

Woodstock Economic Development Commission

Draft Minutes

February 7, 2019

Commissioners present: Charlie Kimbell, Joe DiNatale, Jon Spector, Mica Seely, Barry Milstone, Michael Malik, Courtney Lowe

Commissioners absent: Julia Cooke, one vacancy

Others Present: Sally Miller, Macy Lawrence, Ray Bourgeois, Christian Avard, Beth Finlayson, Mary Riley, Linwood Thompson, Pieter Bohlen, Michael Caduto, Phil Camp, Geraldine Fowler, Erica Kurash, Noah Anderson

I. Call to Order

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

II. Citizen Comments

None.

III. Approval of Minutes

On a motion of Ms. Seely, seconded by Mr. Spector, the minutes of January 3 were approved.

IV. Grant Discussions

Lifescape – Linwood Thompson presented. Wired Woodstock will have a focus on tourism by capturing and sharing moments. Woodstock or the local venue would be branded on each shot. It would be a free app. The purpose is for users to be informed and guided. A multimedia moment will be contained in the frame. He has talked with the history center. The plan is for a central digital kiosk and a hundred very small, long lasting transponders throughout the community.

Mr. Milstone asked where is startup funding coming from and what is future funding? Mr. Thompson is still fundraising and said that funding structure will be based on feedback.

Ms. Seely wanted to know what are the responsibilities of EDC? Mr. Thompson is looking for help in getting content. There are no long term expenses for the town. This is a pilot program for the company; in the future, they may ask other towns to pay for Lifescape to provide content.

Mr. DiNatale asked why they need EDC funds? Mr. Thompson said that they don't, but the value is that it is a cool project and it would be great for the community to show support for a local business.

Mr. Kimbell asked if they will hire local people? Yes, probably three times the value of the grant.

SW Green Bags – Michael Caduto, Pieter Bohlen and CTWK's Erica Kurash and Noah Anderson presented.

Replacing all the single use bags in town would save \$52,000. With local businesses already going Green, it is good for the community to be promoted as a green community.

Ms. Kurash said that voluntary actions are more forceful and lasting, so CTWK will contact individual businesses to get their support. Mr. Anderson said that this is just one facet of sustainability; CTWK has other initiatives, too.

Mr. Milstone asked if they had a sense from stores about the need? Mr. Caduto hopes that the survey will help determine it.

Mr. DiNatale asked about replenishment? SW will need to find money to replace over time.

Mr. Milstone wanted them to consider charging something for the bags.

Further discussion about branding opportunities.

Ms. Seely mentioned the impact on Food Shelves and Banks and other nonprofits. They need to help them transition.

Parkrun – Mr. Fowler presented. Parkrun is an international weekly free 5k event that is happening globally, but there are not many places in the US yet. The budget is for back end material; it is a one time cost. Mr. Malik talked with Ms. Fowler a few months ago and thinks that it is great program. Mr. Lowe sees the potential of the tourist aspect; it is something that people will want to collect. Mr. Milstone questioned annual costs like insurance? Equipment and management is volunteers. Mr. DiNatale wanted to know how would it be marketed? By volunteers and working with current running groups. He asked about other funding sources. Ms. Fowler felt it fit the EDC criteria very well. If not fully funded, they will look for other funders. Mr. Lowe wondered if they had examples of leverage from other communities? How much return does the community get from it. (i.e. a new advertising opportunity) Mr. Kimbell thinks it will help establish Woodstock as an outdoor community and suggested that they ask CBHM for help. He liked that, unlike Strava, participants are not alone. The organizers would love to get it going by Memorial Day. Mr. Spector sees it as a great way to launch the River Loop Trail.

V. Financial Report

On a motion by Mr. Milstone and seconded by Mr. Spector, the financial report was approved.

VI. Coordinator Report

Mr. Spector and Ms. Miller will work on a handout for Town Meeting which will be based on the powerpoint presentation prepared by Mr. Spector. Citizen participation in subcommittees will be encouraged. Ms. Miller reported that seven proposals were received for the Municipal Planning Grant update of the Riverwalk 2000. Decision should be made next week to award that project. The EDC had approved matching funds of \$2,500 for that grant.

VII. General EDC updates

a. Promotion / Website

Mr. Lowe presented the 11 month figures. Users are up almost 35% over the previous site. Sessions are up to 149,000, a 41% increase. Referrals are down, but probably because the site is new and doesn't have a lot of drivers yet. He questioned what we can do to drive more visitors to the site. The great thing is that people are going to the site and it is a huge opportunity.

Mr. Kimbell mentioned that Katie Berdan sent out the Storefront Initiative with good response and many local/regional stories.

He reported that the subcommittee has worked with the Chamber on an agreement and is ready to present to the Select Board. The maintenance agreement expires at end of month and they are looking for a new firm for maintenance and hosting.

b. Economic Resources

Mr. Milstone said the ERS is working on an initiative to enhance the State's \$10,000 deal. They are fine-tuning a local deal and will keep it simple with three basic criteria which may be refined.

1. Meet State Criteria and live in Woodstock
2. Need 12month lease / or mortgage
3. Reimburse up to \$2,000 of local expenses to be paid quarterly.

Some discussion about the State program and the desire to keep the money in the community. Additional thoughts included - How to incentive people who move here for a job? How to gather documentation of funds spent? Should it cover other types of workers, not just remote workers? What about renters?

Mr. DiNatale wants to consider other expenses of living here like water and sewer bills and show that Woodstock is doing a little more.

The ERS will put something in writing and present it at the next meeting.

Mr. Spector mentioned that the ERS is looking at a better web presence and will be talking to Town how to put current EDC information and EDC projects in one place. It would be located on townofwoodstock.org.

Mr. Kimbell wondered if EDC funds could be used to update Town website?

c. Civic Revitalization

Mr. DiNatale reported that he, Beth Finlayson and Ray Bourgeois met with Sophie Sauve at DuBois & King. They would like to schedule a joint public meeting with Select Board and Trustees and have D&K make a presentation. The Chamber will notify downtown businesses. Unfortunately, the final draft of conceptual plan is due after the next SB meeting. Further discussion about when to schedule a joint meeting. Mr. DiNatale with work with SB and Trustees to schedule a meeting that will be open to the public.

The committee is also discussing applying for a Downtown Designation which would provide possible funding for signage, sidewalks and other village amenities. They will be talking with Gary Holloway, Agency of Commerce and Community Development. Further discussion about the benefits of Downtown vs. Village designation. Most of the difference is in transportation grants. The town will need to have a funding source like a TIF to apply. Mr. DiNatale will set up a meeting and invite representatives of municipal boards to attend.

d. Recreation Assets

RFP reported on previously.

VIII. Other Business

Ms. Riley asked to have a report on the housing meeting at the next SB meeting. The link to the housing meeting will be sent to the Select Board.

IX. New Business

Mr. Milstone reported on the February 6 Planning Commission discussion regarding Short Term Rentals. Innkeepers have asked to convene a task force to discuss updating the regulations. The committee will include innkeepers, STR owners, PC, SB and other officials. He is looking for a volunteer from the EDC. Ms. Seely volunteered.

Mr. Kimbell reported on the announcement made by Woodstock Community Trust at the housing meeting that they will be buying residential properties at market rates and then underwriting to make them permanently affordable.

X. Adjournment

On a motion from Mr. DiNatale, seconded by Mr. Lowe, the meeting was adjourned at 8:55.

Respectfully submitted,
Sally Miller
EDC Coordinator
February 12, 2019