



UNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

February 5, 2018 * 6:00 PM * UNITY COMMUNITY CENTER

AGENDA

- 6:00 Introductions & agenda review
- 6:05 Review and approve Jan 3rd meeting minutes
- 6:10 Committee Updates
 - RLF Committee
 - Marketing Committee (meeting Feb 8 @ 6pm)
 - Makers' Space
 - Lake/Trails
- 6:20 Lodging Study Status
- 6:30 Budget Committee & EDC
 - Our proposals unclear; better communication needed
 - 2nd budget meeting, Feb 7th @ 6:30pm @ UCC
 - Clarification of roles; ideally how should this work?
 - Do we need ordinance revisions?
 - Any changes to our proposal?
- 7:10 Selectmen & EDC: What's next?
- 7:40 Annual Report
- 7:55 Recap and next steps
- 8:00 Adjourn

**Unity Economic Development Committee
January 3rd Minutes (Draft)**

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

Present: Mary Ann Hayes, Mary Leaming, Jenny deHart, Ellen Batchelder, Kari Hulva, Lucia Picard, Mike Gold, Jim Buckle, Alicyn Smart (late), Gail Chase, Najean Shedyak, Tony Avila (Late)

Excused: Jon Wadick, Larry King

Absent:

Guests: Zoey Bond, Emily Newell, Penny Sampson, Dan McCormick

ITEM 1: REVIEW AND VOTE ON NOV 6 2017 REVISED AND DEC 4 2017 MINUTES

Motion to accept Nov 6 revised minutes from Lucia, Mike 2nd – 9 in favor with 1 abstention

Motion to approve Dec 4th minutes from Mary, Gail 2nd - with amendment from Jim B. to correct appropriations number (from \$52 to \$52K) – 9 in favor, 1 abstention

ITEM 2: BYLAW REVISIONS

Want to avoid bias and conflict of interest while recognizing the interconnected nature of small towns in the EDC's work to provide access to and recommendations on grant \$ and other programs.

Guidance from MMA (A "standard" source of guidance): conflict of interest = Direct or indirect pecuniary interest (10% or more ownership in affected entity or thousands of dollars worth). Also, consider bias (personal feelings about the project or person) as well as "familial prejudice" – benefit to family (either through blood or affinity up to 2nd cousin).

Proposed EDC Bylaw Changes: (in red below)

"Program Access: The Committee shall broadly publicize all opportunities to apply for available financial assistance or otherwise participate in programs under its jurisdiction. Procedures shall be clearly outlined and user friendly. Members may assist applicants in accessing EDC programs, including the preparation of grant and loan applications, provided no conflict of interest exists (as defined below).

Conflict of Interest: Prior to voting on a pertinent matter, members shall disclose any direct or indirect pecuniary (10% or more interest in business affected as an officer director, partner, associate, employee or stockholder), familial or other prejudicial conflict of interest that may influence their opinion. To protect the integrity of the process, members shall recuse themselves from voting on matters in which they have a pecuniary interest or other clear bias preventing objective judgement. Should there be a difference of opinion about whether a member must recuse him/herself, the question shall be resolved by majority vote of the other members present and voting."

Mary- suggests adding language " The EDC adheres to the legal interpretations and recommendations of the Maine Municipal Association regarding conflict of interest. As such,"

Motion to amend by laws with the suggested additional language – 1st by Jenny d, 2nd by Mary L – 10 in favor, 1 abstention

ITEM 3: COMMITTEE REPORTS

RLF: another deadline for applications has come and gone, no new applications- current application is still proceeding. Process needs to be revised – perhaps to relax criteria and make these funds easier to access. Also, need to confirm current RLF committee membership. Waiting for tax info from current applicant to complete review, who perhaps is waiting til year-end to get that done.

Marketing: Heard a presentation from Experience Western Waldo, a new company that could provide for our website needs, looked at street plans for lighting updates, and developed some budget numbers for these projects.

Maker's Space: Finding an affordable policy and liability has been a hold up due in part to the as yet to be defined nature/non-standard nature of the entity. Possibilities for this to use space at McKay Farm and become a “project” of Unity College. JimB suggests contacting Allen Insurance who may have some experience with this.

Lakes and Trails: Was pursuing Rails to Trails or Rails with Trails concept but seems a tough sell with DOT.

ITEM 4: LODGING FEASIBILITY STUDY

Mary put a draft RFP together and has incorporated some feedback from community members (Barry McCormack, Emily Newell, etc.)

Interested EDC members can review online and offer edits by Monday Jan 8th. Mary will request to be on next Selectmen's Meeting agenda.

ITEM 5: 2018 BUDGET ALLOCATIONS – 2nd viewing with updated numbers.

Sidewalk Repair: (Mary Ann Hayes) Money already appropriated for sidewalk repair in TIF District but projects that were specifically proposed came in under budget. Can selectmen use remaining \$ for other sidewalk projects or should the \$ be re-appropriated? Unlike other government funds, TIF account can be “rolled over” to hold funds for future years rather than sweep the account. Selectmen likely have the authority to spend on other sidewalk repairs in TIF District but it may be wise to bring this up at town meeting to inform citizens and get approval for how and where they propose spending the remaining funds.

Firehouse paving: (Emily Newell) – \$7K – updated conservative estimate for front and back rugged base layer plus surface layer = \$40K. Request for TIF Funds is 17.5% (this ask is based on volume of in-TIF district calls/ responses 2015-2017). Front is priority, both would be great. Rationale- the paving is “necessitated by the district,” and that the fire service protects TIF district property. It will allow for hose and truck washing and drying necessary to maintain that equipment. Remaining \$ will be requested from the town through general funds.

Note: 1/3 of this year's appropriations of TIF funding going to fire department- how much of this is a clear Economic development project?

Firetruck Reserve: (Mary Ann Hayes) – \$10K – Unity has a “grandfathered” tradition to send \$10,000 per year to firetruck reserve fund. Currently the fund has \$58K in it. Older firetruck is from the 1980's. Will have to be purchased before TIF District ends in 2025.

RLF: (Kari Hulva) Keep current \$50k in fund, reallocate \$5K. Argues to allocate more now and in the future. Rationale: if the current \$ are spent down, would need to wait another year to allocate more. Also, a funded RFL fund could extend longer than the TIF district contract. On the other hand, there have been few applications to date. The need for an RLF has not yet materialized and EDC could recommend more allocations in future years nearer to end of TIF district.

Community Grant Program: - \$5K - same amount appropriated in 2017 (no new request). This program hasn't yet received any applications. It may need advertising

Electric Event Sign: (Larry King) – \$12K – rationale has been explored in previous meetings.

Marketing: (Jenny deHart) – \$5K – for 1st year website development at premium level with Explore Western Waldo for single entry point website to include municipality and tourism info. (Note: will require \$1500/yr. maintenance in the future)

Zoey B (from Explore Western Waldo) suggests 10% of their work will be linked to migrating government info (which is not covered through TIF funds). Town will be asked to contribute 10% from General Funds to migrate and maintain government functions in addition to 500-1K for buying and holding domain names.

Horseshow Ring: (Penny Sampson) – \$6K – 1) fencing, gravel, wood to turn horseshow ring area to a trailhead hub for snowmobiling (connects 3 snowmobile trails), canoeing and horse trail, as well as 2) improvement to ring itself to encourage more horse shows, and 3) create an outdoor ice rink for winter use

Projects related to development of a trail head are obviously covered by TIF funding. However, details remain to be worked out – EDC could recommend a larger amount for general trail work with the understanding that some would be used for trailhead development at that location when a firm plan and budget are presented.

Horse Ring is out of the TIF district – TIF funding out of district must be necessitated by the district. We can argue that we want to create a place that brings in people. The district “necessitates” a working ring to draw in these people. Horse Ring contributes to a multi layered economic driver. MMA legal advisor Becky Seel (reported via Penny S.) – TIF omnibus section C has broad language which could cover the ability to use a horse show ring as a draw for business. But omnibus refers to a table of uses which does not seem to cover this type of project. An idea to properly use TIF funds to support horse show ring improvements is for the town to grant a loan to business entity for horse show ring improvements. Or as non-profit could apply for a community grant. Town should have lease agreement with group to make improvements on town property.

Wayfinder and Business Directional Signs Cost-Share Program: (Penny Sampson) – \$3K – for 10 businesses + 5 other wayfinder signs such as for Kanokolus. Application process to be determined.

Streetscape/Lighting/Signage: (Jenny deHart) – \$10K – for an architectural design and plan. Hire consultant for a Lighting plan to improve and make lighting/streetscape/signage more consistent in look and function. Look and function should serve to help attract people to downtown areas. New lighting could also save \$ long term if we own lights rather than rent them and move to LED/ solar power, for example.

KVCOG dues: (Mary Ann Hayes) – \$2.73 K – is allowed from TIF funds and has been funded in the past.

Traffic Calming: (Mary Leaming and others) – \$4K – 1) hire a professional for digging out, redesigning and replanting of traffic calming neck-downs near to Field of Dreams. 2) Cover more frequent police details. 3) Pay for someone to help move expected state-provided speed signs 4) Pedestrian signs, street striping.

Gen Admin: \$2.5K - Legal Advice, Misc.

EDC Recommendations: All projects are supported with the exception of the contribution towards firehouse paving. See draft Excel data sheet below for EDC recommendations regarding previously appropriated funds, funds EDC recommends for reappropriations, and requests for new appropriations.

TIF Appropriations				2018 TIF Budget Proposal - Working Draft for 1-3-18			
Meeting Date	Total	Remainder	Purpose	Amount	Purpose	Remainder	Town Meeting Vote Needed
March-14	\$22,000	\$0	professional serv., fire truck			\$0	
July-14	\$15,000	\$0	Branding, signage, website, lodging, UBX			\$0	
March-15	\$23,386	\$2,581	professional serv., fire truck	\$2,581	Lodging Feasibility Study	\$0	
January-16	\$55,000	\$55,000	Business retention & growth, esp. RLF, also marketing & alternative	\$50,000	RLF	\$0	NO
				\$5,000	Lodging Feasibility Study		
March-16	\$35,000	\$20,513	prof, admin, consult, marketing, traffic calming	\$3,094	Traffic Calming (contractor for neck-downs + sign mng	\$0	NO
				\$10,000	Marketing Grant Program		
				\$7,419	Lodging Feasibility Study		
September-16	\$50,100	\$20,196	sidewalks, fire apparatus, kanokolus	\$20,196	Keep for sidewalks - after town discussion	\$0	YES
March-17	\$17,730	\$5,000	Fire apparatus, KVCOG & Grant	\$5,000	Community Grant Program	\$0	NO
March-18	\$56,000			\$12,000	Electronic Event Sign		
				\$10,000	Streetscape Lighting/Signage Plan		
				\$10,000	Propose reallocation to Fire Truck Reserve Fund		
				\$10,000	Propose reallocation to trailhead development outside the district		
				\$3,000	Business Directional Sign Cost Share (program)		
				\$5,000	Destination Web Site		
				\$1,000	Traffic Calming		
				\$5,000	KVCOG dues, general admin		
Total	\$218,216	\$103,290					
				\$159,290	TOTAL	\$0	APPROPRIATED BUT UNALLOCATED
					ALREADY APPROPRIATED	\$52,651	2017 UNAPPROPRIATED
				\$20,196	REQUIRES REAPPROPRIATION	\$77,000	2018 ANTICIPATED
				\$56,000	REQUIRES NEW APPROPRIATION	\$56,000	
						\$73,651	AVAILABLE FOR FUTURE

ITEM 6: It was determined that no extra meeting would be required to meet town meeting preparation schedule. Will develop annual report at February 5 meeting.

ITEM 7. ADJOURN 8:45 PM.

Unity Economic Development Committee Ordinance

ARTICLE I ESTABLISHMENT

Pursuant to Article VIII, Pt. 2, Sec. 1 of the Maine Constitution, and 30-A MRSA §3001, the Town of Unity hereby establishes the Unity Economic Development Committee (hereinafter referred to as "Committee").

ARTICLE II PURPOSE AND AUTHORITY

The Committee shall advise and make recommendations to the Board of Selectmen on matters related to economic development, which include but are not limited to business assistance programs, economic development incentives, business climate, business attraction and retention, marketing opportunities, investment incentives and other issues that may promote economic development.

In addition, the Committee may be responsible for managing one or more economic development programs and budgets to the extent authorized by the Board of Selectmen or Town Meeting vote. Final authorization for any budgeted expenditure or contractual agreement resides with the Board of Selectmen.

ARTICLE III GOALS AND PRIORITIES

In doing its work, the Committee will ensure that policies and strategies it develops are in keeping with the Unity Comprehensive Plan and the following economic development goals: diversifying the local tax base, creating local jobs, providing citizens and visitors with local services and improving the overall quality of life in Unity. Galvanizing and strengthening local businesses will be a priority, followed by attracting complementary businesses that will enhance the commercial center and maintain the rural character of the town.

ARTICLE IV DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Committee members shall:

1. Work in a coordinated fashion, respect all points-of-view and, in carrying out its duties and tasks, shall adhere to the Town's Comprehensive Plan as well as the values and mission of the Town of Unity.
2. Review and understand the Town's current economic development challenges and incentives.
3. Interface with businesses seeking economic development assistance including requests for local Tax Increment Financing (TIF) assistance.
4. Provide recommendations and guidance to the Board of Selectmen regarding use of TIF revenues. Prepare the annual TIF budget.
5. Have responsibility for the structure of any Town revolving loan fund and/or grant fund for economic development/business assistance purposes.

6. Advise on tools that could be used to encourage economic development and community investment opportunities.
7. Serve as ambassadors of Unity and promote the Town to their contacts.
8. Provide business leads and contacts to the Town where appropriate.
9. Be respectful of all other Committee members and work positively toward accomplishing Committee objectives.

ARTICLE V MEMBERSHIP

The Committee shall consist of no less than 7 or more than 17 members appointed by the Board of Selectmen and should represent a diverse cross section of Unity's economic base including representatives of:

- A member of the Board of Selectmen
- Technology business
- Retail business
- Home-based business owner
- Downtown business owner
- Banking or finance professional
- Farming/agricultural
- MOFGA
- Unity Barn Raisers
- Unity College (staff & students)
- Other non-profit
- High School Students

Every effort shall be made for membership to include both young adults and retired individuals. No more than 25% of members may be non-residents.

ARTICLE VI OFFICERS AND ROLES

Members will meet at the first opportunity after annual appointments to elect a chair, a vice-chair and a secretary to serve for one year unless otherwise provided. The Committee may develop additional roles as circumstances direct and select Members to be responsible for leading those areas of the Committee's work.

The **Chair** shall preside at all Committee meetings and shall have authority to rule on questions of evidence and procedure, to maintain order and determine the course of proceedings, and to take such other action as may be necessary and not inconsistent with these bylaws or other law to enable the committee to perform its duties and conduct its affairs. The Chair also shall set the agenda for each meeting and provide the agenda to the Town Clerk for posting as required. It will be expected that the Chair or an appointed designee will attend one Selectmen's meeting each month and submit a written report of activities to the municipal officers to be included in the Annual Town Report. The Vice-Chair shall assume the responsibilities of Chair in the Chair's absence.

The **Secretary** shall maintain a permanent record of all Committee meetings and all correspondence of the Committee, which shall be a public record except as otherwise provided by law. The secretary shall be responsible for providing the Town Clerk a copy of all meeting minutes.

ARTICLE VII APPOINTMENTS, TERMS & TERMINATION

Committee Members shall be appointed by the Board of Selectmen.

Committee Members are appointed for a period of two (2) years. Terms shall be staggered with the initially appointed Committee having one-half of the members appointed to two-year terms and one-half of the members appointed to one-year terms. Members may be appointed to serve three consecutive terms and must have a minimum of one year off before being appointed again.

Committee Members may be removed by a majority vote of the Committee and confirmed by a majority vote of the Board of Selectmen.

ARTICLE VIII MEETINGS AND PROCEDURES

1. The Committee shall hold an organizational meeting at the first opportunity following annual appointments to orient members, elect officers and establish an annual workplan and meeting schedule.
2. The Committee will schedule other meetings as it deems necessary, providing public notice to the Town Clerk for posting.
3. Attendance shall be considered a quorum when 50% of the members are present.
4. Votes shall pass by a simple majority.
5. Members must recuse themselves from participating in any discussions or votes on any matter where that member has a conflict of interest regarding that matter.
6. Members are expected to attend $\frac{3}{4}$ of the meetings held with no more than 4 consecutive "unexcused" absences. An excused absence may be requested of the Chair in advance of scheduled meetings.
7. Following attempts to resolve issues within the Committee, the Committee will vote on removal of any Member(s) violating any of the Duties, Responsibilities, Attendance or Procedures outlined in this Ordinance. Upon an affirmative Committee vote, the Chair will make recommendation to the Board of Selectmen for confirmation of removal.
8. The Committee may adopt bylaws or other rules of procedure to manage its affairs beyond provisions of this Ordinance provided they do not conflict with this Ordinance.

ARTICLE IX AMENDMENTS

This Ordinance may be amended at any legally called Town Meeting. The Town Clerk is authorized to renumber sections as needed to incorporate amended language.

ARTICLE X EFFECTIVE DATE

This Ordinance becomes effective upon date of passage.

New Budget
Committee
Ordinance

UNITY BUDGET COMMITTEE ORDINANCE
(as amended March 25, 1995)

1. Establishment

Pursuant to 30-A MRSA Section 3001 (*Home Rule*), a Budget Committee is hereby established for the Town of Unity, Maine. This Ordinance seeks to formalize the Budget Committee that has traditionally reviewed the annual Town budget and clarify its duties.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the Budget Committee is to provide a constructive forum for thought and debate on municipal policy development and problem-solving in any matter which is likely to have a financial impact on the townspeople. The Budget Committee shall have no power to enact Town policy or make financial decisions on its own, but will make written recommendations to the Selectmen, the voters, and/or to other organizations as appropriate.

The Budget Committee's activities shall include, but not be limited to the following: coordination of various municipal and quasi-municipal activities; long-range planning and problem solving for Unity's municipal management needs; development of policy options, funding strategies, annual budget recommendations and other matters related to municipal government. The Committee shall develop its own priorities, while also being responsive to requests for advice and assistance from the Board of Selectmen and other municipal concerns as issues arise.

3. Committee Membership

The Committee shall consist of from 7 to 15 members who shall be appointed by the selectmen and who shall be registered voters of the Town. In addition to the appointed members, all three selectmen shall serve as non-voting, ex-officio members of the Budget Committee, whose attendance is expected at all meetings.

Members shall serve for terms of three years, except that they shall continue in office until their successors are appointed. (For transition purposes, the initial terms shall be staggered so that as nearly an equal number of terms shall expire annually.) Appointments shall be made by May 1 of each year, although additional members may be added during the year.

4. **Committee Organization and Rules**

The Committee shall have an annual organizational meeting during the first week of May. At that meeting, the Committee shall elect officers for the year, set a schedule of regular meetings which shall be not less than quarterly, and identify priority issues for discussion during the year. This schedule shall be posted on the bulletin board outside the Town Office, with meeting topics indicated whenever known in advance. Other meetings shall be given the same public notice, posted as soon as is practicable by the Committee secretary.

Officers shall consist of a chairperson, vice chairperson and secretary from among the appointed membership. In addition to the regularly scheduled meetings during the year, the Committee shall meet as necessary to conduct its business. Meetings shall be called by the chairperson, or upon request of a majority of Committee members, or upon request of the Board of Selectmen. A quorum necessary to conduct business shall consist of at least a majority of voting members.

The chairperson shall preside over meetings. Upon his or her absence, the vice chairperson shall preside and assume other appropriate duties. The secretary shall be responsible for recording minutes of meetings, keeping copies of all documents, records and correspondence of the Committee, and posting public notice of meetings. The Committee may vote to hire clerical support for the secretary in fulfilling his or her duties, if funds are appropriated by the legislative body in a given year.

All meetings and records shall be subject to the Maine Freedom of Access Act, 1 MRSA Sections 401-410. The Committee may adopt rules of procedure not inconsistent with this ordinance. In the absence of additional rules of procedure, the Committee shall rely on Robert's Rules of Order for guidance. A majority vote of voting members present and voting when a quorum is present shall be presumed to constitute an official Committee decision unless other rules are adopted.

Members may participate in discussion, but shall be disqualified from voting, on any matter which may be construed to constitute a conflict of interest. Members shall volunteer identification of such a conflict at the earliest possible time during discussion on the pertinent issue. Any question of whether a member shall be disqualified from voting on a particular matter shall be decided by a majority vote of the members present and authorized to vote, except the member whose potential conflict is under consideration.

The term "conflict of interest" shall be construed to mean direct or indirect pecuniary interest, which shall include pecuniary benefit to any member of the person's immediate family (grandfather, father, wife, son, granddaughter, e.g.) or to his or her employer, or to the employer of any member of the person's immediate family.

Members are encouraged to attend relevant educational and policy making sessions held around the state. Reasonable fees and travel expenses may be reimbursed as appropriated by the legislative body in a given year.

Section 5. Powers and Duties

The Committee shall have the following powers and duties:

- A. To study long-range capital and operating needs of the Town, researching alternate approaches and funding options. This shall apply to municipal facilities and services, as well as those of quasi-municipal organizations including but not limited to the Unity Fire Department, Unity Utilities District and Unity Athletic Association. The Committee shall also monitor and review all interlocal and regional cooperative efforts, including but not limited to the Unity Area Recycling Center, the Unity Volunteer Ambulance Corporation and interlocal use of the Unity Landfill. The Committee will review and make recommendations on other interlocal efforts for service provision, including but not limited to code enforcement, solid waste disposal and joint purchasing of goods and services.
- B. To study the Town's internal funding structure, developing proposals on the most effective and equitable distribution among funding sources for the provision of various services. This shall include but is not limited to permit fees, user fees, special funds, grants, loans and the general property tax. The Committee shall, in its deliberations, consider the relationship between the use of a service, payment for that service and subsidy from other taxpayers, as well as ability to pay, State requirements, and administrative efficiency of the funding system.
- C. To study means of attracting desirable industrial and commercial facilities to Unity, or assisting with expansion of existing businesses. Areas to be explored include but are not limited to tax incentives, loans, grants, training programs, and development of an industrial park.
- D. To stay abreast of municipal and school funding discussions at the State level and participate in policy deliberations that would have an impact on the Town. Opportunities to increase municipal control over internal financial policies and procedures shall be pursued by the Committee.
- E. To review and make recommendations on the annual budget as proposed by the selectmen.
- F. To consider and make recommendations on any other matter that may impact the financial health and quality of services of the residents and taxpayers of the Town of Unity.

The Committee's authority shall be advisory only with regard to fiscal commitments or obligations on behalf of the Town. The Committee may take positions on fiscal policy matters and represent the Town's position on legislation or other public policy deliberations at the State level, provided that the position does not conflict with any vote or known feeling of the Town on the matter.

Any recommendation on a matter requiring town meeting action shall be printed with the article in the warrant and on the ballot, if any, along with such other recommendations as may be included by the selectmen or required by law. The selectmen shall cooperate with and provide the Committee with such information as may be reasonably necessary and available to enable it to carry out its functions under this ordinance.

Economic Development Committee Report – DRAFT of 2/4/18

OVERVIEW

The Unity Economic Development Committee (EDC) was formed in January 2016 by ordinance to guide the Town's economic development policies, programs and investments. The EDC has been extremely active, comprised of 12-17 members at any one time during the two-year period. Several new energized members joined the EDC in April following the **Unity as a Destination** forums. Dozens of working group meetings including additional townspeople were held during the year. All meetings are open to the public. We post all meetings and EDC agendas and minutes at www.unityme.org.

Unity's funding for economic development relies primarily on directing Unity's Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds, which by law must be directed to uses allowed in our state-approved Omnibus Economic Development Program. The EDC understands these legal limitations and makes recommendations to keep the Town within state law. Any violation could be very expensive for the Town and the EDC is vigilant to prevent any such occurrence. The assessor estimates that about \$77,000 will be directed into this fund in 2018 per our existing TIF District that will expire in 2025. We have seven years left to utilize these revenues to spur our economy.

Within these limits, our job is to recommend the most fruitful investments to support economic development that will: (1) strengthen our existing businesses, (2) grow our tax base in a way that complements Unity's existing character, and (3) make allowed prudent investments in public infrastructure that would otherwise fall on the general fund. We have relied heavily on the input received via our **April 2016 Business Survey**, which identified **marketing assistance** and **lodging development** as top priorities.

We set our sights on addressing these priorities in 2017. The **Unity as a Destination** initiative identified several areas in which **investing in amenities to attract visitors would also improve the quality of life for residents**. **Branding/Marketing** and **Lodging** again came up as priorities, reinforcing the results of the 2016 business survey. With strong community engagement and support, we made proposals to the Board of Selectmen to move forward in these two areas with funds that had been previously appropriated for marketing, business retention/expansion and professional services. A majority of the Board of Selectmen have not been willing to approve these investments. The EDC and Selectmen appear to have differing views regarding the value of hiring professional assistance in areas where we lack expertise. We look forward to clarification of the townspeople's intent at this March town meeting.

The following summarizes the work the EDC has done since it was formed in February 2016:

RECAP OF 2016 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Committee Organization
- Understanding TIF-Eligible Expenditures
- Evaluating Economic Development Options
- Full Town Business Survey (48 respondents – results at www.unityme.org)
- Discussions with Potential Assisted Living Developers
- Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Program Setup
- Marketing and Community Grant Program Setup
- Lodging Study Research
- Recommended Public Infrastructure Investments (Traffic Response Truck, Sidewalk Repairs, Kanokolus Improvements, Fire Truck Reserve Fund)
- Develop 2017 TIF Budget
- Set-up for **Unity as a Destination Initiative** with GrowSmart Maine and Unity Foundation

SUMMARY OF 2017 ACTIVITIES

I. Unity as a Destination Initiative

We launched 2017 with a community-wide discussion around developing **Unity as a Destination** to confirm townspeople's views around attracting visitors and future residents. We were grateful to The Unity Foundation for supporting the assistance of GrowSmart Maine in facilitating the two public sessions held in February and March. We had a solid and enthused turnout at both events, with broad support expressed for moving forward on:

1. Developing an attractive Unity **brand and marketing strategy**;
2. Addressing **lodging** needs as identified in the 2016 business survey;
3. Creating a shared **makers' space** to support and mentor artisans;
4. Enhancing our **lake and trail** offerings; and
5. Exploring a **brew pub**.

Volunteer working groups formed around each of these areas, with the brew pub group led by an interested entrepreneur who was ultimately unable to identify a suitable location. This initiative is now inactive; the other four continue.

A. Branding and Marketing

The key recommendations of the Branding and Marketing Working Group were to (1) to create a standing Marketing Subcommittee of the EDC and (2) hire a marketing consultant to assist with:

- (a) clarifying our target audiences,
- (b) creating a compelling destination-oriented brand for Unity, and
- (c) developing a low budget marketing strategy aimed at our target audiences to be implemented primarily by volunteers.

A very modest \$5000 investment of previously appropriated TIF funds for marketing was requested to support the consultant work.

The EDC overwhelmingly endorsed this recommendation as the top priority to move into action immediately. A Request for Proposals was issued in early May. Following interviews of two strong applicants, a majority of the Board of Selectmen voted not to move forward, remaining unconvinced that professional assistance was necessary to brand and market the town. The Selectmen challenged the EDC to accomplish this work on an all-volunteer basis.

While deeply disappointed, the Marketing Committee agreed to do its best to continue work without professional assistance. Follow-up interviews with Unity businesses were conducted to report on the work done since the 2016 survey, gain feedback on possible logo/tag line combinations, and ask how the Town could assist with their marketing efforts. Several good ideas were put forward, including a **New Resident Welcome Kit** suggested by Mac's Hardware and endorsed by many other businesses.

Marketing Committee members also conducted a review of **web platform** options for a site that could both market Unity as a destination and serve municipal and community functions. The current municipal web site platform has limited capacity to perform desired functions such as a quality searchable business directory. A private initiative to market Western Waldo County as a region has potential to address the destination site needs. **Funding to support this or another approach is requested on the town meeting warrant.**

Concerns regarding the adequacy, cost and appearance of downtown street lighting were brought to the EDC by the Selectmen in December. The Marketing Committee agreed to research this area as it relates to the attractiveness and marketability of the town. A meeting was held with the Central Maine Power lighting consultant in January to better understand choices and costs available through pole leasing agreements. It was agreed that alternatives including solar powered lighting should be researched.

Despite months of effort, a cohesive brand and marketing strategy remain lacking. We are hopeful that a promotional web site solution will be executed in 2018, necessary for any marketing strategy to be launched. We further believe that a priority investment should be the hiring of a landscape architect with street lighting expertise to prepare a **cohesive downtown streetscape and lighting plan**. We are interested in exploring LED and solar power options with an eye toward long term operating costs. An attractive and cost-effective plan would guide future lighting, signage, sidewalk and bench design. It could be implemented in stages as the town could afford and may represent a very prudent use of TIF funds available through 2025.

B. Lodging

The specific “Doctor’s Inn” concept advanced by the Lodging Working Group ultimately proved unfeasible. Efforts returned to complete the long-awaited **Lodging Feasibility Study** for Unity. Research was performed on similar initiatives in other municipalities. A minimum of \$15,000 should be budgeted for this effort, which will explore all lodging options including campgrounds. An ambitious Request for Proposals (RFP) has been prepared, including market analysis, operational feasibility and economic impact of several lodging products. The town’s preference for smaller scale and non-franchised offerings is clearly stated. **An article to fund the study will appear on the town meeting warrant. The EDC believes this is critically important to determine what markets exist to support various lodging products, informing future entrepreneurs of potential opportunities and pitfalls.**

C. Makers’ Space

A dedicated working group has identified a potential home for creative artisan space. It is exploring some form of incorporation or adoption by an existing organization so that insurance may be obtained.

D. Lake and Trails

The Selectmen made significant improvements at Kanokolus Beach in 2017 and have further plans to enhance the recreation area. Discussions were held with the ATV Club, Snowdusters, Unity College, Hills to Sea Trail Coalition, Seabasticook Regional Land Trust, Unity College, Unity Barn Raisers and Friends of Lake Winnecook. UBR published a revised map of walking trails. A central kiosk, map, parking area and better wayfinding signage have been identified as short-term objectives. A master map of all trails with allowed uses is desired. Given that ATV and Snowmobile Trails often have to be rerouted, this may be best done on-line. Ideas for promoting businesses to be visited by trail users are also being explored. The Horse Ring site at the edge of Sandy Stream is being considered for a multi-use parking area and trailhead with river access. **An appropriation of \$10,000 to support these efforts is requested on the town meeting warrant.**

II. Other EDC Work in 2017

EDC Bylaws

The EDC adopted bylaws in February 2017 and has strengthened them since as new issues arise. Preventing any conflict of interest has been a priority concern. They are posted on the Town web site.

Sidewalk Repairs

The Selectmen were able to get a much better bid than originally estimated to do the promised sidewalk repairs, leaving over \$20,000 available for additional repairs in the TIF District. Everyone was very pleased with this outcome. The Selectmen will be proposing additional work to be done in 2018.

Grants and Revolving Loan Fund

While the Committee is responsible for guiding the use of TIF funds, we also launched three programs to entertain proposals from Unity businesses and organizations to promote economic development. Prior to last year, there was no vehicle to review ideas from the community or businesses. These programs have been designed to meet the requirements of state law. As such, documentation and reporting are required to ensure compliance. We invite proposals. Specific program guidelines and application materials are available at www.unityme.org or at the Town Office.

1. Marketing Grant Program — to support marketing activities that promote Unity as a place to visit, shop, reside and start a business (apply 90 days before activity).
2. Community Grant Program — to support economic development activities other than marketing that are allowed under Unity's TIF Development Program (apply 90 days before activity).
3. Revolving Loan Fund — 3-5% loans of \$2,500-\$15,000 available for qualifying Unity businesses (detailed business plan and application required; deadlines April 1, October 1, January 1).

No complete Marketing or Community Grant applications were received during the year. We are proposing to hold over the existing \$10,000 and \$5,000 allocations for those programs for 2018. One RLF application was received. If approved, \$35,000 will remain available for lending from the 2016 appropriation.

FUNDING PROPOSALS FOR 2018

Lodging Feasibility Study

The Lodging Working Group prepared a Request for Proposals for a qualified consultant to prepare a tailored Lodging Feasibility Study for Unity as described above. The EDC had felt that the \$15,000 necessary was available from earlier appropriations for business marketing, retention/expansion and professional services and had hoped to have a consultant working by early March. However, the Selectmen have decided to put the question before town meeting. If approved, a consultant should be selected by early May with work completed by Labor Day.

Streetscape and Lighting Plan

The Marketing Committee and Selectmen are researching options for upgrading street lighting and believe the town would benefit from a streetscape plan prepared by a landscape architect to produce the best possible overall outcome for appearance, effectiveness and lifecycle costs including electricity. Signage design, including that for a future electronic message board, would be included. ***There is an article on the town meeting warrant to appropriate funds for this study.***

Wayfinder and Business Directional Signs

Several businesses are finding it difficult to afford the full cost of business directional signs. We are proposing to develop a cost-share program using TIF funds. ***An article to fund this program as well as install wayfinder signs for trails, Kanokolus and other key features is included in the warrant.*** The design for wayfinder signs would be one of the outcomes of the Streetscape Plan, so that everything will have a unified appearance.

Electronic Message Board

A proposal to appropriate funds for an ***electronic message board to better publicize events***, as designed in the Streetscape Plan, appears as a separate warrant article to see if townspeople support such an investment. There is some question as to the proportion that could be legally charged to the TIF account as it would also be used for general government purposes.

Recreational Trails

We are proposing to allocate \$10,000 for trailhead development, signage and other TIF-eligible proposals that are brought to us during 2018. These do not have to be located in the TIF District.

Traffic Calming, KVCOG Dues & Administrative Costs

A modest amount of funding is proposed for upgrading the traffic island plantings and managing the placement of an electronic speed warning sign, combined with routine funding for KVCOG dues and administrative costs.

Fire Truck Fund

We support the continued \$10,000 deposit into the Fire Truck Reserve Fund toward the TIF District share of a replacement truck. It must be purchased by 2025.

HOW TO REACH US

The Committee meets the first Monday of every month from 6-8 PM at the Town Office. The public is welcome to attend. To request that an item be placed on a meeting agenda, contact the chair (currently Mary Leaming mleaming@une.edu or 249-7820) by noon on the Friday before the meeting. Meeting agendas, minutes, policies and program information may be viewed on the Town web site www.unityme.org. Feel free to contact any of us at any time to share your ideas. Our email addresses and phone numbers are on the web site.

Respectfully submitted,

Tony Avila
Ellen Batchelder
Jim Buckle
Gail Chase

Jennifer deHart
Mike Gold
Mary Ann Hayes
Kari Hulva
Larry King

Mary Leaming
Lucia Picard
Najeane Shedyak
Alicyn Smart
Jon Wadick

Unity Economic Development Committee

