

TOWN OF WASHINGTON

Washington Economic Development Committee/ Commission

Tuesday, November 15th, 2022 at 3:00 PM

Minutes are subject to approval of the Economic Development Committee

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

Public: Liz Fenton, Joan Lodsinn

Staff: Michelle Gorra- Economic and Community Development Coordinator

1. **Call to order:** Michelle Gora called the meeting to order at 3:02
2. **Motion:** motion moved by Wayne seconded by Rudy to approve the minutes, all in favor.
3. **Report on activities of Economic and Community Development Coordinator**
 - a. **New home owner mailings-** 6 new homes sold in October, haven't done the mailing yet. The selectmen's email is over 1200 people. Added 150 in the last year and a half.
 - b. **Winter Tree Lights** – We started this 2 years ago. Big thanks to everyone who's been helping fluff lights! We've added 4 new trees to the depot; Titus, Town Hall, WAA & Marty's, 1 on the green and 2 in New Preston. Also, big thank you to Daryl Wright and all his workers and Bill Pollack at Arbor Services, they have been so helpful. This has all been paid for by businesses and people in town, this has not been coming out of the town's budget.
 - c. **Community Center programming committee- survey** – We ran a survey, going to process the responses. May possibly open it up again to catch a few stragglers. It has been in the selectmen's email, Facebook and paper copies at the senior center.
 - d. **Welcome Center-** Still moving along, the painting has been completed. Met with new staff at the museum, curator Amy Campanaro and collections manager Corinne Tabolt. The sign is in production, and we will follow up on it.
 - e. **Newsletter-** In process in design, the goal is to be out December 2nd. Hoping to be in mailboxes the first weekend of December. We run updates from nonprofits, and things happening with our commissions. Jim wanted to see what the committee feels about the political aspect of the newsletter. Jim's thoughts are that no matter what their political viewpoint they represent, they probably shouldn't be in there, because then we would have to entertain putting everything in there. Michelle stated the idea of the newsletter is to report what's happening but without taking a position on it, so we just have to be careful in that sense. Fran mentioned, ask the nonprofits to state the facts, topics and speakers who will be speaking and not be descriptive about it. We should promote the event but we should reserve the right to edit any content, to make it neutral
 - f. **NHCOG-EDC-** They're under new leadership, starting a review of next comprehensive economic development strategy, the last plan is 2019-2023. Meeting 10/10/22, housing emerged as a major issue.
 - g. **Arts Council-** Steph Burr executive director of NW NWCT Arts Council. The goal for tonight is to formalize this council, to write the intent to ask to be appointed to this council, it will be a subcommittee of the EDC, goal is to function as any other commission or committee would; agendas, meetings and minutes. Very hopeful it will be a productive meeting.
 - h. **Conference-** CCM conference, Back to CTs Future. The conversation was interesting, and shared some of the challenges and how we deal with them. Affordable housing came up as a major issue. Talked about some of the challenging points: Housing, satisfying community vs. satisfying neighbors, articulating the downside of no Ec. Dev.

Land Use Updates, Leveraging Public Partnerships to Support Infrastructure Investment, State & Local Infrastructure Resources, Address Housing Needs, CT Economic Development strategies, David Lehman, Commissioner, Dept of Ec. & Comm. Development

- i. **Instagram Post for the giveaway-** 4795 accounts reached. Of the accounts, 3,690 were not previous followers, so mostly new people were reached. 5,146 impressions. 200 likes, and 171 comments! (people commented to enter to win) 94 new followers and an additional 883 people were reached by the instagram story. It was mainly an instagram giveaway but the facebook post got 785 impressions. In terms of qualitative results, most of the followers are Gilmore Girls fans (young woman) who are potential visitors to Washington. A few who shared the posts are bloggers/ influencers with thousands of followers.

- Also going to run a photo contest, photo contents has 16 submissions so far. Need to work with the WBA to get gift certificates for the prizes. End of the contest we'll print out the top pictures and have a little exhibit at the town hall as a thank you and to promote their work. A calendar was mentioned as an idea to add all the photos to the calendars. The EDC could print some to sell and businesses could print some of themselves to sell, or we could use this as a fundraiser for something. A scene calendar of Washington would make great gifts as well for people who grew up here, or people who have moved away. Fran mentioned she will take it to the WBA about it.
- Western CT Tourism District Meeting, Michelle and Fran will be attending.

4. **New Business**

- a. **Broadband;** Wayne stated last spring in Sharon CT formed a broadband committee, they've been very active in trying to solve their broadband problems. They have several homes in their town where they don't even have cable, the poor internet in their town was affecting buying home, and real estate value. This past spring stepped up and said they'd be willing to string cable on the remaining streets in their town. came up with figure of 1.6 dollars, and they put it up to a town vote. At the end of the day the town voted yes to do this, so everyone in their town has access to something. Wayne feels there's other ways we can do this without breaking the bank.
- b. what we have for new businesses, and what we can do for them. Give people a way to make it easier when they come to a new area.

5. **Report of WBA & Selectmen on items not on the agenda** – The lights are very exciting for everyone, in the depot in New Preston, its huge this year and should make a difference. Holiday in the Depot is coming up and we're excited because this is the most "normal" year we have had in a long time. December 9th, there's some new stuff happening at the transfer station and the EV chargers are still in the works.

6. Visitors;

7. Adjournment motion at 4:15 by Wayne Hileman, all in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amanda Reale
Selectman's Assistant

Recording

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zjRu2FcFOc>