

MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
FOR TOWN OF NEW LEBANON
HELD ON SEPTEMBER 17, 2020 AT SHATFORD PARK AND VIA TELECONFERENCE

Present: Richard Beckwith, Gregg Carroll, Cynthia Creech, Anna Duhon, Tistrya Houghtling, Ellen Ann Kafkalas, Mitch Kelleher, Nina Keller, Jack Lancto, Sharon Powers, Erminia Rasmussen, Monte Wasch (Chair), Josh Young

Absent: Al Bellenchia, Rita Carver, Peter Flierl, Marc Frey, Chuck Gerald, Deb Gordon (Board Liaison), Nina Keller, Peg Munves

Members of the public: Four

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 6:37pm by Monte Wasch

REPORTS FROM THE SUBCOMMITTEES

Community Art & Design (report sent in by Ellen Ann and read by Monte)

Deb Gordon met with the architectural firm and had a good discussion. The Art in Business project is also moving forward - researching objects from cows to race cars and trying to determine possible locations for them throughout town.

New Project: Bob Gilson has suggested using underused properties in New Lebanon as spaces to rent out to artists to use as workshops - great way to get artists here and allow others opportunities to visit various workshops. Will also give businesses some income - perhaps they'd pay for utilities only (don't want anyone to lose money on the deal) - only issue will be house people because new Lebanon has such little space around - need to find B & B's to rent to them. He would like to encourage artists as New Lebanon's positive "invasive species" who might come with the lure of cheap space. Laurie Bashour (member of public, was asked her opinion if she would rent to an artist and she said it would depend upon the situation and in what shape the property was in - raw space would be preferable. Needs to find out if artists would be considered "manufacturing" and so subject to different rules, but

she would give this consideration if approached.

Hess Station (report made by Tistrya)

Tistrya said there's no movement there but she did hear that other towns that have asked for something similar from Speedway have been turned down. Station is assessed at \$245K - they want to sell it. Monte suggested doing research to find out other people in the organization who may be contacted about this. Cynthia suggested asking if they would consider a 6 month (or other short-term) lease, Monte thought a PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) might be appealing as well - in exchange for allowing

us to use it for a long time period.

Food Issues (report made by Cynthia, with an assist from Josh)

They are continuing to participate in food distribution - one distribution was made recently of just local products. In September, participated in a town regional food bank distribution event - many tons of food were given to more than 120 people - will continue next week and two days in October

The subcommittee is putting in a proposal to town regarding the relationship between the town and the Farmer's Market.

Virtual Market - is now in full swing - an online version of the Farmer's Market - this week was its 5th distribution and they now have 18 customers who spent about \$1000 this week. This facilitates purchases from local farmers and producers. Monte says a goal of \$3-5,000 a week would be great. Josh does this on a volunteer basis so all money goes to the farmers. The Virtual Market offers a mix of fresh foods and prepared foods including jams, beef, sausage, honey, and maple.

How the Virtual market works: newlebanonfarmersmarket.com

1. Farmers email Josh each week with a list of what is available
2. Josh takes orders from Monday to Wednesday (site is through Shopify so all purchasing is done online) and then informs the farmers what he needs
3. On Thursday, 2/3 of the farmers deliver the products to Josh's house, the other 1/3 he picks up from them - all farmers are paid on the spot when the product is received
4. Customers come in from 4-6 pm (Thursday) to pick up their orders at the Fisher Store

A discussion was had about trying to convince New Lebanon restaurants to buy locally but the consensus was that the local producers cannot compete financially with the discounted rates of the big suppliers. That this has been an ongoing discussion for decades.

Another discussion was about how much of the Farmer's Market should be incorporated into the Town government. The town is interested, but doesn't want total control. They might be interested to be a sponsor, but need to check with the town lawyer about a relationship could be formed legally.

A Plan: Monte, Erminia, Cynthia & Josh will get together and come up with a business model the town could work with and then recommend this to the board for the November Town Board Meeting. They will research what other towns are now doing. Then Josh and the Farmers Market board will have to

figure out what they want and can work with as well.

Infrastructure (report made by Gregg)

The committee now has a chairperson: Gregg Carroll. They also created a mission statement: To examine the physical infrastructure in The Town of New Lebanon and recommend and or facilitate changes with the intention of improving the conditions extant for business and job growth in accordance with the requirements of the Town's current comprehensive plan.

MSC: to accept the new mission statement was made by Cynthia and seconded by Tistrya. Motion passed.

Deb Gordon suggested we send out a letter to engineering firms to solicit interest in assisting us in developing a feasibility concept of infrastructure in the center of town. Many firms will do this for \$20,000-\$50,000 but the town does not have the budget for this. It was suggested that this letter include language that the town has not yet sanctioned this and this is a preliminary stage just to find out what is involved. The subcommittee wants to focus exclusively on sewage and water.

It was suggested that the subcommittee first starts out with the town engineer who might be able to guide the next steps. Cynthia suggested referring to the Association of Towns magazine (Talk of the Town) which has had articles in it about infrastructure with links that may be helpful. The Association of Towns may also have people who we could talk to.

Tistrya suggested asking people who are currently on the Miracle Mile if they would be interested in this since they would have to pay for it. Some suggested that businesses might not want to buy into this until/unless their own septic broke, but others might. Others suggested that having the sewage and water available might attract new businesses to town who otherwise are staying away. The bottom line

is that no one would be forced to opt in but it wouldn't be good to proceed unless at least 40-50% of the current businesses wanted to buy in. No one wants to waste all the energy if no one will participate in it.

Example of Hillsdale was brought up where they were able to attract 6-7 new businesses after they put in water and sewer. The current businesses may well increase their own business if other businesses came to town, just from having more people here spending money.

Committee wants Deb to do the research on this.

Outreach and Marketing (report made by Tistrya)

The committee has had two meetings focused on this and have brainstormed some ideas. Since AI has a marketing background, he has really assisted the committee with focusing on what makes us different. The committee has come up with many ideas (see the committee's minutes for specifics) and will report back once it hones in on specific branding.

Subcommittee project: a mailing to put in the November town mailing advertising all the businesses here. The Town board has already approved it, but it needs to be approved by this committee before it can proceed. The directory would list the name, contact information and what the business does. It will have a disclaimer on the bottom for anyone who would be missed that would say please contact us to be placed in the next (updated) directory. The directory would be 4-15 pages long.

MSC: To approve the O & M Subcommittee to produce a directory of town businesses to be distributed

with the November town newsletter was made by Tistrya and seconded by Richard. Motion passed.

OTHER TOPICS

BEDC Budget

Monte said he included in our budget for next year money for newsletters, one for spring and one for fall, explaining what we are doing and trying to help the town group, also money for design competition so we could offer a prize of \$1200 to be awarded in late 2021. He also put in \$1100 for logo and branding.

Tistrya said that anything about our committee can go in the regular newsletter without additional cost but money could be used for inserts, a coupon book, etc.

Butterflies

Mitch Keller suggested a plan to help monarch butterflies since their population seems to be dwindling. He suggested planting more milkweed and Greg suggested Joe Pye Weed instead (not an invasive species). Bob Gilson said he had a lot of success attracting monarchs with his Mexican sunflowers. Tistrya suggested coordinating this with the CAC since it's about conservation.

Anna said that the Farmscape Ecology program has a butterfly house and has many resources there that may be assistance to butterfly attraction and preservation.

Next meeting of the BEDC: Monday, November 2, 6:30 pm with venue to be determined.

The meeting was adjourned by Monte Wasch at 7:50 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Powers