

Whitingham Economic Development Group

Whitingham Municipal Center, Selectboard Office, Jacksonville, VT 05342

Minutes of Thursday, April 25, 2019

Attendees: EDG Members: Gretchen Havreluk, Kyle Frey and Jenepher Burnell. Gig Zboray, Selectboard Office Administrator. Residents: Wayne Wood, Seth Boyd, Scott Reed and Wayne Corse. Kristine Sweeter, Librarian. Jim Dassatti, Living History Association.

Call to Order. Additions or Changes to Agenda

Gretchen called the meeting to order at 6:04PM. There was a change in the agenda (#9 moved to item #3). Gretchen introduced Seth Boyd as a potential member of the Whitingham Economic Development Group.

Living History Museum – Jim Dassatti came to the table to explain his plans for a “self-guided historical driving tour of the Deerfield Valley”. He petitioned the town for funding at Town Meeting 2019 and was voted down. He explained this is an economic development project to get visitors moving up and down the valley. Gretchen questioned what he envisioned for Whitingham’s kiosk. He said the obvious idea is something on the Town Common (Town Hill) and probably about Brigham Young. Gig noted that there already are plaques at Town Hill about Brigham Young and town history. Gig questioned if he thought about installing a kiosk at the dam with the history of building the dam. Yes, he has contacted Great River Hydro about it.

Gretchen asked about the timeline for this project. Jim is trying to get the towns (Dover, Wilmington and Whitingham; Readsboro voted to fund the project at Town Meeting 2019) to commit to a certain amount of money to use as matching funds to apply for grants. He is not looking for installation of signs until 2020.

Jim is having a difficult time getting the Whitingham Historical Society involved, he has tried several times to schedule a meeting with the president. He asked EDG members if they had could offer him any names of Society members that he can try to contact.

Gretchen asked what the \$4,000 would be used for. Jim answered that most of the funds would go towards the kiosk, they cost about \$1,500 each. He would be asking for funds probably for at least two years.

Networking Event – Collaborate with Library As part of the Library’s 3 year strategic plan they are planning to offer services (workshops and programs) to businesses. Today Kristine attended a conference called “Grow with Google” on how to use a website, how to use Google analytics, and building a website. She is waiting to move forward and complete each training before she begins teaching the workshops. She is hoping to do one course

per week and to be done by July and start the workshops in the fall. The workshops would be held in the main hall of the Municipal Center.

Gretchen indicated that EDG would like to collaborate with the library on this project with possibly some funding and noted that EDG has a business email list. Kristine talked about the possibility of having Chromebooks available but more likely the businesses would have to bring their own laptops.

Approve Minutes of March 28, 2019: A motion was made by Kyle Frey to approve the Minutes of the March 28, 2019 meeting, seconded by Jen Burnell, all in favor.

Blueberry Festival – Car Show, Organizer: Mike Mandracia is interested in organizing a car show but he is not available on August 2nd for the event. He said that he and his friends, Mike Eldred and Alan Hadley will get it done. Kyle tried by phone and email to reach Kristen Breeden to organize the Blueberry Events in Jacksonville (mini Farmers Market, get the store involved, maybe a kid's event -chalk art, etc.) Perhaps Todd Wahlstrom would be willing to organize something, perhaps Adam Buursma could pull out his pizza oven.

There was discussion of emailing the local businesses and tell them what we are looking for and ask for volunteers.

The Farmers Market should be in the Eames Park and there might be room for only 6 vendors. Kyle suggested people want music and to be fed. Vendors should include vegetables and honey, etc.

Seth noted that he likes the idea of the village park but he doesn't feel it wouldn't be fair to limit it to only 6 vendors if more wanted to participate. It could be stretched out to the lot across from the church.

Jen will draft an email and Gretchen will review it before it is sent out. We need one lead person or co-chairs to bring it all together.

Map for Kiosk:

Gig spoke with Jeff Nugent of WRC and he has our map on his to-do list and we are waiting for him to print it.

Website Review:

The only thing that Jen found was that the picture on the home page is great, but perhaps it should be skinnier because you have to scroll down to see it.

Kyle feels we achieved the goal of updating the website, now is the time to grab the potential and utilize what is in there. He will type a list of the things that he feels need tweeking. He thinks that businesses should be able to advertise on the site, paying a small fee.

Whitingham website on business websites initiative - Phil: As far as EDG members know this was not done yet, Jen will add it to the email that she is drafting.

Infrastructure Sidewalk & Streetscape – Update on Selectboard Meeting discussion

Gretchen met with the Selectboard last night. There was discussion on applying for a planning grant for a scoping study to start replacing the sidewalks in town, investigate traffic calming, lighting and crosswalks. A few of the Selectboard members expressed their interest in attending an electric company meeting to discuss sidewalks with them. The electric company does not have enough money to provide matching funds for grants. The next electric meeting is May 14, 2019. Seth noted it would be important to also have a plan to maintain the sidewalks once this project moves forward.

Review Action Items

Gig tell Janet Boyd that we will participate in the Blueberry Festival.

Jen will ask the Jacksonville Blues Band to play.

Jen will draft an email to be sent soon

Kyle will type up his notes on the website.

Jacksonville Electric Meeting is May 14, 2019.

Jen will reach out to Stella in an effort to connect her with Jim.

Find different historic topics for Jim's kiosk(s)

Gig to ask the Selectboard to appoint Seth Boyd to the EDG.

Finalize organization of the Blueberry Event.

Review Jim Dassati's proposal and discuss at next meeting

Other Business: Seth Boyd expressed his interest in including the school in the Economic Development process, they are the largest employer and bring the most people to town every day. We need to figure out how to make the connections and how to support the school. Ask if our blurb on the website if what the school wants to say.

Kyle questioned what jobs there are for kids in this area? When he was young, they worked doing car washes, painting, cleaning things, etc. Seth responded that he thinks kids do have summer jobs but there might be more opportunity. A graduation requirement is that the students have 40 hours of community service.

Discussion ensued around community service, volunteerism, and how to get people involved. It is a big problem for clubs, boards and committees.

Next meeting will be May 23, 2019 at 6pm.

Meeting adjourned at 7:44pm.

Respectfully submitted,
~Gig Zboray