

**Unity Economic Development Committee
November 6th, 2017 Minutes (Approved 1-3-18)**

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

Present: Jon W, Ellen B., Jenny d., Mary L., Lucia P., Najean S., Alicyn S.,
Tony A., Kari H., Mike G., Mary Ann H.
Excused: Larry K., Joe S.
Absent: Emily N., Gail C., Jim B.
Guests: Zoey Bond, Josh Miville, Jason (Jake) Johnson, Penny S.

ITEM 1: Review and approve Oct 2nd meeting minutes

Ellen: friendly amendment – remove highlighted section. Jenny d. -motion to accept the minutes, Alicyn S 2nd the motion – all were in favor.

ITEM 2: ATV and Snowmobile Clubs – What Can Be Done?

- Josh Miville from Chase Toys/ Snow Dusters
- Jason Johnson from ATV Club

Want to get updated park n ride at Envirem location.

Initiated by ATV club, historically has been at that location.

Envirem good neighbor, helped reroute trail when they moved

Also parking @ Chase Toys and Clubhouse

Work by Snowdusters @ Chase Toys for another Park n Ride and to connect Thorndike/Unity trails.

They advertise local businesses on their trails

30 miles of maintained snowmobile trails from Dixmont to Albion.

Business provide the sign to be hung on a billboard @ Albion Trailhead and 1 @

Jackson/Dixmont side, information billboard @ Horse Show Ring for examples. Spanky's has been happy with results. Good ROI.

Midcoast riders like Frye Mountain but there is no destination area – Unity has gas and food so there is an opportunity here to attract more riders. EDC could help by providing signs or organizing group purchases – hard plastic can be printed or left blank to write in businesses. 8 ½ x 11 12 x 12. (Mary says – metal trail signs of sim size = 40\$).

Josh shared UMaine economic impact statement of snowmobiling (old data (1997-98), but illuminating). 1995: \$200mill into Maine, 2012: \$540 million (sales, service, travel sundries).

They maintain trails that other groups also use: Horses, carriages, walking, biking with landowner permission.

Need help with increasing membership

Tracking: through Town registration #'s. Snowdusters membership is obviously snow/weather dependent.

Also, they offer business memberships which gets an ad in Maine snowmobile Newsletter as well as trail signs and their business names added to the FB pages
What is the strategy to get businesses or individuals to join? – FB requests.

EDC could include these groups in welcome packet and new business letter

Other areas where town/ EDC could help:

Getting info on landowners to contact them (phone, etc.)

Continue to make membership applications available @ town office and distributed when a snowmobile or ATV is registered.

Help advertise Snowdusters clubhouse for rentals.

Getting trails ready (moving brush, fixing bridges) – **EDC recommends contacting Unity College (Reeta Largen – Service Learning, Tom Mullin – UC Trail Crew, Pat Clark – UC Woodsmen**

Help in writing grant proposals (ie to state for \$ to fix bridge)

Misc:

Snowdusters gets some state grant \$ (~ 8000\$), but only if they can justify work hours @ 8\$/hr). ATV group applies for grants (based on # of miles of trails), gets volunteers to donate their \$ back into club.

Chase Toys: - selling snowmobiles:

Spend 3000\$/mo. on advertising - Radio (weekly), FB “boost”, website

FB “target Market” income levels, location, demographic – good success reaching out to nearby states (NH/Mass)

ITEM 3: Review Community Grant Application

- Unity Snow Dusters Club (Josh Miville)

Snowdusters is a 5013c and gets a small grant from the state to pay for labor to upkeep trails. They request \$2500 for renovations (job total is estimated \$5000).

Snowduster Clubhouse (Fisher rd.) built in 1973, been improved once since then and is a bit rundown now. They want to renovate to attract more people to use it.

Front has already been re-sided. Further renovations include new roof, kitchen, dry wall, and heating system update.

Is a community asset worth saving- they lend out tables and chairs, donate the space for public benefits and can be rented low cost for weddings, etc.

This application, as written, cannot be supported according to TIF rules – there is currently no indication for a clear benefit to Unity economy.

TIF \$ can be spent on supporting recreational trails (including maintenance or capital equipment, or bridge repair/engineering), printing costs for trail maps, time for someone to update social media and “get pins on maps,” help with advertising like trail signage.

Mary stated that there is no specified allocation for projects in the recreational trails category, so a very compelling project that is over \$2500 could be considered, best proposed at December meeting for consideration via 2018 budget process.

Committee recommends that Snowdusters rewrite application, answering the questions that were skipped. Recommend to focus on projects that TIF can fund according to rules. Josh shared that he would find it challenging to find the time to do this.

Mary Ann H. asked if the EDC had decided if members can assist with Marketing and Community Grant applications. It had been earlier decided that members could not apply for RLF funds as it would be difficult to be objective and have a bad public appearance. Several expressed reservations about members giving substantial assistance but also wanting to be helpful to those who have trouble preparing applications. It was noted that Selectmen, who make the final decision, should refrain from direct involvement and should recuse themselves from voting on applications that involve close relations. With only 2 members of the Selectboard right now, any recusal would result in the inability to act. **It was agreed that this policy needed to be developed and added to the EDC bylaws at the next meeting.**

Zoey offered to help Josh revise the application. If completed and resubmitted, Committee can review again at December meeting.

Najean S. will connect Josh and Jason with UBx. UBx follow up with Chase's for X-mas event.

ITEM 4: Administrative updates

- Comprehensive Plan Update (selectman)
 - Still waiting to hear about committee membership
- Welcome to Unity packets (Penny)
 - Working with Town Office to put together a folder with Unity Logo/ portfolio. Currently has post office moving forms and phone books and some business brochures but can add to it as people send it in, like a FAQ for town services.
 - Would like to get something ready in the next 10 days and give some to UC for new staff/faculty as well as having them at the town office
 - **EDC members get the word out- do businesses want to offer coupons, discounts? Continue by talking with UBx, working with Marketing subcommittee**
- Website upgrade (Penny S.)
 - Considering UnityME.org: can this function as both a town and a visitor site? And does our current provider have enough flexibility to do what we need or should we look to upgrade or even look elsewhere?
 - Examples to consider: LakeSiteTN.gov & TownofGranby.com – use same website company - these examples suggest that one website could possibly serve both purposes
 - Pros and cons: With an upgrade of our current provider we could edit content, but not structure, but structure will be more designed. For services, we might expect migration of current content and design (but not content creation). One site for both purposes = not having and maintaining 2 websites. Could even include Unity.org info (UBr owned)
 - **Contact BridgtonMaine.org and others to see what service they use. (Mary) Contact service provider for Orono Maine to learn what services they provide and approximate costs (Ellen)**
 - **Transition website review to marketing**
- Lighted sign (Mary L., Larry K.)
 - Research: 3 x 6 lit top sign = \$17,000, 4 x 6 = \$19,000
 - Consider ordinances for lit signs. – LEDs are exempt (?)
 - **Larry and Mary will bring proposal to Dec. budget meeting**

ITEM 5: Revolving Loan Fund Committee update (Mike G.)

- Committee of Anni R. Jim B, Mike G, Kari H. met to review 1st application
- Came up with a number of questions for follow up, **Jim B. will return to applicant for answers/ follow up.**
- Questions are arising in this first review of an RLF application, like communication channels. Committee is working to identify sticking points and develop better future practices, deciding on what our appetite for risk is, how to deal with conflicts of interest, and generally improving the overall process.
- **EDC recommends applicant contact the RLF committee for any clarification needed. It was reminded that these applications are CONFIDENTIAL and only the RLF Committee members should be aware of details.**

ITEM 6: Marketing Committee and interview update (Jenny d.)

- Marketing Committee is working on building a welcome package, nailing down the logo and tagline, completing our business marketing survey, and reviewing website options.
- **Marketing Committee will be taking the following actions: reach out to new businesses, brainstorm ideas on how to bring more events in to Unity and develop requests for budget consideration at Dec. EDC mtg.**

ITEM 7: Lodging Committee update (Mary L.)

- Phase 2 with UF and GrowSmart hasn't gotten going yet, but it seems likely that *in phase two we will engage GrowSmart to deliver some specific items, for example - write the RFP for a lodging study.*
- Mary found two primary consultants that do lodging studies (have done Rumford and Brighton ME). Range of service \$10-17,000. Should we send an RFP to both companies?

ITEM 8: Continuation: what's next for the EDC? (Mary L.)

Budget Development for 2018 expenditures

Have Jason from ATV back.

Next meeting is December 4

8:00 Adjourn