

Bi-Town Economic Development Committee
Thursday November 6, 2014 8:00-9:00 am
Wilmington Town Offices

Attendance: Ryan Holton, Ken Black, Carlo Pilgrim, Andy Robinson, Gretchen Havreluk, Sharon Cunningham, Jim Burke, Dale Ribaud, Carolyn May, Randy Terk, Laurie Newton, Laura Sibilia, Pat Wiesbrich, Adam Grinold, Meg Streeter, and Scott Murphy

Laurie made motion to approve minutes from the October 2nd meeting. Sharon 2nd all passed approved.

High Speed Internet Service/Cell Service Update

Chris Campbell, Executive Director of Vermont Telecommunications Authority joined us via Skype to talk about improved broadband and cellular services strategies for our area. VTA builds and funds infrastructure to improve cell service and broadband to underserved areas of VT. They provide grants and lease arrangements to local providers, for infrastructure improvements. The VTA is funded with federal grants, state funds, and matches from providers. The state has a goal of getting 100 megabytes per second in ten years. Ken asked how we get to the fiber. Work with the existing providers and give them a grant. Not all providers will take grants and is their proposal a cost effective way of increasing broadband. The VTA is out of grant funding; however we (Dover & Wilmington) can create our own. Sovernet, Fairpoint and Duncan cable are the providers for this area. We will discuss this at our next meeting about potential action items for this topic.

Marketing and Branding

Sharon Cunningham reported that the Steering committee was not satisfied with Arnett & Muldrow and met with the Chamber Board; which decided to terminate their contract. The committee has hired Opus Design and we should have logo and taglines to present in the next few weeks. We are using the data that was collected by Arnett & Muldrow to move forward with the new consultant.

Work Force Development /Training Fund

Andy Robinson provided everyone with an Executive Summary of Workforce Development in Windham County. (See attached) They are now looking for government agencies, businesses and educational institutions to partner with. The report shows that our demographics are going in two directions...Bi-Town could help as a convener for the educational services. Andy will seek Bi-Towns help to provide public forums after the holidays. BDCC is assisting with the upcoming job fair.

Updates:

Wilmington- Jim Burke Reported the Boys Soccer won State Champs, budget season, and a road crew member retiring. They received 16 applications for the position. Randy reported that both select boards will be meeting in the next week regarding the potential of a ladder truck sharing for the fire depts. and other possible opportunities. Gretchen reported the Façade Improvement grant has been successful with two projects (Jezebel's & Chapman Antiques) completed; another almost complete (North Star Bowl) and others will not be completed until spring.

Dover- Ken reported they are working on easements for the Dorr Fitch Road to Mount Snow Marketplace sidewalk project through VTrans. Construction to hopefully start in the spring.

Mount Snow- They have raised enough funds for the West Lake project and construction will begin next summer. Depending on temperatures this weekend; they will begin to make snow!

Hermitage Club- Dale introduced Carolyn May she is the Social Events and Activities Manager. Columbus day Weekend was a soft grand opening and on December 11th - 13th there will be the full Grand Opening with another nationally known artist.

Other Business:

Meg- Suggested that we should make a goal (a focus) for the year as this has worked well with the Bi-Town group in the past. Meg suggested getting feedback from the businesses; as well as our visitors on what they are looking for here in our valley.

Next meeting is Dec 4th 8am.

Laurie moved to close the meeting

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The purpose of this Executive Summary is:

- Define the challenges the county faces in a technology based workforce environment
- To provide an analysis of the job potential for the county in the next 5 years.
- Outline the job opportunities available now and in the next five years in Windham County.

CHALLENGES: Windham County is challenged by an aging workforce. US Census population estimates for Windham County for 2013 show that the majority of the workforce in the county is between 45 –64 years old. At present this trend seems likely to continue. There is also evidence from employers that many of the core skills that are needed in the workforce are missing. These missing skills are not just with prospective hires but with present employees whom companies may want to move up in their organizations.

POPULATION ESTIMATES FOR WINDHAM COUNTY, VT

2010-2013

PEPAGESEX-Geography-Windham County, Vermont: Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for Selected Age Groups by Sex for the United States, States, Counties, and Puerto Rico Commonwealth and Municipios: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2013

Age	April 1, 2010		Population Estimates (as of July 1)			
	Census	Estimates Base	2010	2011	2012	2013
	Both Sexes	Both Sexes	Both Sexes	Both Sexes	Both Sexes	Both Sexes
Total	44,513	44,513	44,504	44,237	44,040	43,857
18 to 64 years	28,508	28,508	28,485	28,241	27,826	27,494
18 to 24 years	3,633	3,633	3,633	3,601	3,636	3,636
25 to 44 years	9,819	9,819	9,798	9,680	9,550	9,380
45 to 64 years	15,056	15,056	15,054	14,960	14,640	14,478
Median age (years)	44.9	44.9	45.0	45.4	45.6	46.1

Suggested Citation:

Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for Selected Age Groups by Sex for the United States, States, Counties, and Puerto Rico Commonwealth and Municipios: April 2010 to July 1, 2013

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division

Release Date: June 2014

The goal of the project is to understand the makeup of the current workforce, and to project what it is going to look like in the next five years. Will jobs grow or will there be a decline? Are the larger businesses (over 45 employees) of the county seeing a similar picture as the smaller ones? What are the issues that most concern employers in terms of the available work force?

ANALYSIS: The project began by approaching 67 of the largest businesses of the Windham Region. We asked them if they would be willing to participate in this project. To date 35 of those businesses have participated. These companies represent 7 different job sectors and 25.39% of the region's workforce. Their information was collected, aggregated and analyzed. Using our findings from this original group we took two further steps.

1. In conjunction with the local chambers of commerce we sent out a modified electronic survey to small businesses (40 and under employees). 63% of the respondents in this group represented businesses with 10 or fewer employees. Contained in our survey to this group we asked about workforce size, expected growth and also what they saw as workforce challenges in terms of skill set issues.
2. We went back to our original survey group and asked them four specific questions about core skills issues they were experiencing in hiring and maintaining a workforce.

Job Opportunities: What we learned, was that jobs exist and new jobs will become available in our area within the next five years. Based on the information provided by the participating businesses, they expect a minimum of 3,345 job openings. The jobs referenced by the employers involved with this study varied from highly skilled technical and professional positions down to some very basic hourly positions. A full list of these positions is provided in the addendum to the full report that can be referenced on line (see the URL address at the end of this summary). The positions include both new jobs (approximately 27% of the noted number) as well as replacement jobs due to staff turnover in existing positions. To support this growth we must do a better job of preparing area residents for these jobs. It is clear that employment preparedness issues are multi-faceted and complicated. To tackle Windham County's complex employment landscape, it will require the work of current and future workers, educators, agencies and businesses combining their efforts to meet the workforce needs of the region. Some of this work must begin prior to students reaching high school. We must also attract businesses and entrepreneurs to our area. In order to do this, we must improve the skills of our workforce. This in turn, will be the only way we make headway in helping our current employers grow, improving wages, and attracting jobs that pay more to the county.

Anyone wishing to settle in Windham County should be able to access educational opportunities and be financially able to live here. Additionally, students, parents, schools, the business community, and the community at large all have a stake in ensuring that Windham County high school graduates are able to find meaningful work in the area while also earning a livable wage. Together we can grow Windham County making it a desirable place work and live. We have begun to take the steps to make this a reality.

The full workforce report and supporting documents can be found on line at: URL to be added
In addition, the report outlining challenges, objectives and goals for workforce development in Windham County can be found in the 2014 Windham County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies Report (CEDS) at: <http://seveds.com/ceds-report/>