

Unity Economic Development Committee June 5th, 2017 Minutes (Approved 8-7-17)

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

Members Present: Najean Shedyak, Larry King, Mary Leaming, Emily Newell, Lucia Picard, Jenny deHart, Mike Gold, Mary Ann Hayes, Alicyn Smart, Joe Saltalamachia, Tony Avila

Unexcused: Gail Chase, Ellen Batchelder, Jon Wadick

Excused: Jim Buckle, Kari Hulva

Resigned: Clem Blakney

ITEM 1: Meeting minutes

Motion to approve as presented (Mary Ann). Seconded (Mike). Approved.

Mary recounted that on May 12, the EDC held an electronic vote regarding the Marketing RFQ. The majority of EDC members (12-1) voted that the Marketing Committee should send the RFQ to the Selectboard for their consideration. ***Motion to enter this vote into June 5 meeting minutes (Emily). Seconded (Salty). Approved.***

ITEM 2: TIF financial update

Emily stated that the sidewalk quote (UHOP to Food Hub) came in under budget. Joe raised the question of how snow will be cleared from the sidewalks in winter. Emily stated that no specific snow clearing equipment is available for sidewalks. The committee discussed using the remaining funds appropriated for sidewalks for an expanded sidewalk scope. Tony suggested filling cracks where grass is growing. The Committee did not feel qualified to offer an opinion. ***Emily will work with the Selectmen to identify more sidewalk locations worthy of using the funds.*** Otherwise they could be re-appropriated at a future town meeting for another eligible purpose.

The committee reviewed the TIF spreadsheet provided on paper during the meeting. Only the traffic calming flowers have been purchased this year. Mary Ann asked about the bill for RLF legal advice provided over the winter and where it was charged; it has not been received but will be charged to the Admin budget.

ITEM 3: Proposed bylaw amendment

Emily proposed new language regarding public representation of EDC members. ***Motion to amend the bylaws as suggested (Jenny). Seconded (Lucia). Approved unanimously.***

ITEM 4: Update on GrowSmart Maine

On June 13 Emily and Mary will meet with Unity Foundation and GSM to discuss final project proposal, funding, and next steps. Alicyn stated that Larry Sterrs (Unity Foundation) approached her and stated that the EDC Marketing Committee should get in touch with him. ***Alicyn will email him at lsterrs@unitel.me and cc Jenny to ask what he has in mind.***

ITEM 5: Check in on projects

- **Lodging:** In Jon's absence, Mary stated that this group is waiting on GSM to initiate next steps. Regarding the Doctor's Inn, Lucia stated that the property owner might be renovating it himself (unverified).
- **Marketing:** Selectmen will open proposals received by noon Tuesday 6/6 and read them into the minutes. Marketing Committee will screen them and if any rise to interview, will set up interviews for 6/15 AM when selectmen can participate. Then final recommendation will be made and selectmen will decide on 6/20.
- **Maker Space:** Mary stated that Bob Kelly (EnvirEm owner) is willing to rent space in a warehouse to this group. The group also has a draft mission statement.
- **Trail/Lake:** The coalition convening has not yet been set. Mary stated that she is almost done with the Western Waldo County trail brochure and thanked Mary Ann for her editing assistance. Mary will share once printed. Mary stated that UBR is coordinating a Unity on the Move series of activities nightly at Field of Dreams.
- **Brewpub:** Joe stated that Cody Leland moved to Portland, and has some interested investors in Waterville, but still has desire to open in Unity. There is no suitable space in Unity other than the old Unitel building, and they are not interested; or the place near the Raceway, but Cody needs to be convinced because of perception that the town center is developing faster. Larry asked whether we could offer a tax incentive. Mary suggested a tax abatement. Mary Ann reminded the group that a credit enhancement agreement requires a process. ***Emily will ask Maine Municipal Assoc. (MMA) to determine whether there are alternative tax tools, or an agreement the town could strike with the individual.*** Joe stated that Cody and Kevin Spigel are possibly working on another brewpub model that will work for Unity.

ITEM 6: Destination Development Checklist

Mary Ann noted that Nancy Marshall Communications declined to respond to the marketing RFQ because the firm did not believe Unity is ready to be a primary destination. Mary Ann led a discussion of the checklist that was provided in the meeting packet (from the Maine Office of Tourism) on destination planning. Key discussion points:

- There is a lack of common vision and direction for the community. Emily stated that the revised Comprehensive Plan is on hold and incomplete. Tony stated that the stall is due to unwillingness to compromise. Mary stated that no one is willing to be "the champion" that drives the plan to completion, and that therefore progress in many other areas is hindered, including some funding opportunities (require a Comp Plan within 5 yrs, e.g.). Unity's existing plan is dated 1993. Lucia suggested the EDC become the champion. Emily countered that the champion group should be smaller. Mary Ann reminded the committee that land use ordinances must be consistent with the Comp Plan, and our Comp Plan limits development options. Lucia offered to

take a look at current progress; Emily is willing to share the progress document with her. Mary suggested putting out a call on social media for volunteers to serve on a Comp Plan committee. **The EDC agrees that the Comp Plan should be re-started. Emily stated that the selectboard will discuss this at the 6/6 meeting.**

- First tier of questions (for Primary Destinations) are currently unattained, and strongly confirm that Unity is more likely a secondary or tertiary destination. Mary suggested that lack of professional central oversight is holding the town back. Tony countered that the town is too small to afford a position. Alicyn asked how much the salary might be; Joe suggested about \$30K. Jenny stated that the position could be written so as to require that it pay for itself in town business attraction and tax base increases, or it's cut after a certain number of years. Joe stated that Unity is the "best bedroom community" around, but the housing stock is undesirable, and half the population doesn't want it to change. Mary challenged that a town administrator could help with a housing study. Larry said growth needs to be incremental to prove to the locals that it won't hurt them. Larry asked how Common Ground Fair got to be so large? Tony stated that Unity can be on the map with better marketing.

ITEM 7: Business Welcome Protocol

Larry shared a draft welcome letter in paper format during the meeting. The committee discussed what assistance it can provide to new businesses. Mike suggested the revolving loan fund, a web site link to the fund info. Jenny suggested adding the email address for EDC and links to online resources. Tony suggested that for any new business that goes through the planning board, there is a version of the welcome letter that gets handed to the owner. **Mary Ann will put it on letterhead and bring it back for Mary to sign as chair. Mary asked for a volunteer to be responsible for handing the letter to new businesses; Mary Ann agreed (at least for the first two!).**

Other Business/Announcements

Mary stated that the restaurant will be opening in the old Crosstrax location by the end of June.

Larry described the new indoor market in Belfast, and stated that the vendor spaces are sold out every Saturday. He suggested we convert part of the EnvirEm space to an indoor market that could include the existing farmers market. He also said it is difficult to get into the farmers market. Mike seconded that and stated the farmers market is self-governed. **Mary offered to work with Larry to communicate with farmers market about whether the Community Center space could be double purposed for additional artisans on Saturdays.**

Next meeting:

Too many people will be absent on July 3. The group agreed not to meet in July; Grow Smart lodging will get underway in July and other teams have plenty to do. Perhaps the Comp Plan process will be starting. Mary asked that we all respond to emails received in the interim. She reminded us that EDC@unityme.org is the email to use for the group. Next full meeting will be August 7.