

Bi-Town Economic Development Committee
Meeting Minutes
via Zoom & Deerfield Valley Rescue
Thursday, May 7, 2026

Members present: Gretchen Havreluk, Vicki Capitani, Heidi Taylor, Christine Howe

Members present via Zoom: Shannon Wheeler, Pam Greene, Adam Grinold, Christine Howe, Lea Gabrielle Potts (8:43)

Also present via Zoom: Tim Dolan, Sam Kondracki

A recording of this meeting can be found here: https://youtu.be/UMw_Z6nUbv0

Meeting called to order at 8:31 am by Chair Gretchen

- I. Public Comments: *None*
- II. Additions or changes to the agenda: *None*
- III. Approve minutes of March 5th meeting:
 - a. Motion to approve by Heidi, second by Vicki. Motion approved (Christine abstained)
- IV. Housing Committee Update:
 - a. Shannon: Reached out just yesterday to the group to try and restart - Thursday May 21 at 2pm. Waiting for clarifications on open meeting law requirements for this group and also the marketing committee.
- V. Marketing Committee Update:
 - a. Presentation of 3-Year Strategic Plan: [attached] plan on bringing to Selectboards later this month.
 - b. Adam shared info on Brattleboro area next gen marketing talks.
- VI. Economic Data Reporting:
 - a. Shannon: Received notice last night so haven't had a chance to update Board or docs; formatting is off but if these numbers are correct, received \$467,956.29 for the period of February 4 to May 3 which is up 15% from last year's payment.
 - b. Gretchen will update and send out after deciphering the data.
- VII. Other Business:
 - a. July Meeting: after short discussion it was decided to cancel July meeting, next meeting will be September 3.
 - b. Act 181 Discussion:
 - i. Gretchen: some Towns have discussed as Towns and sent letters. WRC came to Wilmington's meeting this week. Meeting in Brattleboro tonight at former Austine school.
 - ii. Adam shared some updates on yesterday's legislative moves repealing Tier 3 and Road Rule. [Summary he referenced emailed to committee].
- VIII. Wilmington Update:
 - a. Gretchen: Waters Excavation hired for East Main St sidewalk and sewer project, starting in two weeks with a 15 week timeline. Hoot, Toot, & Whistle trail opening is May 23 at 1pm. Almost to completion of that contract, additional grant will be needed to fully finish work that needs to be done. Working with Sam to meet with vacant building owners to connect with business plan competition and historic tax credits. Planning commission halfway through town plan rewrite, adding a new arts and culture section. Veterans Park construction starting in next month. Scott and I traveling to Barre to justify banners.
- IX. Dover Update:

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- a. Vicki: Very close to reappraisal notices being sent out, NEMC will offer 5 days of meeting slots for property owners where adjustments can be made on spot. Then lots of BCA meetings dealing with grievances. Planning commission still working on rewrite of zoning bylaws.
- b. Shannon: DOIT program application window is open through May 31. Continuing to work on town website updates, STR program renewals and registrations, participating in panel at the VT Planners Association meeting next week about our program. Gordon has been hard at work on projects in Horace Hill and Dover Town Forest. Met with new Snow Mountain Market owner, hoping to be open for 4th of July. Returned to regular meetings with Mount Snow GM.

X. Hermitage Club Update: *None in attendance*

XI. Mount Snow Update:

- a. Lea: shared a recap of season. Golf course is opening on May 15th and mountain biking lifts June 20th. Snow Lake Dam removal project in permitting phase with hopes to start drawing down in 2026.

XII. BDCC Update:

- a. Adam: census data shows shifting economic indicators for Dover, making it eligible for programs like New Market Tax Credits and potentially an opportunity zone. Southern Vermont Economy Summit at Mount Snow next week. Pursuing a healthcare sector pre-apprenticeship program for various roles.

XIII. Moover Update:

- a. Christine: Winter ridership up 4% despite route cuts. Employee retention is improving, with 75% expected to return next season. State funding for transportation is tight. Randy has been giving presentations on history of building. Fireworks are next big event.

XIV. Chamber Update:

- a. Pam: Chili and Beer Stroll with about 400 participants and great weather. Golf tournament on June 15 with great sponsorships, Fireworks coming July 2nd with July 10th raindate. Blueberry festival and wine and harvest coming along. Working on bringing back banner across route 9 for events.

XV. Wilmington Works:

- a. New business plan competition opens May 18th with \$40,000 prize. First ever restaurant week will run for nine days starting June 19th. Strolls on May 23rd, June 19th and July 18th and block party August 8th. A parking analysis for downtown is being conducted with Windham Regional Commission.

XVI. Motion to adjourn by Heidi, seconded by Christine at 9:26 am.

Next meeting September 3rd

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon Wheeler
Economic Development, Town of Dover

Bi-Town Marketing 3-Year Strategic Plan 2027-2029



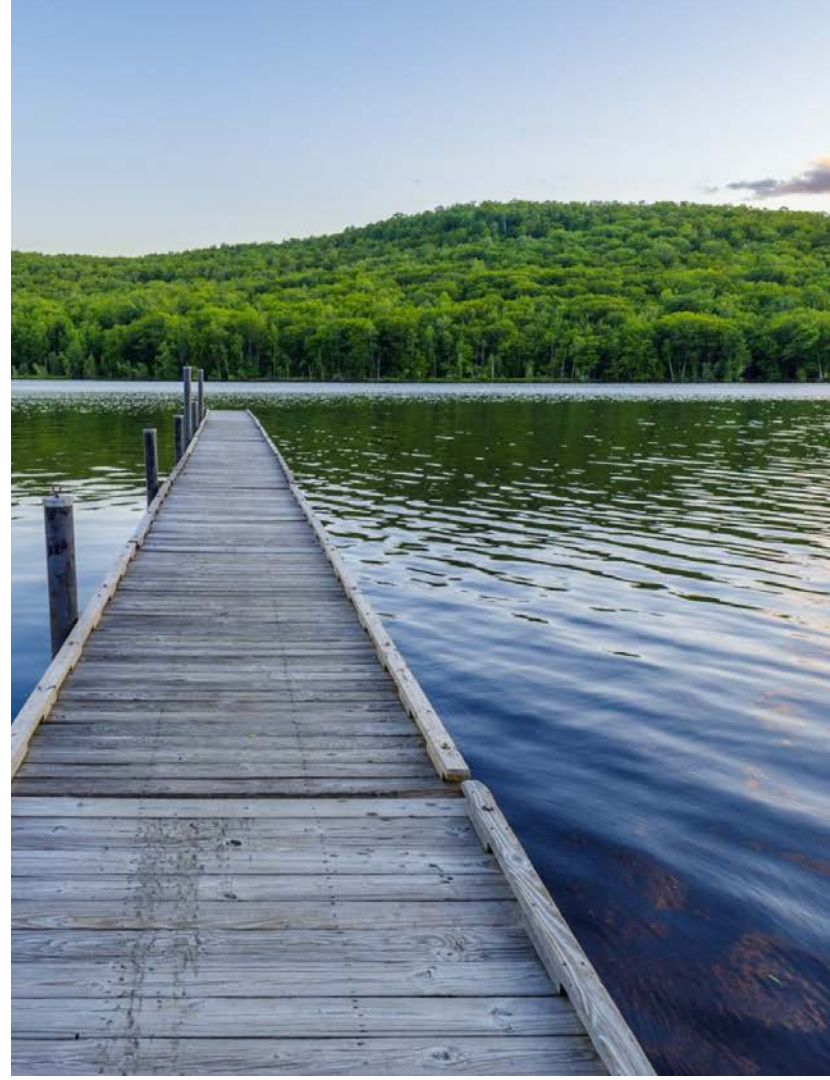
SOUTHERN VERMONT
DEERFIELD VALLEY

The Strategy: Defining the Deerfield Valley

The following Vision Statement is the cornerstone of our strategic efforts. Building on the success of our initial strategic phase, we reaffirm this vision as the enduring bedrock of our regional identity, serving as a unified commitment that continues to align our stakeholders and guide the Deerfield Valley toward its future.

Vision Statement

"Southern Vermont Deerfield Valley is rooted in the grandeur of the Green Mountains and steeped in Vermont culture and history. It offers authentic New England hospitality experiences, a relaxed lifestyle, and abundant outdoor experiences—all of which inspire visitors to relax, appreciate, and engage."





Strategic Focus on Summer and Shoulder Season Growth

To capitalize on our region's untapped potential, we are prioritizing our advertising budget toward driving growth in the summer and shoulder seasons. While winter remains a cornerstone of our identity, our strategic focus shifts toward diversifying our seasonal appeal to ensure a more resilient year-round economy. By integrating our winter positioning primarily through the website, paid search, and organic social channels, we maintain our reputation as a premier cold-weather destination while focusing our proactive investments on attracting visitors during the warmer months. This balanced approach ensures year-round credibility while aggressively pursuing the significant growth opportunities found outside the traditional ski season.



WHERE
VERMONTING
BEGINS

SWIPE UP
TO EXPLORE

The Brand Foundation: Continuity and Momentum

Our strategic positioning remains anchored in our identity as the "**Foothold of the Green Mountains**," a designation that perfectly captures our geographic advantage and the gateway experience we provide. Centered on this position is our established tagline, "**Where Vermonting Begins.**" We have made the data-driven decision to carry this tagline into the next cycle due to its proven resonance in our recent advertising campaigns and the hope for recall among our target audiences.

In the crowded landscape of destination marketing, continuity is our greatest asset; by maintaining this consistent voice, we reinforce our market presence and build upon the brand equity already established. Continuing with this successful messaging allows us to deepen our connection with visitors, ensuring that Southern Vermont Deerfield Valley remains the definitive starting point for the authentic Vermont experience.

Strategic Anchors: Driving Momentum and Market Impact

Our core strategic objectives are designed to transform the Southern Vermont Deerfield Valley from a regional hidden gem into a premier, top-of-mind destination. To achieve this, we are committed to the following pillars of growth:

- **Elevating Regional Recognition:** We will continue to sharpen our identity, intentionally building the momentum and recognition necessary to establish the Deerfield Valley as the preeminent destination for an authentic Southern Vermont experience.
- **Optimizing the Traveler Journey:** By building consistent, high-quality consumer touchpoints we ensure a seamless experience at every stage of the travel lifecycle.
- **Targeted Market Expansion:** Our efforts will focus on driving incremental visitation by pursuing growth within our priority feeder markets, capturing new audiences who align with our brand values.
- **Empowering Local Ambassadors:** We recognize that our greatest strength lies in our community; we aim to engage local stakeholders as active destination ambassadors who embody and share our story.
- **Data-Driven Excellence:** Underpinning all these efforts is a commitment to implementing measurable, data-informed decision-making, ensuring every dollar spent is optimized for maximum regional impact.

Strategic Audiences

To maximize our marketing efficiency, we are doubling down on the visitor segments that offer the highest return on investment while expanding into high-potential secondary markets. Our strategy is built on a "Continuity and Growth" model:

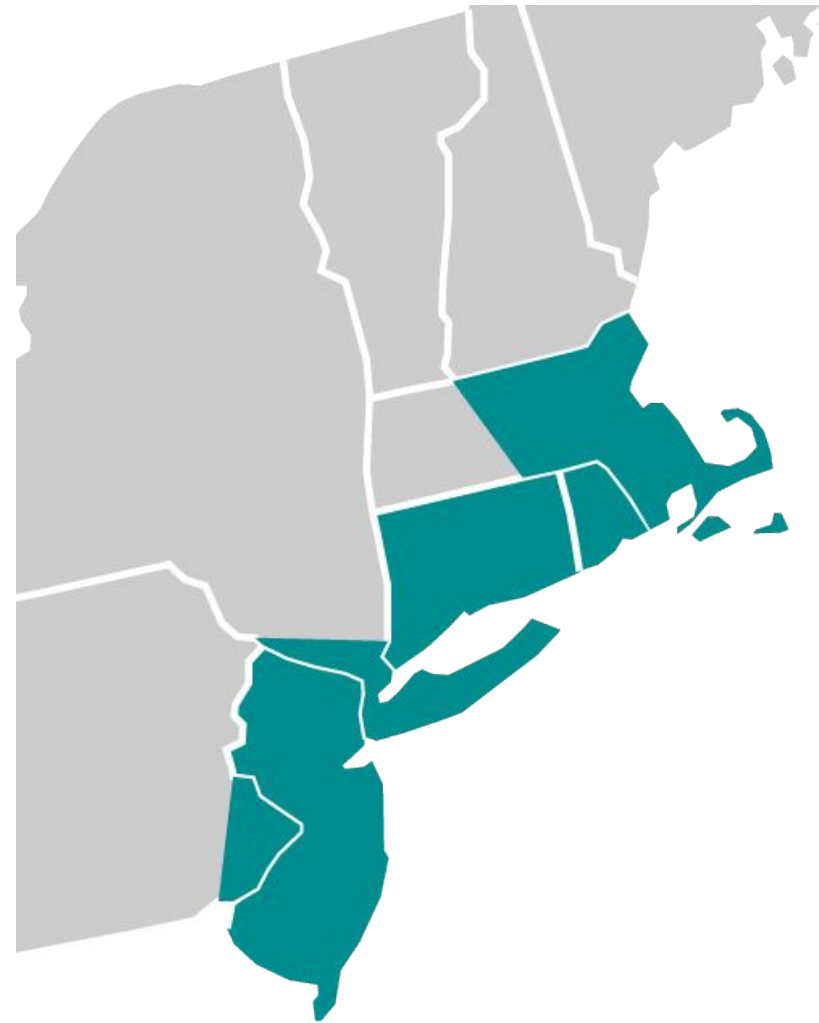
- **Primary Leisure Audiences:** We remain committed to our core demographic, "Three Generations and a Dog," celebrating the multi-generational family travel that is a hallmark of the Valley. Additionally, we have streamlined our focus by combining "The Shippies" and "The Adventurers" into a single, high-energy Young Adult audience, allowing us to speak more effectively to the next generation of explorers.
- **Secondary Growth Audiences:** To bolster midweek and off-peak occupancy, we are intensifying our outreach to Retirees with Flexible Travel Schedules, who possess the freedom to enjoy the region when it is quietest.
- **Group & Event Business:** We are positioning the Valley as a premier boutique host for Weddings & Small Events, as well as Group Retreats & Meetings, tapping into the growing demand for intimate, nature-focused gatherings that can drive significant local economic impact.

By refining these profiles, we ensure our messaging resonates deeply with those most likely to choose the Deerfield Valley for their next escape.



Precision Growth: Aligning with Priority Feeder Markets

Our geographic strategy capitalizes on our prime location as the gateway to Vermont, specifically targeting the high-yield "Drive Market" within the Northeast corridor. By focusing on major metropolitan hubs south of us—such as New York City, Boston, Providence, Philadelphia, and Hartford—we position the Deerfield Valley as the first and most accessible point of entry into the Green Mountain State. For those seeking to escape the intensity of the city for the serenity of the mountains, we are not just a destination, but the immediate fulfillment of the Vermont promise. By emphasizing our role as the place "Where Vermonting Begins," we highlight that the peaceful, authentic experience these urban travelers crave is only a short day's drive away, making us the most convenient and compelling choice for a New England retreat.





Yearly Strategic Framework

Primary Focus

- Paid media activation
- Brand awareness in feeder markets
- Social amplification and earned media

Key Initiatives

- Digital Advertising on Meta and at least one additional channel for 6 months per year
- Paid search strategy to span entire calendar year
- Maintain consistent organic Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok presence
- Expand influencer relationships
- Capture high-quality photography and video to continue building database of authentic Deerfield Valley assets
- Develop engaging tourism targeted emails
- Stakeholder engagement projects
- Track baseline KPIs and continue looking for new opportunities to measure success

Primary Key Performance Indicators (KPI)

To ensure our marketing efforts translate into tangible results, we will employ a rigorous, data-driven approach to track success through the following **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)**:

- **Digital Presence & Intent:** We will monitor **website traffic, engagement, and time on site** to gauge interest, alongside **social media growth and engagement** to measure brand resonance.
- **Email opt-ins** will serve as a primary metric for capturing high-intent leads and building a loyal visitor database.
- **Economic Impact & Market Intelligence:** Success will be benchmarked against **Rooms & Meals Tax** collections and **AirDNA data**, providing a view of lodging performance and the regional economic contribution.
- **Physical Momentum:** Looking toward the future, we are incorporating **footfall capture for FY28** to gain deeper insights into actual visitor movement and density within the Valley.

By aligning these metrics with our strategic goals, we can make real-time optimizations, ensuring every investment strengthens our position as Southern Vermont's preeminent destination.



WHERE
VERMONTING
BEGINS



SOUTHERN VERMONT
DEERFIELD VALLEY

VISIT
TODAY

Amplifying the Valley: Our Roadmap for Market Penetration

Our media strategy is built on a full-funnel approach designed to capture interest and drive action, with our website serving as the primary conversion hub. We will utilize Paid Search (**Google Ads**) to capture high-intent travelers actively searching for Vermont escapes, while Paid Social (**Meta**) and **Programmatic Display** will build brand awareness and keep the Deerfield Valley top-of-mind through visually compelling storytelling. To add a layer of authentic third-party validation, we will integrate **Influencer Marketing**, leveraging trusted voices to showcase the "Vermonting" lifestyle to new audiences.

Once interest is captured, **Email Marketing** will act as our critical tool for retention and nurturing, transforming first-time lookers into repeat visitors through personalized, value-driven communication. This integrated ecosystem ensures that we are not just reaching potential visitors, but guiding them seamlessly from discovery to arrival.

WHERE
VERMONTING
BEGINS



SOUTHERN VERMONT
DEERFIELD VALLEY

VISIT
TODAY

Financial Roadmap: Strategic Investment Projections (2027–2029)

To ensure sustained growth and the ability to build upon our marketing momentum, our proposed financial roadmap includes a steady **3% annual increase** across the next three years. This incremental scaling allows us to stay competitive in the Northeast market and account for rising media costs while expanding our reach. For **Year 1 (2027)**, we have projected a budget of **\$253,000**, followed by **\$260,000 in Year 2 (2028)**, and reaching **\$268,000 by Year 3 (2029)**. Please note that these figures serve as strategic projections for long-term planning; formal budget requests will be submitted each fall for the upcoming calendar year to ensure our funding remains aligned with current economic conditions and regional priorities.

