

UNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
April 2, 2018 Minutes

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

Present: Larry K, Ellen B, Gail, Tony A, Alicyn S, Alicia McCormack (new), Kari Hulva, Najean S

Excused: Jean Bourg

Unexcused:

Guests: Penny S, Noreen Norton, Kathy Monroe, Mark Lessard (Horse Show Ring)

ITEM 1: Review and approve April 2nd meeting minutes

Alicyn moved to adopt minutes with friendly amendments; Gail second. All approved with one abstention

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

ITEM 2: Introductions of New Members and Guests

Larry sent around a sheet for old and new members to update phone and email info. Alicia McCormack is a new EDC member appointed by selectmen.

ITEM 3: Committee Reports

Marketing – are moving forward, have a list of criteria and wishes and have a meeting on 22nd May to interview reps from 3 website services virtually.

ITEM 4: Review and Vote on Community Grant Application (Horse Ring)

For \$2,500 (they are matching with \$1000 of their own and the Rotary Club is donating a new (nonpermanent) snack shack). Larry summarized the request and budget (funds will go mostly for lumber and sand). Kathy (proposer) says that, currently, people come at the beginning of the season but lose interest because the ground isn't well -maintained. Alicia asked if this grant would allow them to be self-sustaining – yes, Mark says replacing sand will bring in new audiences like barrel racing. Alicia asked are injuries at the ring covered by Town Insurance? – Kathy and Mark say people sign waivers, provide proof of insurance. Alicyn asks how many events when the ring was operating – Kathy says 8 -12 shows a season. Depending on the type of show, 20 -75 participants – they could double that with improvements to the ring. Gail asked about the connection with Economic Development – how will they show that there is economic activity as a result of the improvements. Kathy says – people eat in restaurants, go to local coffee shops, etc. They have paperwork (ie insurance waivers), to indicate how many people participate in the show. Kathy said she could also ask and track how many additional audience members are expected with each participant. Penny says that the ring is town owned, anything they do will improve town property. Larry says that improving the aspect of the ring will benefit the look of the town, too and is supported by a large group of volunteers. Alicia asks- how will you let horse show people know of the improvement s- via social media and word of mouth – it is a small community and a good place for children to come and learn. Penny said that getting people involved in horses leads to more indirect purchases (feed, hay, vet., etc.) Noreen agrees that this sounds like economic development.

See Facebook: Unified Riding and Driving Club

Gail moves that the EDC accepts the proposal from the Unified Riding and Driving Club of Unity for 2500\$. Alicia 2nd - passes unanimously.

Kari Hunt or Penny Sampson will administer funds from the Town Office and URD Club will return receipts.

UDR Club will maintain some records of attendees and make that information available to the EDC.

ITEM 5: Discussion of allowed TIF uses

Noreen is available to answer questions.

Larry – if funds have been allocated at Town meeting – if EDC votes to spend \$, does it need to go back to selectmen for approval (for example, for a Community Grant like the one awarded today).

Noreen says – this is a circular process – it starts at budget time when the EDC puts forth a proposal, then the proposal gets approval at town meeting. Then, within that value and within the specified funds, the EDC should be able to determine how those dollars are spent.

Gail has 2 points of conflicting language – other language in ____ document says that we are advisory only without authority to approve and it has happened before that an EDC recommendation for using allocated funds was not agreed to by selectmen. Based on our EDC ordinance, Noreen suggests that EDC is to focus on programmatic recommendations for broad directions but that specific EDC recommendations still require selectmen final approval. Gail asks also -can Selectmen make proposals to spend TIF funds without consulting the EDC (bypassing the EDC)? Kari understands that TIF is the responsibility/burden of the EDC and proposals for its use originate with the EDC, although requires Selectmen final approval – Alicia reminds us that Selectmen and EDC needs to work together and agree on the direction. Noreen reminds us that all proposals and warrants to spend TIF funds should be based on the categories in the table in the TIF omnibus.

Larry – what are your recommendations for us - not all have easy access to online sources - what can we do to bring attention in an economical way? Does an electronic sign fit into TIF under this description?

Noreen – can you give examples of how the sign would function – Larry cites a recent UCCPA music event was not well advertised. Noreen- putting any municipal (or town/recreational/school) announcements on a sign will bring scrutiny of TIF fund usage. The portion of the cost of the sign and its maintenance devoted to community attractions could be borne by the TIF funds.

Gail – who will make sure that we do use the sign according to proportion of funds used to pay for it?

Alicia – the biggest economic turn away to her are some of the disrepair of houses in the “downtown.” Is there a way to use TIF funds to incentivize townspeople to help repair. Noreen says no – but you could purchase and help repair buildings for commercial use, or offer grants to businesses for façade work.

Noreen – identify vacant/run down/ underutilized buildings. Develop a database of those properties and other places available for development. Then identify what businesses we want. Then develop specific approaches to call and recruit new businesses. Use TIF revenues to pay a consultant (or to support someone already on staff, or a summer intern) to work with local realtors and assessors to develop a list. Sometimes it pays to pay someone to do the work. Look at TIF as an investment fund to help us grow. There are two reasons to put a property in a TIF district – a property brings in revenue (ie an apartment building) or because you want to make an investment there (infrastructure, etc.) to capture revenue from a new investment.

Alicyn – do we have access to what other towns have done with their TIF funds?

Larry – we are unique, we don’t have a defined down town. We should start small to learn how to best administer TIF funds on small projects, and work up to larger ideas. Get momentum going again.

Successful businesses will attract other successful businesses. Some of his ideas are -

- Saturday Market (see item 9)
- Trailhead parking

- Beach improvements

Noreen says all those items are legitimate uses of TIF Funds

Tony asks about the well on Depot st. that is in need of repair – is it eligible for use of TIF funds? Noreen asks if any businesses at all are in the TIF district – no – so TIF cannot be used for the well maintenance. (We paid for well repair out of general funds – which was the right thing to do).

Kari – should we consider re-writing the TIF district again to capture that end of town? – Is it easier to set up a new district to capture Depot St. or amend/add the Depot st. area? Noreen says it would be easier to amend, however our district timeline is getting short. Adding some parcels would be less extensive than the 2016 remaking of the district.

Gail will find the third document that she says mentions this language and send to selectmen and Noreen for review.

ITEM 6: The RLF fund

We have allocated 55,000\$ and after a year are still working on getting one loan approved.

Larry says, we do not have the expertise to run this well. Kari – sees it as a way to do some development on a community basis rather than a specific business. Focusing on community ventures rather than specific businesses might have less restrictions on the way the \$ can be spent.

Noreen suggests – set up a loan guarantee fund with a bank – businesses could get a loan from a bank, RLF could guarantee part of that loan – the bank does the review/ due diligence and Unity still supports local businesses. Alternative – work with a bank to administer it completely, or hire KVCOG or Eastern Maine Development Corps to manage the RLF – they do manage programs for other funds (but there is a fee). Noreen says we could still capitalize the \$ and extend the use of the money beyond 2025 even if we chose to guarantee a loan. These ideas were considered by the EDC when the RLF was first set up and it was felt it would not give us the flexibility and would add unnecessary costs – however, with experience, we understand that the fees would be worth it.

EDC will discuss working with a bank and using RLF funds to guarantee loans through a bank at following meetings.

ITEM 7: Update Committee member list

See item 2

Larry will pass updated contact info sheet to Kari Hunt at town office to update email lists and website info.

ITEM 8: Old Business

Not specifically addressed

ITEM 9: Market of Unity

A small group has organized a Saturday market – make it, bake it, grow it. Have approval from Selectmen to use Town Hall property for the market. Will be coming to EDC to ask for marketing \$ and marketing towards the coast. They plan for no charge to vendors for yr 1, in yr 2 charges will be enough

to cover basic costs to run the market. Hope to start July 7th 2018 and are looking for people to help spread the word and invite vendors.

ITEM 10: New Business

Penny spoke on behalf of the ATV club and Jason Johnson, president. They are working on trails and expanding to Brooks and Plymouth (trails already exist in Troy). Jason has promoted the ATV club well. He hopes EDC can help with 6 business signs at 6 locations. (Businesses are Unity businesses – but signs would be placed outside of Unity), and with stakes and trail access signs, and gravel to level some spots (6 yards to level multi use trails in Unity). Request is for 1,091\$.

Fixing trails – can come out of TIF trail category. 815.20\$ *

Business signs – could be legitimate under the TIF marketing category. 276\$

* a later email clarified that the quote for gravel was incorrect and the actual cost is \$175.00

Larry moves that we approve use of TIF funds allocated for trails in the amount of \$815 (later amended to \$175) for the purpose of gravel, stakes, and ATV access route signs for use in the bounds of Unity by the ATV club. Motion seconded by Alicia.

Motion approved, with one no vote.

Kari Hunt or Penny Sampson will administer funds from the Town Office and ATV Club will return receipts.

ITEM 11: Views and Hopes

For the agenda next time – send ideas for agenda items in advance.

Budget Committee is meeting May 17th – EDC members welcome to attend.

ITEM 12: Open floor

ITEM 13: Adjourn