

Bi-Town Economic Development Committee

Thursday August, 7 2014 Minutes

Attendance: Jim Burke, Ryan Holton, Ken Black, Heidi Taylor, Randy Terk, Carlo Pilgrim, Jake White, Pat Weisbrich, Laura Sibilis, Adam Grinold, Sharon Cunningham, Andy Robinson, Gretchen Havreluk

Meeting called to order at 8:05am.

Heidi made a motion to accept the minutes from the previous meeting and Jim seconded. Approved.

Trail Update

Google Maps Update- Ken reported that he is working with Jeff Nugent from Windham Regional Commission on configuration of the Valley Trail in Google Maps. Uploading is difficult in Google Maps. Gretchen suggested that we could develop a QR Code to go directly to Google Map.

The new kiosk has been installed in Wilmington. Jake reported that he has mowed portions of the trail and there is a counter that will be moving around the trail. Already reported 670 counts (note that if a hiker/biker is going one way they may be returning on the same trail be counted twice) on Cross Town in a one week period. Ken asked if we had access to stats from other trails in Vermont. Sure packing is on hold until we hear back from the engineer and attorney.

Workforce Committee Update:

Workforce Development Sub-Committee- Laura reported The BDCC is working regional on workforce development; however this area has an opportunity to move things forward as long as the town governments are willing to provide their resources (Economic Development consultants) to work collaboratively on developing what the opportunity is. Jim commented that government should not promote job creation; however support the effort. He would support job education and training. There is an opportunity here in the Valley with a number of sectors. The resorts are making large investments to their properties and how can we assist them. Adam commented that The Hermitage Club spent two months recruiting employees from outside the area. Ken commented that Mount Snow recruits employees from South America. This is a challenge. Heidi reported that the Mount Snow Rep. was saying their biggest workforce need is in culinary. Creating a satellite campus from one of the area colleges will not work as is too small for them to make it profitable; however possibly a career center program might be viable here. We could encourage local businesses to collaborate efforts with each other. Workforce Development is many things we need to create goals.

Randy suggested that we go to the two large employers in the area and ask what their needs are then plan for those needs. Is the model changing from non-seasonal employees? Carlo feels that the resorts will resolve their own hiring issues. That leaves us with a choice we need to develop infrastructure and we need to have the resources in place to bring employees. Employees are not willing to travel for training and the employers need to encourage or incentivize job training. Randy asked if there are grants available for training and Laura responded...there is always money; however we have to develop a project and define the need. Laura reported that a current initiative at the BDCC is working with the 50 largest employers in Windham County to do 5 year employment planning; including the age of their workforce. We do not have a handle on the small businesses and yet here is another opportunity. Jim suggested not focusing on the two biggest employers, but what other manufacturing with 20-30 employees and employ year around with benefits, can we bring here. He also feels that Vermont is not business friendly. Carlo commented that we have a mind-set that Economic Development is to beautify, when the primary function should be to bring jobs in. Pat suggested we need high tech infrastructure with broadband, fiber and cellular service. Towers are the internet of the future and we need to be thinking beyond what is available now. Randy suggested that our largest hurdles are in our zoning for industrial/commercial properties that are a road block for development. We have competition with other states that are willing to abate taxes to get the carrot. This would take effort in educating our voters to what we are trying to accomplish. Laura feels we are doing well community wide, compared to other communities. Adam commented that we have space at the vacated high school building and there is an opportunity for an incubator. Ken feels that we are not moving fast enough with technology and who are these tech employees. Heidi met with Scott and Gretchen and Scott is willing to put some resources towards this project. Randy suggested that we have been through a number of events since the Mullin Report was created and we should update the report and develop a plan for the select board. Laura suggested do a progress report on the Mullin Report. Ryan says we need to talk about what we need to do possibly with small core groups to meet outside the monthly meetings. Randy suggested that we should get together more frequently and not the 12 meetings we have a year. We will get through the Labor Day holiday and meet outside the regular meeting. Jim reminded everyone of the Open Meeting Law and would need to be warned. Jim feels this was a good meeting and we have to focus on specific goals. He also suggested that we meet for longer than one hour for our meetings. No action taken.

Next Project

Review Charge- Gretchen gave a brief explanation of the charge. Due to the Mullin Report being completed in 2009 and the FEMA Report a few years ago do we need to change our charge?

Discuss goals of the Mullin Report & FEMA Long Term Recovery Plan- Gretchen gave a brief outline of things that have been accomplished in the Mullin & FEMA Reports and those projects that we have not worked on. Gretchen will send out notes excerpted from the Mullin & FEMA Reports. No other action was taken.

Laura reminded everyone that Frank Knott, the consultant working on the CEDS will be here next week to help create and update CEDS projects. The deadline is in September for those projects.

Randy Moved to adjourn the meeting and Jim seconded.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gretchen M. Havreluk