

Wolfeboro Economic Development Committee
Minutes of 3/15/22 Monthly Meeting
Great Hall, Wolfeboro Town Hall

1. Call to Order

Member Kathy Fairman called the meeting to order at 8:02 am. Chairman Dave Maher was unable to attend and asked her as a past chairman to fill-in. The EDC is presently without a vice-chairman.

Present: Members Kathy Fairman, Carrie Duran, Jeremy Roberge, and Kathy Tetreault Alternates Mary DeVries, Barry Elliott, Lucy Van Cleve and Selectman Linda Murray, BOS alternate.

Staff: Planning and Economic Development Director Tavis Austin

Absent: Members Dave Maher, Liz Baker McClain and Brian Deshaies, BOS (Board of Selectmen) representative. Alternate: Domenic Endicott.

K. Fairman said she would try to take minutes. K. Tetreault offered to help.

K Fairman appointed alternates M. DeVries, B. Elliott, L. Van Cleve and Linda Murray to act as voting members for this meeting.

December 20, 2021 Minutes: B. Elliott moved that the Minutes be approved with two amendments: Correct spelling of “Elliot” to “Elliott” and Van “Cleeve” to Van “Cleve.” M. DeVries seconded. The motion passed 6-0 J. Roberge and K. Tetreault abstained as they were not present at the meeting.

BOS (Board of Selectmen) Updates/Appointment of New Members: L. Murray explained that members must be reappointed when terms expire. Those seeking to be reappointed must notify Amy in the BOS office in writing. Following reappointment by the BOS, members must be sworn in by Town Clerk Pat Waterman. BOS will appoint new members to fill vacancies.

K. Fairman noted there are two member vacancies and if alternates move up, there will be openings available for alternates. She said Jen French a local business owner and employee of GWRSD has expressed an interest.

Alternates B. Elliott and L. Van Cleve indicated they are willing to serve as members.

C. Duran asked why the EDC did not have a report in the Town Report. L. Murray said reports from various department heads/chairman are submitted to the BOS office; perhaps the deadline was missed.

It was suggested that D. Maher and T. Austin create an EDC Calendar so future deadlines are not missed.

Selectman L. Murray reported that the 2022 Town Meeting was very successful with all Town proposed Warrant Articles passing. Two articles presented by petition did not pass.

Looking ahead she said the town will be working on Storm Water Management plans specifically a Wolfeboro Bay Watershed Management Plan; DPW Director Dave Ford anticipates a grant will help pay for this.

L. Murray noted the BOS is concerned about proposed state legislation that would prevent individual towns from regulating short term rentals because it would take away local control. The BOS is also concerned about Governor Sununu's proposal to suspend the NH Rooms and Meals Tax for the summer as the Town is counting on approximately \$400,000 as its portion of the R&M Tax in its 2022 budget.

Town Planner Updates

T. Austin reported that the Planning Board and ZBA will be looking this year at zoning regulations regarding density. A ZBA density variance requested for the Mill Place project in Wolfeboro Falls along the Bridge Falls Path has been denied. Two other housing projects proposed on Pine Hill Road (Rt. 109A) with apartments and prefabricated houses are in the works and will be requesting density variances.

K. Fairman noted that WEDCO (Wentworth Economic Development Corporation) reports that bids have been requested again for construction of the proposed Harriman Hill houses, part of that affordable housing complex. The project could not move forward last year because of increased construction costs but NH Housing has now received \$1 Million of Rescue Plan money to offset the increased costs.

C. Duran said she doesn't think the project is realistic. As a current resident in a Harriman Hill apartment she wouldn't be able to afford to buy one of these houses and doesn't see how others will be able to either.

Marketing

Work in Wolfeboro/Help Wanted

Marketing Chair C. Duran explained that the Town Attorney recommended that the EDC hire a third party to work as an agent to administer any such website, however the EDC does not have a staff person to oversee this. She suggested the EDC could request additional money to hire an EDC staff person.

L. Murray noted that the town is already having difficulty hiring someone to take minutes.

B. Elliott said it might be a good opportunity for the Chamber of Commerce.

M. DeVries (Chamber Director) said her organization has the ability to do that for its membership if there is a demand. “Is there a demand?”

K Fairman asked J. Roberge (President of Huggins Hospital) if he thought the hospital would benefit from a Town-wide Help Wanted site aimed at attracting employees within an hour’s drive from Wolfeboro.

He said Huggins currently has about 100 open positions and is doing that on its own. He said they would use the site and support it but he’s not sure it would be all that helpful. He added that lack of housing on all levels is the greater problem.

It was noted that seasonal workforce housing is also needed.

C. Duran asked who is the Town’s webmaster?

T. Austin said Individual Department Heads manage their own pages. He manages the EDC page.

C. Duran asked about social media.

T. Austin said the Planning Department does not do social media.

C. Duran said: “I bring this up every time; there is so much we are missing about advertising because we don’t have a social media presence. I find it difficult to accept that we can’t have social media.”

T. Austin suggested the issue be discussed with the Budget Committee

L. Murray added that it isn’t just about increasing the EDC budget. “The ability to control social media is another issue.”

Marketing 2021 Budget

L. Murray reported that a policy will be forthcoming on what can and cannot be carried from one year to the next. She was able to secure payment for the Yankee Magazine ads but all others approved at the December meeting were not authorized for payment because they were classified as 2022 expenditures.

Other Business

Continuous Visitation Program B. Elliott suggested the EDC implement a Continuous Visitation Program in which EDC member(s) would visit local businesses informally to establish a relationship; find out what they do and what they need. He did this in another community and it worked well. He would be willing to do the visiting.

M. DeVries suggested he EDC print business cards which could be left with the business owner.

L. Van Cleve volunteered to work with Barry on this project. They will report at the next EDC meeting.

Bike Trails T. Austin reported that the Bike Trails Committee is working on a plan to connect the various trails in town.

M/V Mount Washington K Fairman reported that the Mount will be coming to Wolfeboro six days a week, Monday – Saturday, an increase of one day over previous years. They are looking for NH made, especially Wolfeboro made items to sell in their gift shop.

Park and Ride K. Fairman asked M DeVries to serve as chairman so she could speak about her own business, the Wolfeboro Trolley Company (WTC).

She reported that the WTC now owns two trolleys, Molly and Jolly. Molly will continue her tours as in past years. Jolly will provide a Park ‘n Ride Shuttle from the Kingswood Arts Center to Downtown in July and August when schools are not in session. The Shuttle will run seven days a week, every half-hour from 8 am to 6 pm to encourage both visitors and people who work downtown to park their cars at Kingswood. The goal is to free up parking spaces and decrease traffic congestion by those circling for a parking spot. The parking free, the cost for All Day passes for the shuttle is \$6/adult, \$3/child 4-12 and under 4 ride free. A season pass is \$100.

EDC Director

K. Fairman noted that creating and filling this position is a goal of the 2019 Master Plan, and that the lack of staff dedicated to economic development keeps coming up as necessary for follow-through on projects suggested by the EDC. She suggested that the EDC might make researching this a priority in preparation for next year’s Economic Development budget.

M. DeVries suggested that we might begin by looking at communities like Wolfeboro which have ED directors. Other resources suggested included State of NH/Division of Economic Development and NH Extension Service/UNH.

K.Tetreault suggested identifying the scope of services for this job as part of our research.

C. Duran volunteered to begin research and report at the next meeting.

B Elliott made a motion, and C. Duran seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:35. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Fairman

D. Maher asked L. Murray about the process to fill member and alternate vacancies. She explained that the openings must be noticed (advertised) and then applicants are reviewed and appointed by the Board of Selectmen. Existing alternates must reapply to be appointed as members. They can do that through Amy Capone Muccio in the Town Manager's Office.

Approval of Minutes

K. Fairman moved to amend the November 16, 2021 EDC Meeting Minutes to include the following under "Planning Director Update:"

"T. Austin reported on upcoming agenda items for the Wolfeboro Planning Board including Taylor Home expansion plans and discussion about residential density in the CBD (Central Business District) and Pine Hill zones."

And to correct in the last paragraph "Liz McClain" to "Liz Baker McClain."

L. Van Cleeve moved to approve the 11/16/21 EDC Minutes as amended. B. Elliot seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

BOS Updates

L. Murray reported that First Night (an EDC sponsored event) would be going forward in-person. She reviewed the schedule, including Fireworks at 6 pm: \$2500 paid for by the Town of Wolfeboro and \$2500 by donations from local businesses.

Proposed 2022 Warrant Articles are expected to be finalized at the January 5, 2022 BOS meeting including those pertaining to bond issues such as the Commercial Docks and Dockside Parking area.

She suggested the EDC may want to take a position on plans to repair and/or expand sidewalks. A CRF (Capital Reserve Fund) had been established a few years ago for construction of sidewalks on Bay Street. A new CRF has been proposed to fund only repairs to existing sidewalks. "I think we need to find a balance here," she said.

B. Elliott expressed concern with spending town money for outside engineering consultants when the town has someone on staff, Public Works Director Dave Ford, who can do it. He cited the proposed Warrant Article for \$125,000 for engineering at the Pop Warner facility as an example.

L. Murray agreed and explained that last year the BOS proposed hiring a separate PWD to manage the DPW, so Ford could focus on projects like this and others like grant applications. However, the Budget Committee did not support the new position and it failed to pass with the voters

Chair Maher asked what subjects the EDC should address in its upcoming report to the BOS

T. Austin suggested waiting until the Warrant Articles are finalized before commenting on this year's proposals.

T. Austin, L Murray and Selectman B. Deshaies explained that the process starts in the fall when the CIP (Capital Improvements Committee) meets and departments heads begin submitting their budgets.

C. Duran asked if Tavis could provide the EDC with a calendar "sort of Town Civics 101."

Planning Director Updates

T. Austin reported there is planning board discussion about increasing the residential density allowed in the downtown core. He has concerns about the impact on the town sewer system; ie, he said the current proposed warrant articles to upgrade pumping stations only provide for the existing density, not for expansion.

L. Murray said an analysis of the town's water and sewer system is necessary before increasing density.

B. Deshaies added that the public doesn't understand a lot of these things.

M. DeVries suggested that the town's cable TV station, WCTV is good for getting information to the public and that the EDC could use that throughout the year.

Marketing Budget/ Work in Wolfeboro

C. Duran reported on recommendations approved by the Marketing Committee at its December 12, 2021 meeting.

The committee supports a marketing effort to attract workers living within commuting range of Wolfeboro, (up to an hour.) to help ease a shortage of workers brought about in part by a lack of workforce housing.

C. Duran moved that the EDC expend up to \$1000 from the 2021 Budget for winter advertising in **The Laker** to be used to promote winter day trips to Wolfeboro and "Work in Wolfeboro." L. Van Cleeve seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

C. Duran moved that EDC expend up to \$500 from the 2021 Budget for advertising on WASR Radio. M. DeVries seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

D. Maher said he and K. Fairman met with a local digital agency called MoxDog to discuss creating a free "Help-Wanted" on-line listing service that could be used by Wolfeboro businesses. MoxDog is currently partnering with WEDCO (Wentworth Economic Development Corporation) with a special offer for digital service.

He explained that this would be a pilot program with the goal to help Wolfeboro businesses reach fulltime/part time, year-round/seasonal employees who live within commuting distance, promoting Wolfeboro as a desirable place to work.

There would be no charge to Wolfeboro businesses to advertise, however he suggested the EDC could also offer paid sponsorships to businesses where their business logos would be included on the website as sponsors along with the Town of Wolfeboro. This could help pay for promoting the site.

D. Maher moved that the EDC approve the expenditure of \$3000 with MoxDog for the program with \$1500 coming from EDC 2021 Marketing finds and \$1500 from 2022 Marketing funds. K. Fairman seconded the motion.

T. Austin and L. Murray indicated that the proposal should be reviewed by the Town Attorney to be sure it is an appropriate expenditure of town funds.

D. Maher said he doesn't view it as any different than placing a print ad to promote tourism.

The motion was approved unanimously, pending review by the Town Attorney.

T. Austin pointed out that all signed contracts allocating 2021 funds had to be in his office by the end of the following day, December 21, 2021.

Other Business

K. Fairman suggested that the EDC should compile and conclude its 2021 business survey, however, the Committee has lost its chair and administrative assistant.

B. Elliot made a motion to adjourn at 9:24, L. Van Cleeve seconded, and it passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Fairman, Member