

ASHLAND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

October 21, 2014

6:00 pm

Ashland Fire Station

Steering Committee Members Present

Susan MacLeod, Jill White, Cheryl Cox (Planning Board ex-officio), Steve Felton (Board of Selectmen ex-officio)

Ad Hoc Committee Members Present

Scott Stephens (Plymouth Regional Chamber of Commerce)

Others present

Norm DeWolfe, Fran Newton

This meeting of the Ashland Economic Development Committee was called to order at 6:04 pm by Chairperson MacLeod.

Disposition of Meeting Minutes

A motion was made by Steve Felton to accept the minutes from the September 16, 2014 meeting. The motion was seconded by Susan MacLeod. The vote was 4-0 in the affirmative.

Facebook Page/AEDC Page

Cheryl Cox has created an AEDC Facebook page and a website using WIX.com. The name is "Destination: Ashland" for both. There is still work to be done on both before they can be made publicly available. In the meantime, the page on the town website needs to be updated.

NH Open Doors Shopping Event

With the mission of advocating for Ashland businesses in mind, Susan MacLeod shared an article/ad that she found recently in a local monthly publication about NH Open Doors, a Statewide Shopping and Touring event that should be shared with local business owners. This is an annual event held in November (Nov. 8 & 9 this year) but registration is possible year round through the event website, www.nhopendoors.com. The website enables visitors to create a weekend of shopping fun by designing their own self-guided tour using a custom-designed Google Map. Using the website's search function, visitors find participants by category and region, and then use the interactive Google Map to get driving directions from one vendor to the next. It was suggested that Paul Branscombe be asked to share information about NH Open Doors in an Ashland InfoBlast email.

Budget

A budget of \$500 was submitted to the Board of Selectman in September.

Center for Rural Partnership Study

A letter of support from the Ashland Economic Development Committee was sent to PSU for the demographic study proposed by the Center. The study was approved on October 10 and the expected \$5000 cost will be completely covered by PSU. A written report is expected in mid-December.

GIS Mapping

Definition: A geographic information system (GIS) is a computer system for capturing, storing, checking, and displaying data related to positions on Earth's surface. GIS can show many different kinds of data on one map.

The Ashland Water & Sewer Department has purchased a GIS system to be used to map locations for town systems. Michelle Therrien, GIS Coordinator for Lakes Region Planning Commission (LRPC) is assisting in the mapping process. This system is available for use by other town groups. Steve Felton will look into scheduling a joint meeting with the Land Use Review Board and others to identify how it could be used in the asset mapping process discussed by the Planning Board as well as the Economic Development Committee. The system could be used to map out all commercial, retail and industrial sites available in Ashland. Once mapped out, the information could be used to easily identify available sites for potential business ventures. The Department of Resources and Economic Development (DRED) provides a service to help find appropriate sites for new business. For more information: www.nheconomy.com/business-services/starting-a-business-in-nh. Steve will also look into how information is made available through DRED.

Jill White will look into how Holderness is using their GIS system. Steve Felton will invite Michelle Therrien to a future EDC meeting.

“Business After Hours” Forum

After some discussion, it was decided the economic forum will be held in the March/April timeframe. It was agreed that a meeting in November or December would likely diminish attendance.

Additional reasons why it was decided to delay:

- We still need three regular members
- We need members from the Ashland business community
- Other local community business owners should be invited

It was agreed, the best way for us to advocate for Ashland business was to provide tools they could use to help them succeed and grow their business or help someone start a new business in Ashland. It was decided that educational material would be provided, covering such topics as creating a business plan, marketing tools, financing, using social media, how to find a site for a business, etc. Several resources for providing this type of material were identified and will be contacted.

Marketing Tools

As previously discussed, we need to develop a “packet” that could be given to anyone interested in starting a business in Ashland. The mapping of available sites is a start.

The towns of Littleton and Bristol have developed these types of materials in their recent economic development efforts. It was decided this would be a good starting point. The town administrators for both towns will be contacted to set up meetings.

Other Topics; Reference Materials

Prior to the meeting Susan MacLeod emailed the Orton Foundation’s “Community Heart & Soul” Field Guide attached. Copies may be downloaded at www.orton.org.

She also provided hard copies of the Lakes Region Planning Commission’s “Lakes Region Plan: Executive Summary 2015 – 2020”.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:39pm.

The next meeting will be held on **Tuesday, November 18, 2014 at 6:00 pm** at the Ashland School Cafeteria, *unless notified otherwise*.

Minutes submitted by Cheryl Cox