

Bi-Town Economic Development Committee
Meeting Minutes
via Zoom
Thursday, November 2, 2023

Members present via Zoom: Eric Durocher, Vicki Capitani, Tom Fitzgerald, Christine Howe, Brian Suhadolc, Bethaney LaClair, Adam Grinold, Bill Benneyan (8:07)

Also present via Zoom: Shannon Wheeler, Will Galway, Tim Dolan, John Redd, iPhone video only user

A recording of this meeting can be found here: <https://youtu.be/sYE-1MkpsUc>

Meeting called to order at 8:03 am by Chair Eric

- I. Public Comments: *None*
- II. Additions or changes to the agenda: *None*
- III. Approve minutes of September 7th meeting:
 - a. Motion to approve by Vicki, seconded by Bethaney. Motion approved.
- IV. Housing Committee Update:
 - a. Met last month after a month off, had some new attendees. Meeting again this month, focusing on LTR from the subcommittee recommendations. Interested developer in Wilmington for workforce housing, all hands on deck to get that moving forward.
- V. Marketing Committee Update:
 - a. 2023 Campaign Recap & 2024 Proposed Budget: [attached to these minutes]
 - b. Updated Signage Plan Presentation and Discussion: [attached to these minutes]
 - c. Looking at 11/21 to go to both Selectboards for 2024 budget, will confirm next week.
- VI. Other Business: *None*
- VII. Wilmington Update:
 - a. Tom: going into budget. Have been attending asset management meetings for water. Town Hall relocation committee working on identifying sites out of flood plain for it as part of the Town Plan. Working on RFQs for Lake Raponda dam, didn't know we owned it. State Inspection came back as poor.
- VIII. Dover Update:
 - a. Vicki: A lot going on, a lot of Economic Development items. Heading into budget as well. Getting ready for major transition at Police Department with Michelle and Randy leaving mid-December. New office manager and Chief are in place and training. Town Common well, were able to do 4-hour test for PFAS in that new well vs the 36 hour \$30,000 test. New windows at Dover Town Hall.
 - b. Eric: Held public STR meeting with subcommittee recommendations. Thought it was positive meeting, heard a lot of points from both sides of issues, general consensus that it would be helpful if we implemented some of these recommendations. Tuesday we'll have a brief discussion with the Selectboard to see if they want us to move forward with registration companies to get final information. Held public ARPA meeting, had a productive conversation and will continue this Tuesday night as well. Horace Hill trail piece will be completed by middle of next week. Hiking trails are at 70% completed with boardwalk going in in next weeks. Disc golf moving ahead as well. Really positive feedback from everyone that's been out there so far. Valley Trail project has been completed. Helping with some business transitions in town.
- IX. Hermitage Club Update:
 - a. Bill: 30 until opening, ready and anxious to go! Staffing in pretty good shape, posted some seasonal positions. Cracked the code in sharing employees with opposite season clubs. Housing continues to be a challenge.
- X. Mount Snow Update:

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- a. Opening weather dependent, ready for when the weather happens. Tested snowmaking last night. Staffing in good shape, in better shape than last year at this point. Shifting drop zone, incoming traffic will be like airport drop off. New MyEpic app, pass can be loaded on phone and scanned. Epic for Everyone program to ensure equitable access to our resorts. This year has 75 youths from National Brotherhood of Skiing program, supporting Adaptive, Choose Snow and local school programs. Working with Act250 on new master plan. Partnered with Town of Dover on Snow Lake Dam removal, Summer 2027 tentative. J1s returning but less needed this year.

XI. BDCC Update:

- a. Adam: business plan competition in October completed with assistance from the Chamber, there was a finalist from the Valley. Seeing businesses launched or growing from it. Seeing a lot of lifestyle businesses apply but not large scale, attracting people to the area. Running Jump On Board program with over 30 participants, with how to engage in your community. Welcoming communities program has an additional 100 people on SIT campus primarily from Afghanistan and Congo. Seeing a lot higher caliber of professional training people this round, civil and mechanical engineers. Challenge is understanding they need updated credentialing. Lots of work to house them off SIT campus. Have retained a lot of original people which we didn't expect. 250 people now in Windham/Bennington County that weren't here before. That's a 1% uptick in population in Brattleboro for a population that's been flatlined for 50+ years. State CEDS priority project list rankings completed, ACCD use that list for funding allocation. Received a million dollar grant from federal department of labor for workforce development in the public school system and those that did not move onto college but are in area. Focused on manufacturing, trades, and healthcare.

XII. Moover Update:

- a. Geared up for Winter routes and projects. Stratton starts 11/13. Mount Snow on Thanksgiving weekend, expecting a learning curve with Drop Zone changes. In much better staffing shape than last year. DMV staffing a big challenge for us with CDLs. Brattleboro routes are very well ridden right now with refugees, looking into bringing on as a driver. Have many new faces in seasonal drivers.

XIII. Chamber Update:

- a. Bethaney: Wrapped 2023 event season with Wine & Harvest, over 2,300 for Soup Stroll and Grand Tasting. A very successful event and have some great feedback moving forward. 11/8 mixer at Inn at Quail Run. Annual Gala December 7th at Farm Road Estate with invitations going out soon. Nominations needed for membership awards. Working with VT Department of Tourism on their Tourism Summit May 8-10 at Mount Snow. Hosting a mixer there. VT Chamber of Commerce annual publication has chosen Deerfield Valley to do their feature on. Our hard work seems to be paying off. Membership renewal process happening, a dozen new businesses joined already. 2024 event schedule out soon. A reminder to use the job board on our site. Visitors Center has been very busy.

XIV. Motion to adjourn by Christine, seconded by Bill at 9:14 am

Next meeting January 4th

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon Wheeler
Economic Development, Town of Dover