

EDC Meeting Minutes June 20, 2016~ Unity Town Office

Members present: Jim Buckle, Dan McCormick, Clem Blakney, Chris Rossignol, Joe Saltalamachia, Lucia Picard, Mary Leaming, Mary Ann Hayes, Emily Newell, Mike Gold, Tony Avila – Guest: Penny Sampson  
Meeting called to order 6:04

Chris presented his work on first draft of revolving loan/tiered financial plan  
Committee discussed the benefit to the town to offer forgivable loans, matching grants, credit enhancement plan options

-More research/clarification needed on forgivable loans (more discussion on this to follow)

Clem reported on his follow up with local business -post survey

(a good example of how offering a financial package to local businesses could be directly applied and benefit not only the business but the community)

- a local business looking to expand in the immediate future would benefit greatly from up front financial assistance for infrastructure needs; fire suppression, upgraded power supply

The committee then discussed development of loan application process and criteria, working from a draft Chris put together. -What are other towns doing? We will utilize the resources of KVCOG in detailing financial outlines/applications but each town has to decide its own priorities about what it is trying to accomplish. We agreed to lean toward flexibility when we did not have a reason to rule something out. Should there be a preference for the downtown? It was agreed that businesses suited for the rural area should not be disadvantaged. We are interested in activities that will increase economic activity, ideally having a spinoff effect for more than one business.

We reviewed what the businesses had told us in the survey. Only 17% opposed providing any financial assistance programs, though there were also comments concerned about loan defaults with town funds. A majority of survey respondents indicated town financial assistance would be most appropriate for building improvements; 44% felt equipment purchase would be appropriate. About 25% supported financing for working capital or activities that would increase the tax base (consistent with building improvements & possibly equipment purchases) or payroll (jobs).

Guest Penny Sampson (selectperson for town of Unity) reported on projects she has worked on which need immediate action: sidewalk paving and repair – she is meeting with paving company next week to get quote for sidewalk repair, paving of sidewalks within the TIF district. The Committee thanked her for doing this and agreed that TIF funds should be tapped at some level to finance sidewalk improvements within the district. Penny will bring the quoted options to the July meeting for review.

Promotional video filming for the town: Committee voted to approve \$1500.00 for filming points of interest around Unity for the purpose of promoting the town. Penny will work with the vendor to identify points of interest and attempt to cover all 4 seasons. One longer product could then be cut into shorter segments and rotated on the web site.

Discussion on the progress of town website > Mary Ann met with Sam, who is working on getting the site ready for launch and started her own training for Thorndike's site. GovOffice does not include a searchable directory product as such so we will likely just start with a business listing, working from the Google Doc we used getting the survey delivered. It is possible to search in general on the site so we can see how that works. We will have to decide whether to just have it alphabetical or divide into categories. Either way, first we need basic info, proofing and permission to publish from the businesses. It would be great to have the help of UBx to gather this info. Chris will continue collaborating with Clem & UBx to get businesses on board with listings on web. Sam is willing to manage the document overall and be the point of contact for keeping it updated once launched.

Clem reported on UBX – having set up a bank account and establishing EIN status. The setup and printing of town maps will be used for the purpose of promoting local business and encourage tourism-distribution at various points statewide; visitor/information centers, chambers of commerce etc Committee approves contributing 50% of the project costs = \$4310.28 in TIF funds for the set up/design/printing/distribution of the maps-UBX providing funds for the remainder for the initial printing of 8000 maps.

More general discussion followed regarding language, guidelines and eligibility requirements for creating loans/grants –there are many good examples available from USDA website. We don't want to reinvent the wheel and want to get something approved and available ASAP.

A financial sub group of the committee; Mary, Jim, Joe, Mary Ann will meet Wed July 6<sup>th</sup> to fine tune language and criteria of loan/grant applications and decision-making criteria so that a thorough draft can be reviewed and hopefully completed by the EDC at its July 18 meeting. Those who can will start at 6:30. Jim and Mary Ann cannot arrive until 7:00.

Parting thought; Tony shared his view that while the committee is strong in its mission to try to bring in new businesses we cannot lose focus on continuing to assist local businesses and land owners on how we can actively revive, repurpose empty lots and vacant buildings around town – encouraging reaching out to landowners to see what might be done to revitalize some of these properties that are currently neglected.

Next meeting July 18th  
Meeting adjourned 7:40  
Respectfully submitted,  
Lucia Picard