

## **Westminster Master Plan & Economic Development Meeting December 5, 2012**

Present: Stephen Wallace, Jeff Crowley, Bud Taylor, Richelle Brown, Heather Billings, Linda Wiest, Laila Michaud, Joe Flanagan, Norma Hales, Joe Serio, Dean Johnson, Sheryl Vaillett, Scott Ryder, Mike Gallant, Noel Berard

Meeting called to order at 7:01

Motion to approve minutes, AIF

Motion to approve committee master plan update for annual meeting, AIF

### **Econ Dev Chapter Data & Analysis:**

Discussion of where the data came from on the economic development chapter. Annual or adjusted for seasonal employment. State reporting full time jobs. New normal might be 30 not 40 hours. Compare apples to apples. Why is our unemployment rate higher than state rate. MRPC also has higher rate. Add the regional rate to table. Definition of employment- self employed don't count when they stop working. Seasonal, Self-Employed and home based businesses don't count nor do those who have given up finding work. Not going towards numbers being talked about on the state statistics. Check with Department of Workplace and Development for these numbers?

Bud Taylor suggested a review of Ncmwib.org- North central mass work investment board, which provides prevailing wage numbers.

SW will share table of # in town jobs from year to year. Two different data sources- need to set the bar so that we can compare. Lots of reports say the same thing. We can't control a major company coming in and folding or reorganizing, but the numbers are controlling the data that's in our report. How to explain whole issue.

Manufacturing. In a cycle- recovery, expansion. Raynor addition, Fitchburg Welding addition & hired employees. More business, added one-three employees. Understand where the jobs are, what they do. 10 years there are more employees at the mountain, automate as much as possible, still have more.

Should we charge ourselves to better understand unemployment and employment in town.

Take a second crack at the chapter and talk about it in January.

Impediments:

Lack of economic development director.

Lack of public policy that is creates/coordinates economic development.

Economic development is not just reducing taxes.

Discussion surrounding timing for this chapter. Best to make best use of available data, set goals, make recommendations and move on OR to spend more time on this. To take more time would mean

delaying implementation. Question of whether implementation committee could get moving before the plan was finished.

Would we look into hiring a full time Economic Development Coordinator? Town is too small to have both a planner & econ dev professional.

Discussion regarding filling currently vacant space in town. How to get involved? EDC goal to take charge of coming up with the information to solve the problem.

Discussion of whether we should set up sub committees to figure out the loose ends between monthly meetings.

Open space at 30% will hurt us in future if we don't plan for it. Huge asset in future. What is our potential?

We have the ability to invite people into the community that may attend other regional events and attractions. Not tapping resource for festival in town.

SW to work in data portion over December into January. Summit in January, that will give us better ideas of possibilities. Need to hear that before moving on to goal setting.

One more impediment:

Change wording "lack of skilled workforce". Ranor having trouble getting skilled machinests= regional problem. Rosemary to make link. Monty Tech & Mount Wachusett turning out what the companies need? What are we doing as a region to solve the problem? Train variety of professions to take the initiative to spear head the problem. Train the local workforce to become exactly what we need.

#### **Economic Development Summit Planning:**

Elementary School needs month notice to clear any evening for us. Wednesday January 23<sup>rd</sup>, snow January 30<sup>th</sup>. Three day weekend right before.

Discussion: Bigger business owners are not going to come to forum, would we like to change to something more intimate? Is the summit worth holding as originally envisioned? Go through the motions of extending the invitations. Need to reschedule and hold it. More useful for us as planners. Sheryl called farming community, almost everyone was excited about the opportunity. We thought of other people to invite, one last time. Get on the phone one last time. Enter new people into database. Senator Flanagan and Representative Fergusson, & Zlotnik. Invite businesses from neighboring communities, acting as a region. Please pass along to chamber membership to be interested in attending. Add NCMWIB

First week of January start making the calls. SW to have flyers ready the first week of Jan as well.

**Next business: Joint meeting Feb 13<sup>th</sup> at 7pm. Review second iteration of Econ Dev Chapter**

Motion to adjourn: Bud, Joe seconded, AIF