

NOTES OF THE BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
FOR TOWN OF NEW LEBANON
HELD ON June 6, 2022 VIA TELECONFERENCE

Present: Steve Abramson, Anna Duhon, Deb Gordon, Tistrya Houghtling, Danielle Kuffel, Peg Munves, Sharon Powers, Erminia Rasmussen, Monte Wasch, Josh Young

Absent: Ellen Ann Kafkalas, Jack Lancto

Members of the Public: Bob Gilson, Rae Gilson, Chris Dreyfus

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 6:32pm by Monte Wasch

MSC: to approve the minutes of the May meeting was made by Erminia Rasmussen and seconded by Danielle Kuffel. Motion approved.

REPORTS FROM THE SUBCOMMITTEES:

Infrastructure, presented by Deb Gordon

The subcommittee met with Candace Balmer. Her organization (RCAP Solutions) focuses on rural communities and infrastructure. She would like to work with New Lebanon to figure out what is best. She can help work on an RFP which would describe a feasibility study for free but she has two asks. She would like us to enter into an agreement with Balmer so her organization can get paid for the consulting work (but New Lebanon does not pay). Tistrya would have to sign off to get the Board approval. So they would also need to get a letter from the Town to get paid.

Monte said we still need to survey the owners and see if we have interest. He wants this to be done within a month of today. He wants to know if the businesses support creating a sewer district in which they would participate and be charged.

Following are Peg Munves's notes on the meeting:

- We met with Candace Balmer, who is a NYS Water Resources Specialist with RCAP solutions. Her organization focuses on rural water and infrastructure issues. Balmer has worked with many towns in rural NY to develop plans on how to get started and how to proceed with the entire process.
- Balmer confirmed that there are lots of different kinds of wastewater systems. She wants to work with us to help us conduct research on which ones might be the best fit for our small rural town. She can help with concrete tasks like writing the RFP for a feasibility study. And because her organization has state and federal funding – USDA and NYSDEC - she can do all of this for free.
- We would like the BEDC to vote to encourage the Town Board to enter into an agreement for free consulting with Balmer and her organization.
- Following this committee's guidance, we also worked on toughening up the survey language. As a result, we believe it makes sense to shift from our survey to a petition. The petition asks the Town Board to commission a feasibility study, and we will work to get endorsements by the next BEDC meeting.

MSC: To develop plans and how to proceed with Candace Balmer and RCAP Solutions to look at the water issues was made by Peg Munves and seconded by Erminia Rasmussen. The motion was approved.

Outreach & Marketing presented by Tistrya Houghtling **Brochure**

Tistrya was excited to say that the brochure, thanks to Erminia and Sharon, is now at the printer. New Lebanon signed a contract with Berkshire Brochures to distribute it from June through September and the Columbia County tourism department is paying us back \$400 and will distribute 200 of them. The Chamber of Commerce will distribute 200 of them as well. We printed 10,000 of them – 6000 will go to Berkshire Brochures for distribution and we will use the 4000 either to supplement this or to use for next year. We also have a web page: visitnewlebanon.com, which forwards to a page on the New Lebanon town website with more info on it. We can promote businesses on this site as well. We also feel we got a great deal with the printer.

Town Revitalization

The Town Board has discussed beautifying the downtown area. Tistrya will meet with LaBerge on how we might get the Town Revitalization grant from New York State. <https://hcr.ny.gov/new-york-main-street> Main Street Technical Assistance Grant – this give us the parameters of what we want the downtown to look like and what areas would be included. We will have to pay LaBerge for the grant application \$3500 and could use ARPA funds for it. The due date is July 29th and then we have a year to do it. It gives 75% coverage to beautification plans – inside or outside buildings, following certain parameters. Only pertains to businesses. The business owners pay 25%. Phase one of the grant is to pay someone to do the design parameters that the businesses would follow. (Approximately \$20,000)

Phase 2 – is to actually do the work. Tistrya and a community member went to every business and asked if they would want to participate and most said yes.

Walkable Downtown

When sidewalks were originally proposed, only one side of the street would be covered, not both, and it didn't include crosswalks because DOT wouldn't allow them. DOT will now allow crosswalks. According to Creighton Manning, we can now have a crosswalk. But Tistrya doesn't want to do this without public buy-in. A Community member got lots of signatures saying people wanted the sidewalks and Tistrya will see if we are still eligible to do this. Will fill out TAP paperwork in preparation for this coming up again next year.

People didn't want them last time because it required the seizure of small amounts of property via eminent domain. Questions like who would shovel them came up. Still needs to be worked out.

Small Business Saturday

Should we pursue this? Is there interest? Since there was so little interest last time it might be better to do a mailer to market businesses to our residents or have a social event for business people. Should we contact the Chamber of Commerce or encourage more NL businesses to join it?

Food Subcommittee presented by Josh Young

Josh met with Anna about local food issues and the long-range plans for a community refrigerator. They are going to do a trial period with Maverick's. Will get the check soon to buy it. How they got it was through a grant from Berkshire Taconic (to the Farmers Market via Grow the Valley) to house and keep healthy food that any member could take. The Town will let residents know about it. After the trial period with Mavericks, they will reassess their goals. Perhaps the refrigerator could be at the Community Center as well.

Next meeting: July 11 at Town Hall at 6:00 pm so the CAC can start their meeting at 7:00 pm afterward. We might change it to 5:30 if they can't move their meeting

Meeting adjourned: 7:50 – motion made by Peg Munves and seconded by Erminia Rasmussen

Respectfully submitted,
Sharon Powers