

TOWN OF WASHINGTON

Washington Economic Development Committee

Tuesday, October 18, 2022- Minutes

Minutes are subject to approval of the Economic Development Committee

Member Present: Jim Brinton, Robyn Gray, Dan Sherr, Rudy Montgelas, Fran Keilty, Wayne Hileman, Kristen Atlas, Trisha McMahon

Public: Liz Fenton, Joan Lodsins, Leslie Anderson, Julia Nable

Staff: Michelle Gorra- Economic and Community Development Coordinator

1. **Call to order:** Michelle Gorra called the meeting to order at 3:02
2. **Motion:** Approve minutes of September 20th motion made by Rudy Montgelas seconded by Kristen Atlas, all in favor.
3. **Report on activities of Economic and Community Development Coordinator**
 - a. **New home owner mailings-** Still doing them, 8 new home owners in September
 - b. **Harvest Fest-** Huge success! Thanks to everyone who worked the table with Michelle, we collected 16 additional emails, had lots of connections with visitors, and handed out lots of info to them. Had people from all around the state. No headcount, we ran out of tickets. Based on what we heard about parking we think it had to be around 2-3,000 people. Kudos to Explore Washington for promoting this so well and reaching out to people. People were in the town shopping too which is great. Brought people to town, tons of Gilmore Girls fans. Wonderful event- stunning weekend all around.
 - c. **Winter Tree Lights-** Had a fundraising letter put together waiting for approval from Lisa and Barbara then ready to go. Had a conversation with Darryl Wright, we're going to save the lights that came out of the big maple from the town hall front lawn and we're going to use those lights as back up. Last year we had 5 trees, and they were able to get them all relit in one day.
 - d. **Community Center programming committee** - will be working on a survey to send to the community. We have been visiting various communities and senior centers.
 - e. **WiFi in New Preston** - Have been working with Jay and EdAdvance with this. We're hoping it can reach the Privet House and The Owl may need to get repeaters. Even if we can't get any of the businesses to use a repeater we will have covered 75-80 percent of the commercial area up there. They are looking at boosting the WIFI to the pavilion- the vendors had a hard time at the harvest fest using the WIFI.
 - f. **Habitat for Humanity-** getting ready to break ground on 2 houses on the Myfield project, looking for people to move in 2023. Also, if you want to volunteer you can email them.
 - g. **Welcome Center-** Did get the approval for the zoning permit for the sign, and the deposit has been requested. Will go into production when the check has been received,

no update on the interior waiting for the electrical to finish up so the painters can come back.

- h. **EV Chargers** - Met with the engineer from Eversource went to visit different sites, put together proposals/ what each could cost. Eversource pays for 50 percent of the unit, up to \$20,000 installations for each charger. One in New Preston near Nick Platt, one near the depot, one near the white horse, off of Titus. These will put us on the EV maps.
 - i. **WBA Workshop**- Lisa had asked for Michelle to put together a workshop for WBA members, but decided to cancel because businesses were quite busy during this time of year. Planning to reschedule sometime in January
 - j. **New Businesses**- Ro by Frecha Design in New Preston just opened and Inari- Asian Bistro in the Depot waiting for their Health permit.
4. New Business
- a. **Presentation from Sandor Max, explore metrics etc.**

Contacted by an online magazine called BRIT & CO. They have 1.5 million Facebook followers, they contacted us because they wanted to do a piece on the Gilmore Girls. Long article about following the footsteps of the Gilmore Girls in Washington, linking local restaurants in town. Right after that, explore got tagged by an influencer, and got comments saying how they love the town by other influencers.

 - Instagram called CT Bucket List, they feature a lot of our posts and they have 90,000 followers.
 - Came up first for 10 knockout views for Fall on CT Visit. We also are on the Autumn Wine Trail Feature on the site. They're new campaign is called "Find Your Vibe" and they featured Pride in the hills and Spring Hill Vineyards.
 - 3,674 followers on Instagram, 15k Tags. We have the hashtag #explorewashingtonct
 - Facebook 1450 Followers. We still post on Facebook but Instagram still seems like the faster grower. MailChimp was interesting. Our open rate is 56 percent, a 10 percent increase from last year.
 - Harvest Festival- Social Media reached 12,700, number of visits to the events page was close to 2,000.
 - Did a boosted Ad on Facebook and Instagram for \$50, and it reached 9,600 people.
 - Highest monthly page view was August 2022 over 33,000.
 - Gilmore Girls Metrics, "Gilmore Girls Getaway" 171 percent increase from 2021 to 2022, 35k pageviews. 15 percent of all pages viewed.
 - Going to be doing a Gilmore Girls Giveaway, say tag a friend, follow us and like this post and you'll be entered to win a Gilmore Girls Basket, going to do this post organically.
 - **Completed:** spring and summer articles, summer arts and culture postcard, guide to Washington, welcome center design.
 - **Next steps:** Fall and winter marketing, more Gilmore Girls promotions and guides
 - Welcome Center production
 - Marketing seminar for businesses (EDC & WBA)

- Thinking about doing a contest now “Calling all photographers” To submit a photo of the foliage in town. We should do this every season, with this contest they could win a gift card to the local businesses, and also their photo can be featured on the blog or Instagram.

(All the metrics are going to be on the EDC Website)

5. **Report of WBA & Selectmen on items not on the agenda** – WBA Report - There's no displays for those small explore cards, Fran at the Hickory Stick said they would love more. The WBA has to remind other businesses to pick up the guides so they are always stocked. Jim- Harvest Fest was a huge success, we have to take a look at how we're running the festival, need more volunteers, if we're going to have such a large event. We're going to have to tap the brakes a bit on the EV Stations, concerns with fire safety, and reach out to public works director and fire marshal, if there's an event that happens with them it's nearly impossible to put them out. For example, if there were something near The Steep Rock that could be a huge concern with all the down trees, the biggest concern is the placement. Something we have to take a closer look at before we continue the process.
6. Visitors
7. Adjournment motion at adjourn by Wayne Hileman seconded by Rudy, all in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amanda Reale
Selectman's Assistant

Recording

<https://youtu.be/SkyE-cso4u0>