

## **Woodstock Economic Development Commission Agenda**

Draft Minutes

September 3, 2020

All participants on the Zoom due to COVID-19

**Commissioners present:** Jon Spector, Larry Niles, Courtney Lowe, Julia Cooke, Joe DiNatale, Michael Malik

**Commissioners absent:** Elizabeth Reaves, Mica Seely, one vacancy

**Others Present:** Sally Miller, Mary Riley, Beth Finlayson Allan Stein, Karim Houry, Jeffrey Kahn, Bill Kerbin, Isabelle Chicoine, Patrick Fultz, Tom Weschler, David Brown, Ray Bourgeois, Bill Corson

### **I. Call to Order**

Chair Spector called the meeting to order at 7:05. The agenda was reviewed. The meeting was recorded. A copy is [here](https://bit.ly/2RFpUKS) - <https://bit.ly/2RFpUKS>. It is also available on the EDC webpage under Videos.

### **II. Additions or Deletions to the Agenda**

Additions to the agenda. Chair Spector wanted to add a discussion about State \$30 gift certificate and a grant proposal that was submitted. Mr. Niles asked to discuss a 6:00 start time.

### **III. Citizen's Comments**

None.

### **IV. Approval of Minutes**

With a motion from Mr. Lowe and seconded by Mr. Niles the minutes of August 6 were unanimously approved. No roll call was taken.

### **V. Financial Update**

Ms. Miller received a report from the town late in the day which seemed to indicate that Woodstock received \$20,217 for the second quarter of 2020 which is down about 75% from last year. Chair Spector mentioned that grants were made in January based on full forecast for the year, and while we are not exceeding our income, there will be any reserve at year end.

### **VI. Update on Business Relief Fund and Woodstock Works**

Ms. Miller presented an update of the Business Relief Fund. There were some inquiries about the fund in August, but no payments were made. The balance in the account remains \$54,200. Chair Spector asked if there was interest in making any changes to the account, but there was no motion to take action, so it will remain as is. Mr. Lowe said that the lodging industry has a lobbyist working hard to get more funds for that sector. No update on Woodstock Works.

### **VII. New Grant Requests**

a. Ottauquechee River Trail Release of Approved Funding

Tom Weschler presented the request from the Ottauquechee River Trail for a release of an additional \$7,500 from the funds that we approved in January for a total of \$22,500 in this calendar year. The OTR has been moving fast. They have all the state and local permits, and the town has provided insurance, so property owners have signed off. They will have an opening day on Labor Day. In building the trail necessary changes have become apparent. The kiosk and ramp are important, as well as trail signage and printing of maps. Allocation of these additional funds will allow them to be up and running starting Monday. There has been great community support on volunteer days and great coverage by the media.

Mr. Niles said that Mr. Weschler has done a great job organizing it and getting people involved. Mr. Lowe agreed and said that it is a great investment for our community. Kudos were given to Randy Richardson and Jerry Frederickson.

Chair Spector asked for a motion to release the funds. Mr. DiNatale moved the motion. Ms. Cooke seconded. All approved. No roll call taken.

Mr. Weschler said that the Open House is Monday, September 7 from 10:00 – 2:00.

b. Woodstock Chamber of Commerce Disaster Recovery Grant – Taste of Woodstock

c. Woodstock Chamber of Commerce Disaster Recovery Grant – Pasta Supper

Items b. and c. were discussed together as they are similar situations. These were both requests to replace expected profits from cancelled events. The third request is for stabilization.

Chair Spector summarized his note which addressed:

1. Specific grants requests.

2. Broader policy issues.

He posed the question about how much support should Chamber receive from the government? Ms. Miller reminded the EDC that they already have an MOU with the Chamber about the website.

Mr. Fultz wanted to know the numbers. The Welcome Center costs \$36K annually to operate, the Town gives them \$25K.

Ms. Cooke thinks Chamber should be compensated, but also thinks that there is a third category which covers some services may not be in line with the EDC. She sees the EDC as more structural vs. commercial – i.e. daycare vs. individual business. She thinks the funds must be used for priorities of the EDC.

Mr. DiNatale sees these are two different things – hardship vs. ongoing.

Ms. Finlayson described a young couple that came and wanted to move here. She gave them information.

Mr. Malik asked what was different due to COVID. Have their expenses gone down? Ms.

Finlayson said that they furloughed one person, and membership has gone down. Ms. Chicoine said that Chamber gets EDC funds for operation of the visitor center, but they still need funds for staff. They need funding because the Director is currently doing all the jobs.

Mr. Lowe says Chamber has no cash reserves. He wondered if there is any State relief funding allocated to Chambers. Ms. Finlayson said that the Chamber is not eligible for most loans because they are a 501.c6. The Chambers have asked for the State to send some CARES money their way.

Ms. Cooke sees two very different issues. Back rent is something different from grants for recovering lost income.

Mr. DiNatale see the Chamber as another entity in the Town and decisions should be based on that. Ms. Miller suggested that the funds come from the Business Relief Fund.

Mr. DiNatale made a motion to use Business Relief Fund monies to support the two grants for \$13,300. Ms. Cooke seconded. Mr. Malik questioned whether the EDC can change the terms of the BRF. Mr. Lowe said that he feels comfortable because it will help all businesses. All approved. No roll call taken.

d. Woodstock Chamber of Commerce Disaster Recovery Grant – Back Rent

Ms. Finlayson explained that this request came from the Select Board. They suggested that the Chamber contact the EDC. The Chamber has asked to lower the rent due to the Town. Before the pandemic, the Chamber had a plan to pay back rent to town in 2020.

Chair Spector said that the goal is to find a model that works; cleaning up the back rent is part of the stabilization. He suggested not considering it tonight and postponing it until the larger picture is known.

Mr. Niles thinks these are all COVID related and should be all in one bucket.

Ms. Cooke said that she doesn't feel great about approving a rent subsidy without know what the EDC is actually funding for the Chamber. She sees the EDC priorities diverging from the Chambers in some areas.

Ms. Finlayson thinks that 5 months is COVID related - \$2,500. The rest the Chamber owns and would be able to deal with it. Ms. Chicoine hopes that they won't be in this situation again.

Mr. Lowe clarified that the back rent is going to the Town. Mr. Bourgeois said that that the Town gets the money for the Chamber through a special article (not in the budget.)

Chair Spector asked for motion. The request was for \$6,000. Mr. Niles motioned to grant \$2,500 for back rent (based on Ms. Finlayson's comments.) Mr. Lowe seconded.

Mr. Malik suggested granting the full amount and then having the Chamber pay back over time. The Chamber worried that would be getting complicated.

Chair Spector polled EDC members. The consensus was \$2,500 was okay because it was COVID related. A vote was then taken. All approved.

## **VIII. Old Business**

a. Competitive Bidding Requirements for EDC and Grantees

Mr. Spector explained that the Town has a purchasing policy which covers the competitive bidding process but doesn't recognize entities like EDC. He thinks that the policy should be adjusted for EDC projects. There are reasonable ways to cover EDC projects. He wants to withdraw the motion from last month.

Mr. DiNatale wanted to know if it would be for all future projects.

Chair Spector said that they would ask grantees to either follow the policy or make a statement that they have assessed the situation as being a good value for the money. It only applies for contracts and purchases \$3,000 and over.

## **VIII. New Business**

a. State \$30 gift certificate

Chair Spector wanted to make sure that businesses know about the program as it has a short deadline. He will talk with the Chamber. He asked if the EDC would deputize him to advertise the program. Businesses need to sign up for it. There were no objections.

b. Grant Proposal

August 31 was the deadline to submit a State marketing grant to help communities develop videos for marketing programs. Class 4 (Charlie Kahn) helped submit the grant, and they will

donate their time for the project. The grant is \$10K with a total cost of \$20K. There was a short deadline so Chair Spector helped submit the proposal. The video will be owned by the Town.

c. Discussion of 6:00 meeting time

All members agreed to try it for six months.

**IX. Other Business**

Ms. Riley asked about picnic tables. Mr. Spector said that two have already been placed on Green. The MOU for use of the Pi property has been signed. The other tables are at Chair Spector's and should be placed this weekend.

**X. Adjourn**

On a motion from Mr. Lowe and seconded by Ms. Cooke, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45.

Respectfully submitted,

Sally Miller

EDC Coordinator

September 7, 2020