

TOWN OF WASHINGTON

Washington Economic Development Committee

March 21, 2023- 3:00

Minutes are subject to approval of the Economic Development Committee

Member Present: Trisha McMahon, Lisa Stein, Dan Sherr, Robyn Gray, Jim Brinton, Tony Bedini, Wayne Hileman, Kristen Atlas (4:00)

Public: Liz Fenton, Joan Lodsin, Emily Hultquist

Staff: Michelle Gorra- Economic and Community Development Coordinator

1. **Call to order:** Michelle Gorra called the meeting to order at 3:02
2. Motion to approve minutes of Jan 17 and Feb 21, made by Jim seconded by Wayne. All voted in favor.
3. **Report on activities of Economic and Community Development Coordinator**
 - a. **New Home Owner's Mailings-** Slowing down, 4 in January, 6 in February. Each year post covid dropping in home sales. Would be interesting to talk to a realtor about the housing market and get a better sense of what's happening
 - b. **Newsletter-** Went out in March, we are growing beyond our 10 pages and we are going to streamline and help people use the space wisely.
 - c. **Welcome Center-** Installing all the artwork and pictures on Thursday, did not finish all the information cards yet, going to do some mock labels to see how spacing goes.
 - d. **Arts Council-** Going really well. We had a second meeting last week. The council decided to go ahead to see if we can get a Cultural District designation. Working on getting the dates for the summer postcard mailing, we like to get that out in May, so all the June activities are picked up.
 - e. **WBA Breakfast & Business-** on the second or third Monday of the month and everyone is invited. Michelle attended and it was great. Jim has allowed the businesses to bring their compost to the Transfer Station. If you're able to join please do! Around 20 people in attendance
 - f. **Affordable Housing-** Decided to apply to Representative Johanna Hayes and Senator Murphy offices for a community fund project. It is a federal request for the renovations at the Dodge Farm housing. It is the same project as the previous CDGB grant requests. Fingers crossed on that, had to get some letters of support.
 - g. **ARPA funding /Broadband-** would like to thank Dan for serving on the ARPA Committee. \$30,000 to the broadband study was awarded. Grants also went to ASAP, Judy Black etc.. Selectmen had a meeting last week, and have approved more money for the Library, Pilobolus, Steep Rock- all going onto a town meeting March 30th. There is more money to do some repairs. Jim and Wayne talked about the broadband- Their initial thoughts were that the broadband was too good to be true. Met with Frontier, they are going to be installing fiber to the vast majority of the town of Washington. Work will start in April and finish early August. This is at no cost to the town. Going to be doing close to 80% of the town.
4. **New Business**
 1. **Q&A with Emily Hultquist, Assistant Director of the NHCOC, Regarding Economic Development and the upcoming Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.** Very familiar with the COG's started at the Capital region COG. A Lot of her work has been Urban focused, but loving the more rural community. She has worked a lot with EDCs. Regionally we will get to tap into some more of the funds that are available federally. Most of the towns (21)

are on the board. Michelle is on the larger EDC board, there's an executive committee on that board, to ramp up to want to have a larger stakeholder meeting. The 5 CEDS Focus Areas they have been working on within the past 5 years were; Fiber, Tourism, Farms, Manufacturing, Innovation. The 4 main goals of the CEDS were:

1. Develop and implement a targeted, regional branding and marketing strategy.
2. Connect homes and businesses in the region to high speed fiber optic broadband.
3. carry out business retention and expansion programs including Rural Lab, NWCT Food Hub, and Jobs Hub initiatives
4. Continue to implement regional transportation and land use plans and invest in infrastructure

Broadband Report for 2022- \$40 million total grant funds from the CPF- Funded Grants. The \$40 million is currently in Hartford, we're still waiting to physically have the next \$100 Million.

5. Report of WBA and Selectmen on items not on the agenda. Jim; We're winding down the budget season, Jay is back from Florida, Dean is on his way, it's getting finished up- Tunnel bridge will be closing April 3rd to November 15th. The only access way will be Spring Hill Road. There will be detour signs, and now a large push to get the other Steep Rock preserves utilized. The CT land council is having a workshop, 56 people signed up. It is a workshop about the need for municipalities to cooperate with their land trusts. Its conversations we have been having and finding a difficult balance.

6. Visitors- none
7. Adjournment- Motion to adjourn at 4:20 made by Dan Sherr, all in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amanda Reale
Selectman's Assistant

Recording <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6RV4pKdYwU>