

Town of Woodstock
Economic Development Commission Meeting
June 2, 2022
6:00 pm
Town Hall & Zoom
Minutes

Draft minutes are subject to approval.

Present: Chair Jon Spector, Larry Niles, Joe DiNatale, Mica Seely, Todd Ulman, Patrick Fultz, Michael Malik, Deborah Greene, Marion Abrams, Nikki Nourse, Susie Stulz, Tom Ayres, Beth Finlayson, Roger Logan, Alita Wilson, Jeffrey Kahn, Clay Gillette, David Brown, Antonia Richie

A. Call to order

1. Chair Spector called the EDC Meeting of June 2, 2022, to order at 6:00 pm

B. Additions or deletions to the agenda

1. Chamber of Commerce request
2. Marketing update

C. Citizen comments

1. Ms. Wilson stated that she thinks Chair Spector is doing a really good job with transparency and community what the EDC is doing and how people can be involved. She believes they need to find a way to better build one on one relationships, however.

D. Request from the Chamber & group of restaurants

1. Ms. Finlayson stated that she has been working with a group of restaurants. One restaurant is going to change their house, so they are open Thursdays through Mondays and just closed Tuesday and Wednesday. The restaurant group has created a small spreadsheet of walkable restaurants, and hours. They also included restaurants from Simon Pierce to Ramuntos. They would like to have window clings and rack cards printed that state where to dine in Woodstock with a QR code. The cost would be up to \$2,500. The Chamber is putting \$1,000 towards this. Brian P Graphics is going to be designing this.
2. Mr. Fultz volunteered to do the design and QR part for free to help eliminate some of the costs.
3. Ms. Finlayson stated that Brian had estimated \$600 for that.
4. Ms. Greene stated that requests like this should be in writing and formalized.
5. Mr. Ulman stated that it is disappointing that the restaurants cannot come together and pay a couple hundred dollars each to pay for this themselves. This benefits them. They need restaurants open anow and think they should vote on this tonight. People need to eat. There is a huge problem. Restaurants are turning people away because they are too busy. He does not think taxpayers should have to pay to advertise for this.
6. Ms. Finlayson stated that the EDC funds come from the additional tax that the restaurants are paying already. It comes from their customers. This is a benefit to visitors and guests. This was not created to benefit the restaurants. They want people to be able to easily see what is open and hopefully stem some of the frustration of the dining issues in Woodstock. They will focus on walkable Woodstock restaurants.
7. Chair Spector stated that he also views this as a solution to the frustration that people feel. He thinks the EDC should support this.

Motion: by Chair Spector to approve a \$500 grant to support the restaurant program and to also have Mr. Fultz do the design work necessary to produce the QR code, thus reducing the cost of the project by \$600.

Seconded: by Mr. DiNatale.

Discussion: Chair Spector stated that they will require a letter from the Chamber that shows where the money is going and shows that \$1,000 from the Chamber was contributed and also shows what the EDC's \$500 was spent on. If the cost is less, then the refund will be split equally between the EDC and the Chamber. The EDC would also like to see a document of what is going to be created.

Ms. Finlayson stated that they will distribute the window clings to restaurants, merchants, lodging properties, and have them at the Welcome Center.

Mr. Ulman stated that he will support this. He believes the next agenda should have how the EDC should handle small projects that might come up like this.

Ms. Seely stated that she feels that the EDC is making special exceptions and it is unfair.

Ms. Abrams stated that she agrees that the EDC needs to figure out a process. She feels comfortable with this proposal because they have worked with the Chamber many times and they benefit the community.

Vote: 9-0-0, passed.

E. Marketing update

1. Mr. Fultz stated that they are launching their marketing program in the next few days. People will get one of two offers. One is a \$100 gift card, and the other is a night's stay in Woodstock. They will keep testing to see which offer works best. Hopefully within the next month they will have some results from that. It is very exciting.
2. Chair Spector stated that they have substantial growth on Facebook and Instagram. They have 16,000 followers now on Instagram. This is significantly higher than it was a couple of years ago.

F. Approval of minutes from May 5, 2022

G. Financial update

H. New business

1. Meeting time survey

- a. Chair Spector stated that the EDC used to meeting at 7:00 pm. They now meet at 6:00 pm. They may be able to have more people participate if it was at a more convenient time. However, this is a consistent time compared to other boards. He also wants it to be convenient for EDC members.
- b. Mr. DiNatale stated that he thinks 6:00 pm falls at people's dinner time. It is inconvenient for people. He suggested 7:00 pm or 7:30 pm.
- c. Ms. Abrams stated that she could do 6:00 pm or 7:00 pm Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday.
- d. Mr. Fultz stated that he is good with any weekday night after 5:00 pm. He could do sometime between 11:00 am to 2:00 pm if needed.
- e. Mr. Logan stated that he does not think it is worth it to survey the public. The meetings should not be on the weekend or during the day. That is disrespectful to those who work.
- f. Chair Spector stated that they will be changing the time of the meetings to 6:30 pm.

2. Open meetings

- a. Chair Spector stated that he would like the heads of the working groups to know how they are going to run their meetings. He believes they need to comply with the open meeting law.

3. Recruitment of working group members

- a. Chair Spector stated that he would also like to know how working groups are going about recruiting members and if they are still recruiting.
- b. Mr. Niles stated that it would be beneficial to have someone from VLCT speak with the EDC regarding open meeting laws and requirements. It would be very valuable.
- c. Chair Spector stated that they will have that discussion at their next meeting.

I. Old business

1. Overall priorities and the best way(s) to advance economic and community development

- a. Chair Spector stated they are trying to further define economic and community development. They want to find 5-6 priorities. He created some conclusions from last month. There is a clear consensus among EDC and community member to go big. There were not a lot of new priority areas proposed. The current EDC priorities still dominated the discussion. There was a proposal to transfer a portion of EDC funding to the General Fund. Not all current EDC priorities generate the same level of enthusiasm.
- b. Mr. Ulman stated that he chose to increase housing and childcare. Both would increase economic development.
- c. Ms. Seely stated that childcare and housing are also her top two.
- d. Chair Spector stated that 8 out of 9 EDC members think that housing is a priority.
- e. Mr. DiNatale stated that in order to do a good job with it they have to really get engaged with the subject and learn as much as they can about it. There is a lot of data involved in childcare for example. There is State involvement, and the level of involvement depends on the age of the kids and how many kids there are. It is going to take time.
- f. Chair Spector stated that the working groups are coming up with big proposals. The problem they have is coming up with the proposals. Big proposals are scarce. They have only been doing small things. They could create a working group that focuses on the smaller proposals. It needs to be a radical change in the way they operate.
- g. Mr. Logan stated that he agrees completely. These are multi-year projects. The results are not going to be delivered in the first six months. They should only invest in things that can become self-sustaining. Otherwise, they are funding it forever.
- h. Ms. Greene stated that they may need to find new ways to communicate what they are looking to do.
- i. Mr. Ulman stated that other places in America offer tax breaks to developers. He is concerned that new policies within the Town need to be put in place, but he does not think that can happen with the state of Town Hall right now. There is no Town Manager and no full time staff in Planning & Zoning. He is concerned with how slow things move in their government.

- j. Ms. Seely stated that she struggles with the idea of putting limitations on anything. It is foolish. They are talking about really big, complicated ideas. It requires a lot of ideas coming to the table.
- k. Ms. Greene stated that it is good to come up with a wish list for these ideas. That way it is easier to sort through ideas. It helps people to know what they are looking for.
- l. Mr. Fultz stated that they need the housing for the workforce. They should incentivize people to come here who have the money to increase housing.
- m. Chair Spector stated that they are not going to build housing. The goal is to help developers to build housing. They are also not going to create childcare. The goal is to have developers or owners pay most of the cost, but they help to fill the gap to make it a possibility.

J. Adjourn

Motion: by Mr. DiNatale to adjourn the meeting at 8:01 pm.

Seconded: by Ms. Greene.

Discussion: none.

Vote: none.

*Respectfully submitted,
Nikki Nourse*