

UNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
May 4th, 2020 Minutes
REMOTE

Note: Decisions and commitments made in ***bold italic***.

Present: Ellen B., Najean S. Jean B. Tony A. Kari H

Unexcused:

Excused:

Guests: Penny Sampson, Valerie Tweedie, Jon Wadick, Zoey Bond

*the meeting was held remotely, some members were not in attendance for the whole time due to technical difficulties, etc. The EDC is currently without a chair, Jean Bourg presided over the meeting today.

ITEM 1: INTRODUCTIONS OF NEW MEMBERS AND GUESTS

Guests- Valerie T. (on behalf of UBx), Jon and Zoey (from AdAstra Directive)

ITEM 2: REVIEW AND APPROVE PREVIOUS MONTHS MINUTES

_____ moves to accept the March 2nd 2020 minutes as presented, _____ 2nds the motion. The motion passes unanimously.

ITEM 3: REVIEW ANY GRANTS

Update on FOLW grant from 2019: FLOW was granted money for the purposes of water quality monitoring. Some but not all of those funds were used to pay a Unity College student to aid in collecting and processing samples in conjunction with Kevin Spigel, Jim Killarney, and colleagues and their Maine Space Consortium grant. FOLW had asked if the remaining funds could be used to fund future water quality monitoring, and this was acceptable to the EDC (see minutes, Feb 2020). However, with the COVID 19 situation, FOLW feels it would be easier to monitor water quality with data loggers. FOLW has purchased and placed several buoys. Kevin and Jim from Unity College can provide two temperature sensors to attach to these buoys. They also have access to a dissolved oxygen meter which needs repair. FOLW would like to use their grant funds to repair the DO meter and possible purchase a second one. EDC was generally favorable but asked FOLW to provide a budget for review.

Two grant requests were received that had similar goals. AdAstra Directive and UBx both requested funds to update a map of Unity listing all local businesses. AdAstra requested 2,100\$ for the printing and delivery to various outlets of 4000 maps UBx requested 1500\$ (for a project expected to cost 5000\$)to cover printing costs. Both projects envision a map showing Unity businesses in a tri-fold, 6 panel format to market local businesses.

AdAstra's pitch is that they have been working on this project for a while. They have access to the original Unity business map from 2016, they have developed a comprehensive list of businesses in the Unity area (96+), access to and knowledge of software and graphic design to quickly turn around a professional looking map, and they already have connections for distribution throughout Waldo county.

Jon and Zoey from AdAstra responded to questions from the EDC and Selectmen. They said they could have maps printing by mid-June. Printing for 4000 maps was quoted at 2000\$. Standard procedure for graphic design is that an artist owns the work unless there is a specific reason and disclaimer in the contract. They also plan to support the production of the map by selling advertising space on the tri-fold. Small ads would cost 150\$ for appearing on the initial print run of 4000 maps. They suggest that it would be beneficial to include businesses in surrounding towns on the map but would be fine focusing on Unity businesses only since the support would be coming from Unity.

EDC and Selectmen concerns about this project center around investing in a project that the town does not have ownership of or ability to edit, that would have a defined endpoint. The EDC discussed some ways to reduce these concerns by ensuring that all interested parties (e.g., EDC, UBx) would have the opportunity to review and request additions to the map prior to printing, and by adding a stipulation in a contract that the town would own the map when complete (or access to files that could be edited).

UBx's pitch is that they would produce a map that would be easily editable and would be "owned" by UBx (that is, by local businesses themselves). They will rely partially on donated time and services from graphic designers and printers so the project would be economical. It would also have no end point - more maps could be printed as needed for just the cost of printing. They envisioned an initial print run of 5000 maps.

The concerns about this project focused on the time to completion. This project requires a new design to build a map from scratch and would depend on volunteer time, and there is no specific estimated date by which it would be ready. Also, there were no estimates for the cost of items such as printing.

Najean moved to table this discussion to a later meeting but there was no second for the motion.

Ellen suggested that both maps, while similar, seemed to serve different purposes and we could consider supporting both projects. Kari noted that the most effective use of TIF funds is supporting and marketing local businesses.

Jean moved the motion to "Approve the Marketing grant for the AdAstra project, contingent upon the signing of a contract that lets the town "own" the map (or access to

files that can be edited). Ellen seconded the motion. The motion passed with 3 ayes, 1 nay, and 1 abstention.

Jean also moved to fund the UBx Marketing grant, subject to them providing quotes for printing and similar costs. _____ seconded the motion. The motion passed with 4 ayes, 0 nays, and 1 abstention.

The recommendations will be passed to the Town Selectmen who have ultimate approval on TIF funding use.

ITEM 4: Ad vouchers

AdAstra also proposed an idea to support local businesses by providing businesses with a voucher to purchase advertising. The idea was that they could purchase advertising on the business map (see grant). The EDC asked questions of AdAstra to clarify their idea, but also of each other to expand the idea. An amount of 150\$ was suggested because it is the minimum cost for an ad on AdAstra's proposed business map. The EDC thought generally this was an interesting idea as long as it was not limited to one advertising venue and was available only for businesses located in Unity. There was conversation about how advertising could be considered broadly, and could include maps, brochures, newspapers, radio, and even costs of web hosting.

Jean moved to make EDC funds available for an advertising fund of 10,000\$ from TIF funds to support advertising activities. Businesses located in Unity would be eligible for 150\$ reimbursement by providing a receipt for advertising services. The reimbursements would be 1 per business, and available until the end of 2020 or until the fund ran out. _____ seconded the motion. The motion passed with 4 ayes and 1 nay.

*In order for this fund to be created, money may need to be allocated from TIF funds at Town Meeting.

ITEM 5: NEW BUSINESS

Ellen noted that several grants in the recent past, including the two presented at this meeting had requested more than the 500\$ and 2,500\$ limits (Marketing and Community Grants, respectively). The EDC should review these limits and decide if it makes sense to increase them or not.

Zoey mentioned having ideas about how towns could be supporting economic development and Jean invited her to summarize them in writing and submit them to the EDC.

The EDC is currently without a chair. Jean suggested that we wait for an in-person meeting before electing a new chair and the rest of the EDC agreed.

ITEM 5: ADJOURN