

Bi-Town Economic Development Committee
Meeting Minutes
via Zoom
Thursday, July 2, 2020

Members present: Heidi Taylor, Vicki Capitani, Eric Durocher, Adam Grinold, Gretchen Havreluk, Tracy Bartels, Ryan Holton, Tom Fitzgerald

Also present: Christine Howe, Shannon Wheeler, Gig Zboray

Meeting called to order at 8:03 am

- I. Additions or changes to the agenda
 - a. Updating SeVEDS to BDCC on agendas/minutes in future
- II. Approve minutes from the June 4th meeting
 - a. Motion to approve by Adam, seconded by Vicki. All approve.
- III. Chris Company – Windham Regional Commission: are there any action items from June meeting?
 - a. Gretchen: Do we start with reading our zoning bylaws as individual towns? He mentioned farmlands, do we work to protect those? What about creating infrastructure? We have a feasibility study happening for Route 9 water and sewer expansion and it's really disappointing. It's expensive and it's discouraging because there's so much potential for business growth in that expansion. It's a hard road with heavy lifting.
 - b. Adam: This topic and this project and our zoning and some of the mandates that are coming down from the state are not in alignment. So we have the number one priority as the Wilmington Selectboard to extend the sewer district/line. Yet that entire area is on the proposed river corridor regulations that the Wilmington Planning Commission created to try and limit development on that very same river. There's just no coordination between a top priority and an arm of the government. And then there are different messages coming down from the state. The message to all of us is to figure out what our priorities are, how do we do it, and ensure that we're not allowing restrictions to be imposed on the very land we need to make those priorities happen. This is playing out all over the state, I welcome an opportunity for us to come together and figure out our priorities.
 - c. Vicki: In Dover we have a serious water problem. Water will be the limiting factor for development in West Dover. There's no stomach for the cost of a water system right now; at least there wasn't two years ago. We're currently paying back a study loan because we didn't enact anything which was about \$60,000 so we're going to be paralyzed moving forward with water issues. I don't know how to jumpstart that. There hasn't been historically a lot of support coming from the condominium developments. We have a series of crazy wells and the aquifer is being seriously affected by it.
 - d. Adam: I think it's already hampering development. There's already a limitation.
 - e. Vicki: It is. It's a very expensive answer. Our experience with the North Branch Fire District for a lot of property and commercial property owners has been frustrating to say the least and very, very expensive. We have the problem with two sides of the town, one side doesn't flow into the same watershed, and so thus is not in the same situation. And whether it's a town wide issue or not can be a very hard push because most of our voting population is in the East side of town. I think for Dover in the near term, we need to reorganize our planning commission which is not active. I think that should be a priority for our Selectboard and maybe Economic Development. We're going to have to work on our Town Plan and we do not have an active planning commission.

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- f. Eric: In the Dover town plan there are still some pieces in it that are current for today but there are things that have changed significantly. I think it definitely needs to be looked at and at least updated, I don't know that a rewrite is needed to look at the priorities for the Town of Dover.
- g. Adam: One of the challenges here as towns do this is resources. Windham Regional and all the regional commissions have some mandates that are being pushed down from the state. So when you get a bunch of laypeople who don't necessarily know all the rules and regulations it's easy to head in a direction that you may not fully understand. Long term impacts can really be impactful in growth. If you're trying to create some forward momentum here, Windham Regional is the partner in this for communities.
- h. Tracy: I think the zoning restrictions is a good place to start and seeing what the differences are. Reviewing what those look like and knowing what they are for this group as things move forward.
- i. Adam: I think that's a good suggestion. Many of our current regulations were written at a time to prevent something that frankly we need a little of right now but we don't want to turn our backs on what makes our homes so special either. Picking and choosing what lever we can pull to get a little more activity without harming what we value for the way Vermont looks.
- j. Gretchen: So do you think we present to Selectboards? Is that our goal? Are the Boards aware of the potential. Would that help jump planning commission involvement in Dover? Or is the action item reviewing our zoning ordinances?
- k. Tracy: Maybe it's reviewing and highlighting what are areas of concern or items we ensure we're protecting. Knowing what we're not willing to negotiate on, how we make our homes and towns in Vermont special. As a team we come back with a recommendation to this group of the maybe the top five things we won't give up anything on and then those that we do have some wiggle room on as people approach us for development.
- l. Heidi: yes, let's look at those things and try to come back next time
- m. Eric: let's start in house and look at the zoning docs and let's have a preliminary conversation before the next meeting to brainstorm some of these ideas and bring them back to the group.

IV. Deerfield Valley resiliency team COVID-19 work

- a. Eric: still in resiliency phase and providing info as it comes out to businesses.
- b. Gretchen: new info today; webinar from ACCD as the new Grant program from the state opens for applications Monday.

V. Housing Committee:

- a. Haven't met still since February; looking to meet soon as Windham Windsor Housing Trust contacted Gretchen about a possible project.

VI. Marketing Committee:

- a. Gretchen: Had a joint Selectboard meeting on 6/23. We were approved for a campaign of \$71,500 which includes hiring a consultant to create a 5+ year strategic plan, content creation, stay to stay program, blogging, and new banners for the towns. We've been meeting often and look to start the campaign for Fall. RFQ for the consultant will go out next week.
- b. Eric: we submitted an RFP to the ACCD for marketing dollars through the state CARES funds but it doesn't look like that will come to the 7 regions as we originally hoped.
- c. Adam: most of the groups providing marketing in Southern VT (your chambers, downtown groups, groups like Bitown etc) are operating in survival mode with losses of funding. I've heard from just about everyone in Southern VT on this topic and I suspect a broad conversation is

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coming where we see what does a chamber look like here? Is there a different way for how we can do this together but also keep our focus on local communities.

- d. Eric: Everyone is in the same boat we are. It is not a problem specific to our region or even state. These groups rely heavily on events that are not happening this time of year. I think these conversations are important to see what it looks like working together moving forward.
- e. Gretchen: these group's budgets rely on membership. We can't ask businesses for money at this time.

VII. VTrans Signs:

- a. Marlboro, Dover, and Wilmington signage resolutions all sent in by Gretchen along with photos. VTrans responded that they would take it into consideration.
- b. Vicki: have we reached out to John Gannon and Laura Sibilia at this point? That should be the next step and then we'll go to our Senators.

VIII. Other Business:

- a. Hermitage – Discuss inviting them back to this committee
 - i. Eric: are there any updates on their organization?
 - 1. Gretchen: they do have a GM; I haven't had a formal conversation with him but have had multiple conversations with their interim board.
 - ii. Vicki: we would need to rewrite our bylaws again as we had listed them only as a Wilmington business member.
 - iii. Eric: can we ask them for a tentative representative to attend the next meeting?
 - iv. Vicki: Yes, let's extend a formal invitation

IX. Wilmington updates:

- a. Gretchen: more unfortunate news from State. We can not move forward with East Main St. sidewalk project this summer so I've had to file for an extension for the grant.
- b. Tom: we opened up the beaches as of 8am on Monday. There are no bathrooms but the beaches are open.

X. Dover updates:

- a. Vicki: 8am emergency meeting tomorrow re: mask resolution. Summer Concert Series starts Sunday in the Town Park from -4pm. Hoping people come out and are socially distanced to enjoy.
- b. Eric: I've been picking up some projects that were in progress and meeting with everyone to try and move things forward.

XI. Mount Snow updates:

- a. Tracy: we opened for scenic rides last weekend with lots of COVID procedures in place. Masks are required in buildings and lines. Golf is going well. Carts are being sanitized after each use, chairlifts once a day. Sanitizer available at the top and bottom of lift. Guests were excited to join us last weekend and more importantly excited for winter with lots of pass purchases. Locker rooms opened for first time since March for holders to collect belongings. Bullwheel open for grab n' go and there are some picnic tables. Fairways may add some picnic tables soon. We invite anyone to please share feedback if they think there are additional measures we can put in place to keep everyone safe. Employees have to enter through one entrance for prescreening daily.

XII. BDCC updates:

- a. Adam: PPP has been extended and program is getting funds out fast right now. Business resiliency calls that we've been hosting, today's is mostly featuring the legislators that have

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been designing the state program releasing Monday. 470 businesses have contacted us in the last months and we'll be sending them direct email on the grant program opening Monday. It's going to take everyone letting everyone know what to do Monday morning. Program information is up on the websites but not the application itself. We've been doing a lot of business with our microlending program. \$450,000 and we've just secured another \$450,000 from the USDA.. There's been a lot of activity in the valley from that program. 10 or less employees required, currently 0% interest for a set period of time and loans up to \$50,000 from the program. We're working to develop a Windham fund like the Arlington/Dorset/Manchester fund and looking to pair grants from that with the existing microloan program. The state has not yet announced but will be doing a CDBG-CD. This is HUD money and will come to the state who gets to re-endow. It's not part of what the legislature has been working on but a \$2 million statewide program for sole proprietors to apply for \$5,000, \$7,500 or \$10,000 grants. That info should come out late next week. It's going to be confusing for these people as the State will not include info on this next week. People won't know where to go so it's our job to help with that. As an organization we're trying to think about planning for the what ifs as other businesses have.

XIII. Chamber updates:

- a. Eric: My replacement has not yet been hired so it would be a Board member at this point to be a representative to these meetings. They're making sure there's someone there to take care of businesses. Kathy Blackadar is there Friday-Sunday in the building. This week the board was going to have a conversation with the Wilmington Works board to see if Meg Staloff can work some of her hours out of the Chamber to help.

XIV. Next meeting August 6th. Hopefully in person.

XV. Motion to adjourn by Vicki at 9:00 am, seconded by Eric.

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon Wheeler
Economist Development, Town of Dover