

NOTES OF THE BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
FOR TOWN OF NEW LEBANON
HELD ON May 2, 2022 VIA TELECONFERENCE

Present: Steve Abramson, Deb Gordon, Tistrya Houghtling, Ellen Ann Kafkalas, Peg Munves, Sharon Powers, Erminia Rasmussen, Monte Wasch, Josh Young

Absent: Anna Duhon, Danielle Kuffel, Jack Lancto

Members of the Public: Paul Barros, Britt Buckenroth

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 6:35pm by Monte Wasch

MSC: to approve the minutes of the April meeting was made by Monte and seconded by Erminia Rasmussen. Motion approved.

DISCUSSION:

Monte noted that Blueberry Hill is now up for sale, for \$1.5 million, and hoped that someone would purchase it and keep it running, since it's such a good anchor for our town center.

Infrastructure

Josh sent a survey to the two mall owners, Lori Bashour and Michael Carey – he asked them the following five statements and asked them to rate them 1-05 (with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree)

1. **FIRST** — I believe there's room for improvement in the overall state of economic development of New Lebanon's downtown.
2. **SECOND** — I believe there are realistic changes we could make to improve in the overall state of our economic development.
3. **THIRD** — I believe it's a good idea for the Town to pursue affordable research into different ways we could improve our economic development while preserving our rural character and environment.
4. **FOURTH** — One possible area of research is a professional study of how a potential municipal sewer and water system could work, what it could cost, and what benefits it could create. Assuming the research is affordable, I believe it is a good idea for the Town to pursue this research.
5. **FIFTH** — One possible way to make this research affordable is to find state, county, and federal grant money to help pay for it. I believe it is a good idea for the Town to pursue grants to do research into ways to achieve economic development.

Michael rated each of these a 5 and Lori answered 4 to 5 on most, except for the second question, which she rated a 3.

There was a general discussion about these questions and if they properly gauged whether or not the owners realized they would be paying for these improvements. Josh felt this was a good way to open the discussion without having real facts as to costs the owners would have to bear. Infrastructure believes that NL should pay for a feasibility study. The figure of \$30,000, which has been used as the basis of what a study would cost, was questioned by Erminia – and when no one could recall how that figure came up, it was decided that we should find out what exactly the cost

would be. Peg, Josh and Deb will try to toughen up the questions and get actual info on what costs we are talking about, regarding the feasibility study, etc.

Monte thinks we should get a grant for a feasibility study. Deb Gordon said there are grants for water feasibility studies that would pay 50%. She said that the actual cost depends upon what the town wants the feasibility study to investigate. She said that in New York State, the average landowner paid \$700/year for water and sewer.

Limited Development Corporation (LDC)

Monte wants to designate a subcommittee to explore the LDC, which the BEDC was tasked to do by June of 2023. Monte will chair the subcommittee and hopes to work on a conceptual framework that would include the pros, cons and benefits.

MSC: Made by Tistrya Houghtling to have the BEDC form a LDC Sub-Committee chaired by Monte Wasch. Seconded by Erminia. Motion passes.

Monte will look for other members – Josh Young may be interested.

Subcommittee for new Business Attraction

Another task from the Comprehensive Plan – to see what specific tools and targets we can use to attract more local businesses here. What categories would we want? Health providers? Etc. Suggested that Steve Abramson work with Rae Gilson on this. Rae has an expertise and can be an ad hoc member for this specific purpose. Steve will look to get others to help.

MSC: to Create a subcommittee to develop a marketing strategy to attract new businesses to town and to authorize Steve to work with Rae Gilson and others (who may not be present members of the BEDC) was made by Tistrya and seconded by Monte. Motion approved.

Outreach & Marketing Sub-Committee (O & M) – presented by Tistrya Houghtling

The O & M needs a motion regarding moving funds – the Food brochure that Erminia and Sharon did ate up our newsletter budget – we had had \$800 budgeted for two newsletters. We need approval to move \$341 from the Tourism line to cover the Food Access insert that went with the May Town newsletter.

We also are working on the Town Map & brochure – Columbia County tourism will distribute 200 and give us \$400 towards it. We will have to pay \$190 a month for having it located at Cultural Center locations.

MSC: Steve Abramson made a motion and Peg Munves seconded it, to move the money from the tourism line to cover the Food Access insert and to work with Columbia County Tourism on the new brochure and map. Motion approved.

Food Issues – presented by Josh Young

Josh said that he is now working on putting in a community refrigerator at Mavericks after being given a grant from Berkshire Taconic Foundation. Others will be able to put their excess food there and anyone is welcome to come and get food at any time that Mavericks is open. Mavericks has offered to cover the electric and the girl scouts will help. Josh will meet with Anna Duhon about the new community refrigerator and then present the details at the next meeting so it can become a project of the BEDC and get our support.

Meeting adjourned: 7:45 – motion made by Monte Wasch and seconded by Tistrya Houghtling

Next meeting: June 6, 2022 through Google Meets.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Powers