

UNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
July 13th, 2020 DRAFT Minutes
Unity Town Office

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

Present: Ellen B. (6:45), Najean S. Tony A. Tara Berry (new EDC member),

Unexcused: Jean B, Kari Hulva

Excused:

Guests: Michael Berry

ITEM 1: REVIEW MINUTES

Review and vote on May 2020 and June 2020 minutes - Ellen brought copies and members reviewed them.

Minutes were accepted, pending review of Jean B and Kari H.

ITEM 2: OLD MARINA PROPERTY

Some of the EDC met at the property to review it, although due to rain and mosquitoes, the meeting moved back to the town office.

Tony provided a satellite map and survey map of the site. He talked to our TIF consultant (Noreen - * note she has moved out of state so we should look to find another person to consult with about TIF matters) - we cannot use the word 'park' but if we call it a trailhead it could be covered under the current bylaws TIF funding for trails (and snowmobile and ATV trails do pass by there).

Tony did an online search for other campgrounds - we are at the center of a bit of a hole as campgrounds go (closest are at St. George and Newport).

Najean knows that people visit. Mike Lancaster put a guest book out at Brier's Beach (2 weeks) to collect info - there were lots of entries from surrounding areas: Albion, Etna, Thorndike, Waterville, Fairfield, Unity, China, Bigham, Burnham, Wiscasset, etc. Mike Lancaster also goes over when the weather's warm - he reported that it was so busy at points that cars had to back out. Landowners granted some permits to stay overnight. An RV requested to stay but with no services, that request was declined. Najean also mentions the number of RVs that drive 'through' Unity (it's on the way to the coast, mountains, etc.)

Tony says that we could earn funds by allowing boaters to store boats, set up a disc golf course.

If it could bring in more money than the current tax burden, and is owned by the town, it would be a net positive.

Najeau - keep Brier's as a family oriented swimming area, Kanokolus as more of a boat launch.

Michael B asks- are the gravel pads still there from prior mobile homes? Tony says- if they are, they can't see them (the weeds have grown up). But Najeau says the electricity and cable lines, etc. should still be there (poles, meter, conduit). There should be areas for RVs and tents, potentially a few small cabin rentals.

Tony- we have enough TIF funds to purchase the property and 5 yrs left on this TIF cycle. TIF funds could still pay for a number of projects as well (particularly related to trails).

Najeau - what do we do next to move this forward? Ellen reminds us of Jean (and Penny's) thoughts that we need a formal proposal for its potential cost to get running, and return and management. Ellen has suggested hiring/ paying someone to make this their project and take the reins; Najeau suggests putting together a subcommittee that would meet more frequently than once a month. [This could include members of the public - rep from FOLW, ATV club, etc. - not only EDC members.] The seller's have given the town 6 months (now 5) to come to a decision, but Tony thinks they would extend that until March 2021 if they were asked. The sellers would like to see the town have access.

The Town office has some 1962 plans for a campground with 47! Plots.

Tony and Najeau have been conducting informal polls with their friends, neighbors, and customers. Najeau reports that families are obviously for it, but so have several seniors. Is there a way to better reach a wider audience to get the word out and get a conversation started early to help persuade 'naysayers.'

Tara - it is a big project to take on, especially at this time. And how much longer would it take to get things built? Tony says we could start with carry in/ carry out tent camping only, with ADA accessible porta potties and some picnic tables and a dumpster. (the UBr building has a public shower?)

Tara - what is our (the Town's) insurance liability? It would fall under the same coverage plan as the Market of Unity, and Kanokolus Boat Launch.

Michael - suggests at some point building a bathhouse (brick) similar to the one in Belfast. It would be more attractive than porta potties (esp long term). There looks to be some existing plumbing to build on.

EDC suggests : including a clause when we present this to the town, that if the town cannot make a go of it, it will be offered for lease or for take over by the state (Avoid

selling to a private owner if possible). Campers should be moved on some time schedule - (cannot be year round)/ semi permanent.

Tony moves to make a call for members for an EDC sub committee (of no more than 7 people) (membership subject to approval by EDC/ selectmen) to take up this project, to a) research costs, quotes, regulations, grants, maintenance, etc. and b) make a proposal to the EDC regarding the purchase and a a sustaining business plan. One member at least should be from the EDC, and the committee should seek to have representatives from the REc committee, FOLW, the ATV club, SRLT, Unity College, and other interested groups.

ITEM 3: UPDATES

UBx- re: hats and swag grant - they have sold much of their original stock and the Depot, Market of Unity, and the Flower shop. UBx plans to purchase more for sale that will include the term "Maine" as per request.

Market of Unity - in June/ July, one weekend was rained out, one a holiday, but otherwise the market is going well, with at least one consistent farmer selling produce. Najean is getting calls from vendors now interested in participating (normal start date is around July 7, anyway). Example: Hot Dogs, crafters, etc.

Unity College - is currently closed for in person learning due to the pandemic. It has affected the rental market already. If this continues long term, this could be a good thing for rentals because there is a shortage of apartments and more units would be available to stable renters, or could be of concern because a lot of property is owned from people outside of the community and may not be maintained well. A longer time with students away would probably impact other businesses (restaurants, etc.).

ITEM 5: NEW BUSINESS:

Using TIF funding for COVID relief for businesses?

Do we want to utilize TIF funds to support Unity businesses?

Ideas include things like - advertising vouchers, purchasing and dispersing PPE and cleaning supplies, rent relief.

We would have to check that these activities are allowed under TIF guidelines?

Najean says that we should wait, because businesses currently have access to federal aid from the PPA, etc.

ITEM 6: INTRODUCTIONS OF NEW MEMBERS AND GUESTS

The EDC welcomes Tara Berry, she has lived all over the US, but lives in Unity now, wants to be involved, and is already on the charitable giving committee at her workplace (Johnny's Seeds).

ITEM 7: Adjourn - 8:25, next meeting August 3rd, 6:30 pm

