

UNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
March 5, 2018 Minutes

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

Present: Mary L, Mary Ann H, Najean S, Jon W, Ellen B, Lucia P, Larry K, Jenny d,
Alicyn S, Mike G Tony A,
Excused: Kari H
Unexcused: Gail C
Guests: Penny S, Dan M

ITEM 1: Review and approve Feb 5th meeting minutes

- Mary acknowledged Jim Buckle's resignation from the EDC
- Minutes were reviewed and three friendly amendments were made:
 - Amend Andy Reid to Reed.
 - Amend Gail's comment, item 6, to "selectmen historically honor what the town's people vote for."
 - Amend to "Jim Buckle left the meeting."

Mary Ann moved to adopt minutes with friendly amendments; Larry second. All approved with one abstention

Jenny will update minutes and send to Kari (town office)

ITEM 2: Assignment reports from last meeting and next steps

- Envirem (Mary) Unity had been on the owner's (Bob Kiely, President) radar due to "organic" reputation, and also fit in geographic target area b/w Bangor and Lewiston. Has had good experiences with planning board. Impressed by work force thus far. Travels to Waterville often for restaurant. Doesn't need much, can't think of complementary businesses.
- "Pitt Stop" building (Tony) Owner Ralph Nason has ideas; would be interested in selling. Restaurant ready, fully equipped. On first trip Tony was not able to get into details; second visit is planned: ask why vacant. Penny stated that the building has poor insulation and electricity.
- Nitro Trailers (Penny) – owner is moving business to Pittsfield, has vacant lot. There is a potential business looking for the right spot...
- State of Maine Chamber (Larry) – has not received response so far. Will call.
- UniTel (Gail absent)
- Clean up EDC Annual report (Gail – reported by Mary) – Done, some members of the EDC provided input this past week by email.
 - Ellen recommended a change to the lodging to clarify Dr. Inn.
 - Mary advised change brew pub status to "pending."
 - Penny asked to add a year (2017) to the community conversation.

Mary Ann will make these changes and send to Kari for the annual report.

- Floor Sheet for proposed TIF articles (Alicyn)

- Floor sheet is a concise summary of the EDC recommended TIF Articles to clarify and give perspective.
- This should help people understand, answer questions in advance, save time during meeting.
- Will include article numbers when they are available.
- Mary Ann advised clarifying the wayfinder from business directional signs to distinguish only latter is a cost share program
- Conversation shifted to the articles – see item 4 below.

Jenny will update floor sheet and provide copies at the Town Meeting.

- Unity College IT (Jenny) – personnel are willing to come, but has a big-picture perspective rather than details about UniTel.

Jenny will touch base with UC IT personnel again to see if there is a different topic he could address EDC on.

- Budget Committee (Mary Ann) – supported all the TIF articles except streetscape plan, and also learned that electronic sign is ineligible. Budget Committee appreciated the briefing on TIF and embraced suggestion that EDC and Budget Committee hold joint meetings outside of town meeting preparation season. Fall was suggested as a likely good time, plus as needed if issues arise.

ITEM 3: Committee Updates

- RLF Committee (Mike)
 - Kari Hulva new public point of contact. No new loan requests. The applicant will be getting funds at some point from KVCOG.
 - Selectmen report on loan administration (Penny) – KVCOG provided her the wrong information and that makes it hard to help the applicants. Following our process and KVCOG process and the state process is time consuming, complicated, cumbersome. The funds must be sent to KVCOG to be administered. Then, the funds must be replenished through a mechanism – and the process can extend beyond 2025 when TIF ends. In practice, this is a lot of work for not much money. Mike stated that if demand were stronger, it might be more worth it. Mary Ann suggested changing name to a “loan fund” vs. revolving. That would result in terms of 3-5 years vs. longer, and we could end it when TIF ends. Mary asked if we should promote it better. Some expressed reservation at the amount of risk the town takes on by doing this as a “secondary loan market” and others countered that it is designed to help small businesses. Alicyn suggested that we encourage the first applicant to help promote the program to other businesses; and that after a few more applications, the RLF committee will know better how to streamline the process and whether to continue. Alicyn recommended including info about the RLF in welcome messages to new businesses.

MaryAnn will inform Kari / town clerk to make the address changes on the list serve RLF@unityme.org.

- Marketing Committee (Jenny) – Committee developed the floor sheet (discussed above), and a TIF primer.

- Credited Jon Wadick and Zoey Bond for the idea of creating a TIF informational handout to anticipate questions at Town Meeting. Alicyn and Jenny provided copy for review by EDC.
- A one page sheet can be sent via social media, hard copy in advance of Town Meeting.
- Comments: MaryAnn – bullet point re: TIF district geography is confusing, maybe eliminate?
- Mary – perhaps add “expect \$70,000 per year until end of district in 2025?”
- Clarify that Unity has captured but not spent all of \$270,866 (or, take this number out or include the total that has been spent on the projects, not what was captured).
- Add school and county taxes low.
- Add “This does not raise tax dollars.”

Jenny will make edits and send electronic copy to be shared on personal and town social media. Hard copies to be printed by town clerk to be distributed to community gathering spaces.

ITEM 4: Articles for Town Meeting

- Penny stated MMA recommended that the lodging feasibility study should be from all new funds rather than prior appropriated funds
- Penny stated that the electric sign arguably could be covered by TIF (per MMA) but they recommended against using TIF funds for this purpose.
- Penny indicated that KVCOG dues would have its own article, as it historically has been voted on separately.
- Penny stated that the Selectmen have struck the word ‘plan’ from the article on streetscape, lighting and signage because they do not want to limit the use of the \$. By leaving off plan, we can be more flexible and the article has a better chance of passing. Removing ‘plan’ would allow previously allocated \$ for ‘professional services’ to be used. Tony said that Penny had investigated lighting, thought it was too expensive, so why institute a plan when we might not be able to carry it out.

MaryAnn and Alicyn thought that the word plan was purposefully included so that people would understand the EDC’s intent of that money. The addition of “and implementation,” was suggested to create more flexibility.

Penny and Tony are selectmen and ultimately bring the warrants forward, EDC is advisory only. They do not choose to move forward with the word “plan.” Budget Committee voted to recommend against approving this article.

For the floor sheet, it was agreed to keep the bullet points already written for the floor sheet but to reverse their order. Jenny stated that she will revise the Article titles on the floor sheet to mirror the titles provided by Selectmen.

- Mary reminded EDC to be mindful of the \$15K of appropriated but unspent money – we do want to use this up or change its allocation.

EDC members should be prepared to speak for less than 1 minute or to answer questions:

- ***Destination Website (Jenny)***
- ***Streetscape (Gail)***
- ***Wayfinder signs (Penny)***

- **Recreational Trails (Ellen)**
- **Traffic etc. (Selectmen)**
- **Lodging study (Mary)**

ITEM 5: UniTel

- Mary asked what the group wants to know from UniTel. Lucia believes there are actual plans for improved service and speed. Mary Ann stated we should all be informed about their services.

Mary will ask Gail to ask UniTell to come to the May meeting.

ITEM 6: Ordinance clarity re RLF & Subcommittees (Mary Ann)

- Mary Ann asked for clarification about whether non-EDC members can serve on subcommittees, specifically the RLF, which has a non-EDC member serving. Due to the confidential role of that committee, Mary Ann suggests they should be officially appointed.
- Mary urged that EDC subcommittee members not need to all be members of EDC – that would be too much of a time requirement and “guest” status does not honor their commitment to helping on the project. Penny expressed reluctance at having non-residents on sub committees when the EDC has a limit on non-residents. Mary responded that the Selectmen could appoint them, thereby keeping control. Lucia stated that volunteers get tapped out and that we need all the help we can get.

Selectmen will consider the following at tomorrow’s meeting (3/6): allow and appoint non-EDC members to sit on EDC subcommittees or some form of working groups.

ITEM 7: Announcements and other business and next meeting

- EDC memberships
 - Mary (EDC Chair) will be not renew her membership for another after the April meeting when her term is up. The Chair is a big job, answers questions, preparing agenda, being a liaison.
 - Lucia’s and Jon’s terms are up and they do not wish to continue.
 - Mary Ann is considering resigning.
 - Minimum is 7 members, max is 17
- Mary stated that she would love to see EDC have a long term plan that would include annual ways to spend TIF and other initiatives
- Next meeting: discuss next steps for approved TIF appropriations. Selectmen meet Wednesday, April 3, one day after our scheduled meeting April 2; perhaps push the meeting back, but group could not find an agreeable date. Meeting stands at April 2.
- Penny advised us to “know your audience” wherever you may go, always look over your shoulder.
- Penny thanked all members of the committee. Appreciates all our work and enthusiasm.
- Larry stated the ice fishing derby went well. **Penny wants to invite fish biologist t an informal meeting in April at Mammie’s, inviting FOLW members to attend as well as EDC members.**

8:10 Adjourn