract was put out to bid, there have been additional features requested which the Resort has agreed to cover, up to \$5,000. One such feature is the simultaneous lighting of all of the lights instead of having them on independent sensors, resulting in \$600 in additional costs.
7. In terms of approvals by the town and others: the Design Review Board, Village Trustees and Town Select board have all approved the project. Dubois and King reviewed the design relative to the work they are doing on the revitalization of the downtown and they gave their

support. Years ago the Village purchased the lighting around the green from CVPS who had installed the lights at their own expense. Because of the consolidation of many of the Village and Town governing functions (such as highway and maintenance), the lights are considered to be the purview of the Town, or at least the Town is in charge of executing the maintenance or construction.

8. Other sources of funds for the project: It had been suggested by some members of the EDC that there should be enough miscellaneous funds in the town budget to cover this unanticipated expense. The reality is that there are no funds allocated in the current budget, per Phil.

The grant request was \$17,666.

Mr. Lowe said the Woodstock Inn will split the cost overrun with the Town. He mentioned that Gary Thulander did a great job of raising the private funds. He knows that Butch Sutherland (Select Board) and Phil Swanson (Town Manager) want to get it done by Wassail.

It was unclear whether the \$5,000 that the Inn previously committed was included in the current offer.

Mr. Lowe was confident that the Inn was providing \$8,833, so cost could be \$13,833.

Mr. Spector moved and Mr. DiNatale seconded to approve up to \$13,833.

Ms. Riley said that the town does not have any funds. The budget failed last March and contingencies were cut.

Mr. DiNatale noted that the revitalization project will cost money and wanted to make sure that this grant would not be included as part of that future request as this request came from town. His concern was noted by the commission.

Mr. Kimbell stated that this grant does not conflict with Revitalization Committee work.

Mr. Kahn commented that currently four lamps are not working, so the existing situation doesn't reflect well on the town. He thinks that it the right thing to do.

Mr. Kimbell thinks that it is within the original spirit of the Options Tax. Part of it was to fund improvements to the Green. It ties to the overall feel and look to the Town, and specifically it is a one-time ask.

Ms. Cooke felt that it fits within the rubric.

Mr. DiNatale related a story about a recent visitor to town who Googled "gorgeous villages in Vermont" and Woodstock came up first, so they came and stayed in the Inn for two nights. He thinks that this project does promote economic development.

Vote was taken by roll call – all voted yes.

The request will go to the Select Board next week. If they approve work will start at the end of October and be done by Thanksgiving.

Ms. Riley wanted to say thanks and she is happy that the lights will be not sitting in a barn all winter.

IV. Land and Water Conservation Grant

Ms. Miller explained that the pre-application for the Land and Water Conservation Fund grant is due October 15. The full application is due December 17. The LWCF grant committee will be conducting site visits prior to the full application due date to ascertain compatibility with the program.

The LWCF grants are applied for by the municipality and require a 50/50 match. Ideally the Recreation Committee would request a grant amount from the EDC to support this application but a placeholder number is needed for the pre-application. The idea is to let them know that there is money behind the application. Suggested amount was \$50,000.

The ask is non-committal and gives the Recreation Committee time to finalize a budget before the full application is due in December. The funds would be used to purchase permanent easements for the trail

and could also cover some trail work. Estimated cost for this project back in 2000 was \$250,000. The LCWF has approved grants over \$500,000.

The East End Park was also going to apply for this grant, so a combined application will be submitted rather than two from one municipality.

Mr. DiNatale wanted to know if the money needs to be put in escrow. It was suggested to change the wording to "Recreation Committee is requesting the funds" which will show interest but not commitment of dollars. Mr. Kimbell will work with Ms. Miller on wording.

Ms. Miller was unclear as to how soon towns might be notified.

V. Other business

None

VI. New business

Some discussion about the longevity of the Options Tax and whether it has a sunset? Mr. Kimbell said that it does not by statute, but it may be voted out by a petition of residents. Mr. Spector's concern is the funding of multi-year projects. Mr. Kimbell said that the Select Board designated this tax fund for specific projects.

VII. Adjourn

On a motion from Mr. DiNatale, Mr. Spector seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 7:43.