

TOWN OF WASHINGTON

Washington Economic Development Committee/ Commission

Tuesday October 13, 2020 at 9:30am

Minutes are subject to approval of the Economic Development Committee

Present: First Selectman Jim Brinton, Michelle Gorra, Michael Jackson, Wayne Hileman, Fran Kielty, Valerie Sedelnick, Phil Market, Jeffrey Miller, Dan Sherr, Tony Bedini

1. **Call to Order:** Michelle Gorra called the meeting to order at 9:31
2. **Motion:** Motion was made by Jim Brinton to approve the minutes of September 8, 2020 Dan Sherr seconded that motion,
3. **Report of The Economic & Community Development Coordinator-**
 - Has been working with new businesses, wants to add a new tab on the Washington Town website aiming towards new businesses to allow an easy spot for all the paper work a new small business would need.
 - Affordable housing- Town of Washington got a grant to work on affordable housing plan, gathering a task team together to get everything moving.
 - Wants to get together a complete mailing list of all the businesses in town.
 - Delivering the “Gift it Forward” checks, which has been a good way to meet the business owners.
 - Sent 66 letters to the homes in Washington that were that were sold since March 2020, Jim wrote a very nice welcome letter to the new residents including in the letter some extra information such as; The Explore Washington Website, and the town website, and a survey. Included a form to mail back so they can add their emails to receive emails of updates from the town aiming toward the new families and the families with children to stay connected and aware of what’s going on in town.
 - Updating the Economic Development town page website, and would love feedback and what you would like to see on that page
 - Wanted to thank Tony and Dan for writing the Annual Report, and thank Jim Brinton for bringing back the Annual Report after all these years.
4. **New Business**
 - a. **New Businesses Highlight-**
 - 4 New Businesses that have opened this month in Washington such as: The Smithy Café at 9 Main, The PO café on the Green, opened this week, and they’re having a ribbon cutting at 11am on Thursday, Hays Worthington, a jewelry store, opening this month in New Preston, Friedrich’s Optik, ready to go waiting for last sign off. It’s going to be in the depot right near the Hickory Stick.
 - Please welcome all these new businesses to town by stopping in and supporting them.
 - b. **New Students and Keeping Families-**

- Spoke with Megan Bennett from Shepaug, Laura Martin from Montessori, Ben Tuff at Rumsey
- Region 12 got 68 new students, 34 of them are from Washington, 31 are at the primary school only 3 at Shepaug.
- Montessori had 88 new students (double their normal enrollment) 10 from Washington (7 families)
- Rumsey had 35 new students 20 more than normal, about half from Washington at least half living in 2nd home.
- Would like to start more offerings for families so kids have something to do on the weekends and on the evenings, continuing to think of events to offer to new young families in the community.

c. Titus Block Sidewalk Grant-

- A grant came out to increase pedestrian and bicycle activity, we went to work with Cardinal Engineers as quickly as we could. It's important to get a plan to send into the state to get approved for the \$600,000 grant. The grant would help connect the businesses to one another with sidewalks instead of having to cross roads near the Titus area.
- We feel this is a very important project and want to act on this quickly.
- The grant will allow us to refurbishing the sidewalks that are currently there, on Titus near the river walk, and to add new ones connecting the entire area.
- The goal is trying to make a safe clear passage for pedestrians from business to business, connect the little bit of sidewalks that are there.
- Want to make sure we send something in so we get approved for the grant
- **We're looking for letters of support**, a simple one paragraph would be great just stating that you support this idea, **would like to have the letters by Thursday 10/15/20**

d. Holiday in The Depot-

- Have met with Jeff Hammond in Parks in Rec, we're planning on having Holiday in the Depot this year but it's going to be a bit different than it normally is; there's going to be nothing inside of the town hall, it's all going to be outdoors.
- We would like to have Santa come and drive around the depot taking letters from children in a least amount of connect way as possible, there is no actual plan yet finalized at this moment but everyone's working together to make sure something DOES happen this year. It will be Dec 11th.
- We're encouraging businesses not to open during the event since it's been so crowded in the past, but instead to participate by setting up a table outside of their store with hot cider, hot chocolate, etc.
- We're also encouraging everyone to decorate their windows, we want to come up with a theme throughout the depot having a scavenger hunt. We're planning on putting up 4 selfie stations, outdoor carolers, and also fire pits in the driveway outside of town hall, we want people to be aware of the treasure hunt going on through the store windows and we'll will keep everyone posted when details come together.

e. Community Kiosk in the Depot/ Depot Sign-

- An idea to have somewhere we could have information about the town, events, places to eat
Would be nice to have a community kiosk in the depot somewhere, flyers etc.
- The kiosk would be outdoor but behind glass. It was mentioned there used to be one in front of the post office. Other options mentioned were: in the grass in front of the Pantry, near Judy Black, at the end of plaza near Legion Hall, in the grass between the police station and Town Hall.
- Wi-Fi info on the small sign on the brick wall near the car charging station. Could change the post no signs, sign saying "Welcome to Washington Depot"
- Could have a sign that says welcome to Washington, and could add a low hanging banner that posts post no signs, not readable from the road but readable if you're trying to put up a sign.

5. Old Business-

- a. **Wi-Fi in the Depot**, is up and running in the depot, the signal for the Wi-Fi is good and strong. Try it and see how it works, one area concerned about is near Marty's plaza, since there's so many trees in that area.
 - Michelle has signs she will give out to businesses in the depot to allow people to know about this new Wi-Fi accessibility.
 - Please once you try the Wi-Fi let us know where the dead spots are in town so we can tweak it.
- b. **Progress on Community Center-**
 - We will have an article in the upcoming newsletter (early December) informing the community where we are in the project. We will have another community conversation/ public hearing, asking the community what they'd like to see. That meeting will be in January on Zoom.

Motion to Adjourn meeting- Dan Sheer and Brinton adjourned the meeting all in favor at 10:44

Visitors-

Chris Charles, Lance Reynolds, Jay Hubelbank, Robyn Gray

Respectfully Submitted,
Amanda Reale
Selectman's Assistant