

Whitingham Economic Development Group

Whitingham Municipal Center, Selectboard Office, Jacksonville, VT 05342

Minutes of Thursday, February 28, 2019

Attendees: EDG Members: Gretchen Havreluk, Phil Edelstein, and Jenepher Burnell. Gig Zboray, Selectboard Office Administrator.

Call to Order. Additions or Changes to Agenda

Gretchen called the meeting to order at 6:06PM. There were no additions or changes to the agenda.

Approve Minutes of September 27, 2018:

A motion to approve the Minutes of September 27, 2018 as written, was made by Phil Edelstein, seconded by Jenepher Burnell, all in favor.

Bills to Pay:

We received invoices from the Chamber of Commerce for annual dues of \$295, they distribute our Historic Brochure and other flyers and from the VCDA (Vermont Community Development Association) they provide conferences around community development, their dues are \$50. **A motion was made by Phil Edelstein to pay the VCDA, seconded by Jenepher Burnell, all in favor.** At a prior meeting there was discussion of supporting the Chamber of Commerce and what might things look like without that organization. The Chamber of Commerce membership dues were paid in December 2018. [post meeting note: Eric of the Chamber said he would be happy to come tell us what all the membership benefits are.]

Budget Request:

Jenepher questioned who would read the article requesting funds for EDG? Gretchen agreed to read it. Sherry Adams will likely ask for more information about the organization, Gretchen should be prepared to answer questions. We are working on redevelopment of the sidewalks, the entrance to the Municipal Center, etc. there is an extensive list in the town report.

Website Update:

An email was sent out to all the local businesses on February 14th announcing the website. We had about 3 responses from people saying the site looked good and asking Gig to make minor adjustment to their business listing.

Phil questioned how to we reach out to the universe for people to move here. Gretchen responded that the State has a program called “stay to stay”, which is aimed to draw people in to the state. She suggested trying a mini event in a similar fashion; people flew in from Florida and California, much further away than she expected. The State of Vermont advertises this event, we could use the state’s advertising, we would probably have to pay for it.

Phil questioned how do we get a video on YouTube or something that goes viral to get people interested in moving to Whitingham? The ByTown Committee has a marketing campaign going on, Gretchen says we can do that, it will also cost money. Gretchen will put this marketing topic on the next agenda.

Business listings with providing businesses with a link to the Whitingham website:

Most businesses that are listed have their website linked on the town site, now we should ask them to link our website on their site. A new email to be drafted to request this. Phil will work on the next email (he will look at the one sent February 14th) but will say something along the lines of “please add a link on your website to the Towns website if you think it is appropriate”. Phil mentioned that we could add information about the new cell tower in the next email. Jenepher questioned when MapleFest was, it will be the weekend on March 22, 23, 24. We will wait until we have more news before sending a second email to local businesses.

Phil mentioned that the picture on the home page should change with the seasons. Gig agreed but would like the picture on the home page to still be of the logo/lake site.

Infrastructure, Sidewalk & Streetscape: for a CDBG planning grant the deadline is April 16th, it requires a 25% match. Those same grants are issued quarterly so we could wait for next quarter to apply. In November a VTrans Alternative grant that requires a 50% match usually becomes available for application. We need to get a scoping study done first then go for implementation. Usually a scoping study like that is about \$40,000 and would outline the priority areas to start working on. They would also look at traffic calming measures, lighting, surfacing, safety, etc. Gretchen will reach out to CDBG to see if this project would be a good fit for their grants. Phil’s wife Ali would be willing to write the grant.

Phil noted that Consolidated Communications (current phone company) did add more internet lines out in south Whitingham (Burrington Hill area). It adds about 100 addresses.

Vermont Arts Council Grant: we submitted a letter of intent, we were not invited to apply for the grant. Jen asked if there was a reason why we didn’t win? Is there some way to get on their radar in the future?

Networking Event:

Critique: Phil thinks it was great, it was really a “meet and greet”, now its time to take it to the next step and he is not sure what the next step is. The participants thought it was wonderful. A few people asked Gretchen about website development or bookkeeping, she suggested we could have someone come out and speak on those topics. Phil feels that the next event should have room for people to sit down, perhaps at Riggs Distler’s conference room, and have a real discussion about some or one of the topics, as well as the networking.

Potential EDG Members:

Gretchen noted that EDG needs more members, she will bring it up at town meeting. Gig will create a little postcard size piece of paper saying EDG members needed.

Review Action Items

Marketing discussion at next meeting

Ask local businesses to include a link to the town website on their website

Gretchen contact CDBG to see if our scoping study is a good fit for their grant program

Gig to ask Vermont Arts Council why we didn't win the opportunity to apply for a grant

Gig to create a postcard size piece of paper asking folks to join EDG.

Next meeting will be March 28th at 6pm.

Meeting adjourned at 7:23pm.

Respectfully submitted,

~Gig Zboray