



Whitingham Economic Development Group

Via Zoom

Minutes of Thursday, May 28, 2020

Attendees: EDG Members: Gretchen Havreluk, Chair; Phil Edelstein, Seth Boyd and Carrie Northrup, members. Gig Zboray, Selectboard Office Administrator.

Call to Order. Additions or Changes to Agenda

Gretchen called the meeting to order at 6:19pm.

Approve Minutes of March 5, 2020 meeting:

A motion was made by Phil Edelstein to approve the Minutes of March 5, 2020 as written, seconded by Gretchen Havreluk, all in favor.

Resignation letter from Jenepher Burnell

Jenepher Burnell submitted a letter of resignation to the Economic Development Group. Gretchen suggested inviting prior members back (Adam Buursma, Todd Wahlstrom) she will call them. EDG members will think of residents to invite to join.

US Census 2020 Update

Gretchen noticed that a Census person is going door to door in the area. Gig has 25 Census water bottles and will be getting 100 reusable bags; she thought the library could hand out bags and remind people to participate. Other EDG members will think of ways to spread the word. When an update is sent to Gig, she will share it with EDG members.

Gig will call Pam to ask if a notice of the importance of the Census can be sent out with bills.

Fire Department/EMS – Update from previous meeting

Seth spoke with the school about offering an EMS class at the school. With COVID-19 we are at a bit of a standstill with this topic. Seth and EDG will follow up when things have returned closer to “normal”.

School Leadership Support – invite to a meeting

The school is so swamped in trying to figure out all aspects of schooling during a worldwide pandemic. This too will be tabled until after the pandemic. Seth will send an email to Anna the Twin Valley Middle/High School Principal offering our support and if in need of resources to assist we are willing to advocate for them. Seth mentioned that there is a lot of opportunity here with hands on training/learning, but need to hold off for now.

Chamber Update-Rewrite Whitingham description for the Deerfield Valley Real Estate Magazine

Carrie was able to work on the rewrite, she will send out via Google Docs to EDG members shortly.

Connectivity Update

Phil provided an update about a free wi-fi hotspot and cell service availability at Town Hill. VTel intends to install the equipment on a pole near the picnic shelter which should not interfere with the Mutual Aid antennas already at Town Hill. Gretchen questioned how this will be paid? VTel is providing the equipment for free and the service will be free during the pandemic. Gig expressed her concern about charging forward with this, there seems to be no contract, VTel will be earning fees from roaming charges, etc. Phil and Seth indicated that the project should move forward one step at a time.

The Deerfield Valley CUD is moving forward. They have a website (www.dvfiber.org) with lots of information. The Whitingham Broadband Committee has committed to the CUD rather than going it alone.

List of activities to do in and around Whitingham for website

There is a list on the town website under "our town" of Whitingham things to do. We discussed broadening the list to include surrounding areas. This list is from the prior meeting.

Southern Vermont Natural History Museum
Zoar Outdoor now owned by Berkshire East
EZ Riders Snowmobiling
Clark Art Institute
Marlboro Music Festival
MassMoca
Bennington Museum
Historic Deerfield
Some music festival in Greenfield
Mount Greylock in North Adams
Poet's Seat Tower in Greenfield, lots of hiking trails
Molly Stark state park
Kringle and Yankee Candle companies

New: Shelburne Falls, Bridge of Flowers, North Hampton, horseback riding (Flames in Wilmington), Keene for shopping. Seth noted that with the pandemic some of the items on the list are not appropriate at this time. Now it's more about doing things that are not crowded with people.

Gretchen noted the bike tour flyer should be posted on the town website under Visit Us-See & Do. Carrie suggested changing the label of "Beautiful Places" or list how to find the places that are photographed.

Gretchen would like a link to the Hungry Lion Bike Tour on the website, under See & Do. Gig suggested we wait until we know if the tour will happen in 2020.

Gretchen suggested we might want another tab under See & Do for the nearby places, Gig suggested just having two postings on the See & Do page one with things to do in Whitingham and one for things to do nearby.

Seth noted that there is an opportunity to capture the folks from out-of-state who are looking to buy in a rural area due to the pandemic.

Gretchen will speak with Phil (he had to exit the meeting early). He was going to talk to his niece, possibly about social media marketing.

Review Action Items:

Gretchen will reach out to Adam and Todd about joining EDG. Everyone think of others who might be interested in joining.

Gig talk to Pam at Jville Electric about Census notices.

EDG members should encourage residents to answer the Census.

Carrie will share her draft write up for the real estate magazines

Gig will create two posts for things to do in Whitingham and nearby

Gig will add the bike tour flyer to the website

Seth will work on updating the school information for the website

Seth will reach out to the school to let them know we are offering support in whatever way we can

Gretchen will contact Phil about social media advertising

Next meeting: Thursday, June 25 at 5pm (new time). Annual Reorganization should be on the agenda.

Adjourn

Gretchen adjourned the meeting at 7:19pm.

Respectfully submitted,

~Gig Zboray

FUTURE MEETING TOPICS:

April 2020 (no meeting in April – now June)

Annual Reorganization

Consider joining the Bi-Town group

Determine best way to advertise to the tour buses that frequent Town Hill and Hogback Mtn.

Photograph locals at their place of business for social media/marketing

Record brief interviews with local workers for social media/marketing

Encourage the creation of new age/marketing/social media committee

Encourage students to join either the WEDG or the proposed media/marketing committee

Invite students to help create videos, take photos

Invite students to join the proposed marketing/social media committee

Advertise across the web

Ask Marli for professional help/guidance

Ask Patience Merriman to create short videos

Marketing to encourage families to move to town/connectivity needs

May 2020 (did not discuss in May – now July)

Expand the list of resources for our businesses

Marketing of local businesses

Figure out how to support a declining business

Figure out how to support Briggs with sale or transition of building