

TOWN OF WASHINGTON

Washington Economic Development Committee

Tuesday, March 19th, 2024

*Minutes are subject to approval of the Economic Development Committee*

**Members Present:** Jim Brinton, Liz Fenton, Trisha McMahon, Fran Keilty, Robyn Gray, Kristen Atlas, Rudy Montgelas

**Staff:** Michelle Gorra- Economic and Community Development Coordinator

**Guests:** Ann Jamieson (Voices), Leslie Anderson

**1. Call to Order- Michelle called the meeting to order at 3:04 PM**

**2. Approval of minutes of Feb 20 Meeting;** Robyn noted the last months minutes needed to be corrected, it stated Trisha made a motion, and also seconded the motion. Rudy made a motion to approve the corrected minutes, seconded by Robyn, all in favor.

**3. Report on Activities of Economic and Community Development Coordinator**

- a. **New Home Owner Mailings:** Nothing to update at this time
- b. **Newsletter- went out March 1st-** Only heard from one resident who hasn't received it. Lisa from the market mentioned that a lot of people would come in looking for it.
- c. **Arts Council-** working hard on the restaurant week, doing outreach to the galleries. Hoping this will help kick start the restaurant season as well as the art galleries season, still working on establishing the cultural district.
- d. **Affordable Housing-** Housing Commission had a meeting last week, had Lindsay come and present a booklet about how to talk about affordable housing and how to engage the community. Will be co-hosting in June a home dedication with Habitat for Humanity, going to use it as an opportunity to answer questions about affordable housing, also will make welcome bags and baskets for the new home owners in town.
- e. **Sustainability -** working on an Earth Day newsletter talking about all the things happening in town with what the committee is and will be working on.
- f. **Main St. Conference-** Took place in Hartford, Michelle attended. The conference focused on helping towns fill their empty storefronts and fill their Main streets. This workshop had information about blight and vacancy. Michelle said it was very informative.
- g. **Tourism Conference-** Michelle will attend it next week, and will report back about it at the next meeting. Michelle stated that the state spends a good amount of money on promoting CT, and it's always important for us to know exactly what the state is doing so we can hook into their latest initiatives. Michelle shared her screen with the committee that showed the Economic Impact that the state is having, the state spends \$4.5 Million dollars promoting tourism in CT while gaining a \$17 Billion impact. The conference will share more about their strategy for the future.

**4. Old Business**

- a. **Budget Process-** The committee made the request last month with the Selectman. April 1st the Board of Selectmen will present to the Board of Finance their initial budget, April 15th the Board of Finance will

vote on the budget. May 2nd is the hearing and the town meeting to vote on the budget is May 15<sup>th</sup>. Michelle would like to thank Trisha and Kristen for always sharing with the committee when they see Washington in the top categories on different websites and magazines.

- b. **Restaurant Week-** Michelle will send fliers out to the committee. Have almost 100 percent participation with the restaurants in town. Trisha suggested we should have a photographer during restaurant week.

#### **New Business**

- c. **CEDS/POCD-**Was just adopted - We have a new EDC director at the COG. This year's goals are much broader than they were in prior years. The number one goal is to address the housing needs of the region. Goal 2, Encourage business growth and expansion, Goal 3 Support workforce development that aligns talent with the needs of the business sectors. Goal 4, Increase tourism in the region, Goal 5- Strengthen the creative economy, Michelle mentioned that transportation is a challenge in this town.

**5. Report of WBA & Selectmen on items not on the agenda-** Fran mentioned the Annual meeting from the WBA was great, new board members were elected, things are being organized and everyone seems very excited about it. The block party will be the first Friday on June 7th, a band has been secured, the Arts Council wants to plan some activities at the event as well.

**6. Visitors-**

**7. Adjournment** -Trisha made a motion to adjourn at 4:07 pm Liz seconded.

Recording: <https://youtu.be/GRfIXd4aYvY>

Respectfully Submitted,

*Amanda Reale*

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Selectman's Assistant