

TOWN OF WASHINGTON

Washington Economic Development Committee

Tuesday, January 16th, 2024 at 3:00 pm

Minutes are subject to approval of the Economic Development Committee

Members Present: Robyn Gray, Liz Fenton, Fran Keilty, Trisha McMahon, Jim Brinton,

Public; Ann Jamieson (from voices)

Staff: Michelle Gorra- Economic and Community Development Coordinator

1. **Call to order:** 3:02
2. **Approval of December 19, 2023 Minutes:** Fran made a motion to approve the minutes, Trisha seconded, all in favor.
3. **Report on activities of Economic and Community Development Coordinator**
 - a. **New Home Owners Mailings-** Nothing at this time
 - b. **MLK Day-** We had the event at the park, & had 10 organizations participating. Very impressed with how everything went. Habitat for Humanity was there, and they're hoping to close on a house next week. Collected food, letters to the soldiers, a story and craft for the kids, seems to work perfectly for this time of year. Robyn mentioned a possible time change would be better in the future, 9am is a bit early for some people especially on a holiday.
 - c. **Newsletter-** Getting new schedule out, articles due in about a month
 - d. **Arts Council-** Met last week, had a visitor who is a part of the art community, went over their budget request for next year. Currently working on the cultural district- to be recognized by the state, appear on the map and also helps us be able to apply for grants. Will need to have a public meeting as part of the process.
 - e. **Sidewalk Grant-** Did not get the grant. Michelle had a meeting with the DOT and they have put us in the pool for the next round which should be spring or summer of 2024.
 - f. **Affordable Housing -** There was a zoning meeting regarding multifamily housing, the state mandated that we allow it somewhere in the town. The hearing was well attended, most of the comments were in favor, feel pretty comfortable that zoning will pass the new regulations soon. Currently no multifamily buildings are allowed to be built. The Housing Commission, is going to be asking in the budget request a significant amount of money be put aside for affordable housing, a large piece of property is supposed to be donated to the housing trust very shortly.
4. **New Business-**
 - a. **POCD 2024- draft of Economic Development section**
 1. *Stimulate economic development while maintaining rural character.*
 2. *Promote local and regional economic stability.*
 3. *Maximize socio-economic and locational advantages*

Issue- Business and educational leaders of Washington have universally cited the lack of suitable housing as their primary obstacle in attracting and retaining quality employees.

Goal - Washington shall prioritize the creation of affordable and “missing middle” housing as an economic development strategy.

Issue- Future economic and community development will be increasingly dependent on reliable communications infrastructure. Wireless coverage is spotty and substandard, and current internet service is not designed to meet future needs.

Goal- Washington shall strive for universal access to wireless communications and fiber-to-the home internet services.

b. Budget/ Goals- Projects 23/24

1. Advance the design and construction of the Washington Community Center (2025) Funding, \$1,000 (may drop it down on our priorities, still important but on hold)
2. Work with the Housing Commission to implement the Washington Housing Plan, funding would come out of the housing commission budget.
3. Continue to improve/expand the audience engagement with the Towns print/ social media to increase retail/ non-profit economic support. Funding asking for \$17,000 for a newsletter but thinking will need \$18,000 for postage etc.. Social media/ Mailchimp and explore- \$35,500
4. Broadband Fiber- optic network- Survey, printing, community conversation, \$2,000
5. Creative Cultural Ecosystems” 6.1, Complete Streets, sidewalks, bikes and parking - Funding \$2,000
6. Work with the NOW sub group on attracting young families, including services for families, real estate options- Funding- On hold at this time.
7. Continue to work with the WBA. Funding - Supplies budget (including winter lights) Fran mentioned we should add \$5,000 to the request.
8. Conduct a survey/ review to outline improved pedestrian and parking options for villages- Michelle would like to make a capital request for the sidewalks. Funding- consultant, layout, grants and town.
9. Support/advance Town and Regional Arts and Culture organizations and events for 2023-24. Funding- \$2,000- Summer postcards/ printing

5. Report of WBA & Selectmen on items not on the agenda-WBA- A slate of officers will be presented at the annual meeting in February. **Selectmen** -Jim went to the sustainability meeting and talked a lot about the roads and the issue of the severe storms undermining the roads. Also discussed salt use on the roads as it relates to water quality. Compost, working on to see what we can do to set up our own composting here since it has been so successful.

6. Visitors-

7. Adjournment Motion to adjourn; Michelle made a motion to adjourn the meeting, all in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amanda Reale
Selectman's Assistant

Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SYUwVw-ZuLY>

