

UNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
June 1st, 2020 *DRAFT* Minutes

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

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

Unexcused:

Excused:

Guests: Penny Sampson, Larry King, Mike Lancaster

ITEM 1: REVIEW EDC MEMBERSHIP

The current membership includes Jean Bourg, Ellen Batchelder, Kari Hulva, Tony Avila, Charlie Schaefer, Najean S. We would prefer to have 7 to fill the membership list.

We are also without a chair at the moment. Duties include developing an agenda and calling for meetings.

Najean nominates Tony to be Chair. How does that work with Tony also being a selectman? Ellen 2nds Tony's nomination. Is this a conflict of interest? Selectmen need to approve all EDC spending.

(Jean nominates Kari Hulva, but Kari declines the nomination.)

Motion to elect Tony Avila as the chair of the EDC passes with 3 yes.

ITEM 2: OLD BUSINESS

Jean reviewed the grant proposals from our last EDC meeting. Two grants were approved by EDC subject to specific conditions.

Najean (on behalf of UBx): They are working towards more precise estimates and obtaining quotes for the costs for the UBx business map project.

Update from Selectmen - they prefer to wait to see which businesses will continue to be in operation as businesses are able to open. They prefer to table the discussion of a map for this reason.

They also discussed using TIF funds to create an ATV trail map that could be posted on the Town website. This will be presented to the EDC at a later date.

ITEM 3: INTRODUCTIONS OF NEW MEMBERS AND GUESTS

Mike Lancaster wants to alert us that Susan and John Piotti are selling Brier's Beach. He is suggesting that the town of Unity purchase the property using TIF funds. He described the people who have visited the beach for many years and how there are people who would love to continue to visit. We could advertise swimming and picnicking to free up the Kanokolus Boat Launch, and perhaps camping, and snowmobile ice racing in the winter. That project has shown that people will come for the right events. There is access to electricity but no access to septic. [Quote is ~ 180K for ~1000 ft shore frontage/ 18 acres]. The owner of a nearby field is still open to allowing parking in the field (at least in the winter) [Bob Fordyce].

Tony thinks it would be a good EDC project - to purchase and lease or develop or manage the property. Adding a camp site would improve lodging and bring people into town. He thinks that the more destinations we have, the more people come. (as a related piece of info, he says that people from Southern Maine are coming to attend an ATV mud pit in Thorndike, so there is reason to think people would utilize a campground). He wants to diversify our offerings so we don't have all our economic eggs in one basket.

Penny asks if we should look to interest an investor because it would be challenging to manage it. She thinks the property cost is high, and town ownership would lose tax money, plus there is a cost for maintenance (mowing, electrical, etc.), an attendant, etc. It represents a lot of additional work to run a municipal campground. She would consider this if there was a future plan to sell it. She also says that we should research the legal aspects of a municipally owned business (who collects money, where does the liability lay, who does the public works?). We would need to lease the area out to get a return, for summer and for winter events. She says that we will need to do an analysis of how much it can make, and be able to explain to the townspeople where and how much money it will take.

Larry says that there are few places owned and "controlled" by the town. The property may be outside of the TIF district so there are difficulties, but the revenues would flow back into the TIF/ town. There are ways to work this so it is not a burden to the town (explore making it a state park, e.g.) and there are a lot of town owned campgrounds. He would not like to see us lose the opportunity to do something that keeps it public access. For a campground, there are many people/ retirees who are willing to spend summers managing campgrounds.

Jean says, it's a big idea. She suggests writing this down as a fully fleshed out proposal with financing and income opportunities. If people were spending a summer (RV's etc.) we would need to extend town water or well/septic. Another idea is to work with a developer to give them a tax break or similar to maintain public access.

Kari suggests the town owning the property, and providing the infrastructure but 'leasing' a campground to another person who would pay rent (town would not need to run the

business). Maintain the beach area as a public swimming area. Also, hooking up nearby camps to town septic could improve lake water quality.

Ellen says that if we could pay someone to manage/ progress a project of purchasing and developing the property, that might move it along more quickly.

ITEM 4: REMAINING TIF FUNDS

Penny reviewed remaining allocated TIF funds. We are stuck now using last year's budget until we can hold a town meeting. We cannot have a town meeting (over 50 people) due to Governor's Orders and the COVID-19 Pandemic, and there is no legal way to have a remote meeting (not everyone has access). You could do paper ballot voting for items that cannot be amended.

ITEM 5: Grants

Kari: FarmDrop is doing well. They have 18 farms and two pickup sites right now. Unity, Pittsfield. They are looking to add a site in Belfast. They are processing 60 - 80 orders @ ~75\$ per order each week. Receipts for the previous grants are still outstanding and original funds for shelving and freezers have not been spent (we think).

Kari Hulva will provide a contact where we can send a reminder about receiving those receipts to close out the original grant.

Market of Unity: UBx has taken on the job of organizing the market. Najean says that it seems to be going well; they started early (normal start July) with food vendors, and opened it up to crafters. They have been marketing via social media, etc. Penny says that seedlings are popular; greens, too. Vendors are reporting that it has been worth their while.

UBx caps/shirts/swag grant - they have sold a lot of merchandise at the Market of Unity, and are going on to a second printing of some items.

ITEM 6: NEW BUSINESS

Jean - would like to update us on electric car chargers at the next meeting, perhaps.
Najean - "Flocking" season is here and they've done flocking.

ITEM 7: Adjourn - 7:49