

NOTES OF THE BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
FOR TOWN OF NEW LEBANON  
HELD ON July 11, 2022 AT TOWN HALL

**Present:** Deb Gordon, Tistrya Houghtling, Danielle Kuffel, Peg Munves, Sharon Powers, Erminia Rasmussen, Monte Wasch, Josh Young

**Absent:** Steve Abramson, Anna Duhon, Jack Lancto

**Members of the Public:** Bob Gilson, Rae Gilson

**CALL TO ORDER:**

The meeting was called to order at 6:03pm by Monte Wasch

**MSC:** to approve the minutes of the June meeting was made by Tistrya Houghtling and seconded by Erminia Rasmussen. Motion approved.

**REPORTS FROM THE SUBCOMMITTEES:**

**Infrastructure,** presented by Peg Munves

The Wastewater Feasibility Study letter was endorsed by the vast majority of property and business owners along the Route 20 corridor. There were a few people who could not be reached.

Tistrya Houghtling asked who could not be reached. Answer was Slattery's and some residents.

Peg explained that the group knocked on doors and only spoke with property owners. The subcommittee thought we might consider including houses on lower Shaker Road as well.

BEDC members were impressed that so many had endorsed the letter and commended the subcommittee for their efforts.

**MSC:** To make a recommendation to the Town Board that we move forward to commission a study into potential wastewater treatments. The motion was to send the 3-page document the subcommittee drew up to the Board. (Document attached to these minutes, later revised to include water (fresh) as well as wastewater, see below explanation.) Made by Josh Young and seconded by Deb Gordon. Motion with amendment was approved.

Tistrya Houghtling asked why the request was only for wastewater and not for water and Peg responded that people seem to like their wells and wastewater was often the issue when the wells were too close to the septic. The Town's aquifer is healthy. It was discussed if Candace, their free consultant, should work with the group first and wait until next month to propose this to the Board, or should we just include both the fresh and wastewater now and see what the feasibility study comes up with. Josh Young recommended adding the fresh water into the first paragraph and the motion to send the document, including the revision of adding fresh water to the appropriate parts of the proposal to the board was amended.

**Resignation**

**MSC:** To commend and thank Ellen Ann Kafkalas, who has resigned from the BEDC, was made by Monte Wasch and seconded by Deb Gordon. Motion approved.

**Marketing Subcommittee** – presented by Rae Gilson

Rae Gilson and Steve Abramson prepared a report (attached) – they identified what would attract people to town:

- Medical care

- Pharmacy
- Childcare
- Laundromat

They also met with the Chamber of Commerce – who want to reach out to smaller communities like ours. Mike Tucker and the CEDC introduced them to Brian Zweig who spoke of the possibility of a mobile clinic, and they will be starting the conversation of what they would need – they had a virtual meeting with Xavier (aka Dr. Frank, ER doctor) and Eileen Raab (an ER nurse) who might give talks on specific topics, such as diabetes, nutrition, blood pressure, exercise, etc. they will work on sharing information with the community and collect brochures that are available. (**see notes, attached, for more details of what this subcommittee has done.**)

Tistrya Houghtling recommended they work with the BEDC committee, since this is one of their charges – disseminating health information to the community

Pharmacy – Cathy Grossman is open to figuring out how to transport pharmaceuticals from East Nassau to New Lebanon

Common office space – now in conversation with a Chathan coworker about this

Aim is to build a sense of community, that we want to help business in New Lebanon

Also want to work with Mike Tucker, Monte, Debbie Brown

Monte Wasch commended Rae and Steve on the great job they did.

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

She thanked Erminia Rasmussen and Sharon Powers on the recent brochure and Sharon Powers on the website page, visitnewlebanon.com – invited people to participate on it, by listing Events – it is set up so commercial events that cannot be listed on the Town's main website can be listed on this added page that is just there for tourism.

The subcommittee is now working on welcome packets for both new businesses and new homeowners.

**MSC:** to Adjourn the meeting at 7pm was made by Erminia Rasmussen and seconded by Tistrya Houghtling. Motion approved.

Next meeting: September 12 at Shatford Park, 6:00pm, so the CAC can start their meeting at 7:00 pm afterward.

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

Respectfully submitted,  
Sharon Powers

**DATE:** July 12, 2022  
**TO:** Members of the New Lebanon Town Board  
**FROM:** Business and Economic Development Committee  
**RE:** Wastewater feasibility study

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A municipal water and wastewater system in downtown New Lebanon would be a big step for the Town.

The Business and Economic Development Committee recommends that the Town of New Lebanon commission a study into potential water and wastewater treatment systems that could serve downtown New Lebanon as well as the costs and benefits of those systems.

The BEDC makes this recommendation following the results of a petition (first enclosure). This petition has the endorsement of nineteen of the twenty-nine relevant landowners (second enclosure). We regard this as a clear and powerful signal that the landowners in downtown New Lebanon are highly interested in charting a new course toward economic growth and shared prosperity and are highly interested in finding the facts regarding a potential water and wastewater treatment system.

The next milestone on the path to completing such a study (often called a feasibility study) is to publish a Request for Proposal (often called an RFP). The BEDC recommends that the Board vote today to direct the BEDC and the Wastewater Subcommittee to produce a draft RFP. The BEDC also recommends that the Board vote to finalize and publish this RFP once the draft is complete.

The RFP will define what kind of feasibility study the Town wants. In accordance with the petition, the RFP will aim to generate proposals whose engineering is sensitive to the Town's unique rural needs. It will also aim to generate proposals that describe the expected costs and benefits of the infrastructure they propose compared to a future without any municipal water and wastewater treatment infrastructure.

The Wastewater Subcommittee expects to work with experts to complete its draft RFP. One of these experts would be Candace Balmer of RCAP Solutions, a not-for-profit that assists small rural communities with the planning and execution of municipal wastewater systems. The BEDC recommends that the Board vote to direct the Supervisor to sign the memorandum of understanding furnished by RCAP Solutions, whose services to the Town are completely free.

Finally, the BEDC and the Wastewater Subcommittee also expect to help identify and evaluate grant opportunities that would defray the costs of the feasibility study.

## **FIRST ENCLOSURE — NEW LEBANON WASTEWATER PETITION**

Dear Members of the New Lebanon Town Board,

I'm a tax-paying owner of land or a business in downtown New Lebanon.

I am invested in New Lebanon and our downtown and would like to see improvements in the state of our economic development. Property owners, business owners, other citizens, and visitors alike — we would all benefit from a thriving downtown.

I believe water and wastewater infrastructure may offer a path to economic development. I would like to know how this infrastructure could work. I would also like to understand the costs and benefits of having this

infrastructure. That includes possible individual costs, like special fees or taxes, and benefits, like increased property values, as well as possible community-wide costs and benefits, like a stronger tax base for the Town and a more bustling business district. In addition, I would like to understand the costs and benefits of forgoing this infrastructure. Finally, I would like qualified, licensed professionals to answer these questions, so that we are less susceptible as a Town to speculation and misinformation.

To this end, I strongly urge the Town to commission a thorough feasibility study of different potential municipal sewer and water systems fit for our rural town, using grant funds if available and ARPA or other funds as well.

Once we have the facts, I will be able to evaluate the costs and benefits for my business or property, and we as a Town will have the information we need to move forward on an appropriate plan or defer action for now.

Thank you for your diligence on this matter.

Sincerely,

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## **SECOND ENCLOSURE — TABULATED RESULTS OF WASTEWATER PETITION**

### *Endorsements*

Lori Bashour / Midtown Mall  
Michael Carey / Valley Plaza  
Phil Moldoff / NAPA  
Steve Stollman / Berkshire Thrift  
Tony Murad / 530 Route 20  
Patty Joseph / Liberty Realty  
Diane Dibuono / Mario's  
Melanie Hunt / Blueberry Hill  
Linda Hursa / Angel's Trumpet  
Sara Schonour and Shantel Schonour / 555 Route 20  
Dolores Meissner / Meissner's Auction  
Maggie Cullen / 511 Route 20  
Jimmy Dillis / Jimmy D's  
Cindy Noe / Roaring 20s  
Pat Faran / 423 Route 20  
Michael Deegan for the Shaker Swamp Conservancy / Shaker Swamp  
Deb Gordon for the Phoenix Project / Fisher's Store's  
Deb McLaughlin / Deb's Shear Perfection  
Ellyn Gaydos / 452 Route 20

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### *Declinations*

Johnnie's Barbershop  
Larabee Fuel

### *Abstentions*

LVPA  
Consolidated Communications

### *Did not reach*

Tilden Plaza — new owner could not reached  
Library Board — meeting after our deadline  
Nancy Kyle — could not be reached  
Others — could not be reached

## New Business Subcommittee.

July 11,2022

### **Medical Facility**

We have reached out to Albany Med and Berkshire Med with some success at Albany Med. After speaking to several administrative staff I was directed to Doctor De who agreed to research the options they may be able to help with including Telehealth and a limited schedule office facility. He will get back to me in the next couple of weeks.

7/7/22 Rae completed a request form with Well Now Urgent Care, of Chicago, a Partner of St Peter's Health Partners out of Albany. On the contact form she included a description of the Town looking to be considered as a site for a Well Now Urgent Care and asked them what information they would need to continue a conversation on the Contact Us page of their web site. The only way to contact them unless we write a letter. Well Now Urgent Care has opened 2 centers in Rensselaer. Will follow up

Last week Rae and Steve had a virtual meeting with Xavier and Eileen, both ER Dr's, who had worked with the Lebanon Valley Health Assembly pre covid. They investigated a Community & Holistic practice, something for the entire family, from Food/nutrition to helping navigate insurance, that could be established and may be a possibility for New Lebanon. It would be modeled after the Ithaca Free Clinic. The clinic functioned as a free clinic until they were able to show the larger medical center how much money the free clinic was saving the Medical Center. We also discussed the possibility of engaging an urgent care center although it seems there may not be enough population to support one profitably. Eileen offered to reach out to Columbia Memorial Hospital for any possible alternatives.

We also discussed the benefits for health education, using holistic methods and volunteer practitioners. We would need a physical location, possibly the New Lebanon library. To begin, we are planning a Conversation for better Health at the Library (sitting outside) or the Pavilion in August. Xavier and Eileen are looking at topics, Xavier offered to speak and engage other speakers. We would also use this as an opportunity to remind the community about services existing nearby, that there is help on the computer at the library, see who might need transportation, and what other topics the group is interested in getting more information in a lecture, Q&A setting.

Another topic related to health care was transportation to a medical facility for those that did not drive. The concern was that if we used volunteers, we would need insurance and that may not be feasible. We would need to identify a commercial transportation company that provided this service. Bob Gilson is investigating a Van Service out of Hudson, but what about BMC in Pittsfield?

### **Pharmacy**

We are hoping that a home deliver system can be worked out with Cathy Grossman from the East Nassau pharmacy. Rae is going to reach out to Mike Tucker to determine population density to support such a system. It is unlikely that a physical location full-service chain pharmacy can be supported.

### **Common Office Space for Teleworkers or "digital nomads"**

Rae found information on the "Chatham Coworker" a facility offering office space by the day or month including amenities, e.g., internet, copy machine, coffee, tea etc. Still waiting for more facts.

Steve contacted Lori Bashour who has some open space at Midtown Mall and would rent it for this purpose but does not want to run the “business.” She has two open offices, one with approximately 150 square feet that may be suitable for 2 desks. We would have to determine who would run the schedule, billing, and how we would secure funding to install and purchase the amenities.

Michelle at the Library said there is a number of people who come in and use the wifi there for work or research. Sometimes they are looking for a more private place for phone calls and they do the best they can to arrange a space for them. There was just a college interview there last week. They do get calls looking for a meeting space.

### **Business Owner’s Interaction**

It was suggested that we provide a social event for business owners in New Lebanon to get to know each other. As an alternative it was suggested that we establish a New Lebanon Chamber of Commerce or a similar group for the purpose of networking events which may be of more interest to business owners creating an opportunity to develop more business. It may be possible to partner with the Columbia Chamber of Commerce but that would not be as “local” as a New Lebanon group, but the frame work and staff support is already in place.

### **Other Areas of Interest**

To include information about local existing business on the New Lebanon website

Sharon Powers is working on, a calendar of events, sales, promotions.

Possibly a Rental page, for rent and looking to rent, where they could contact each other from that page.

Commercial Kitchen – for local residents who sell their products can use at nominal charge.

Child Care

Laundromat – need proper water and septic facilities

Senior housing - William Gerlach is on the Board of EverHome, to help older people stay in their homes longer, which could be investigated further to understand who needs help and what help is available.

We also zoomed with the Pres &CEO of the Columbia Co Chamber of Commerce, Bill Gerlach head of Columbia Economic Development Committee CEDC, Mike Tucker, Martha Lane, Tristya, Monte, Stephen and Rae in June, out of that discussion we set up a meeting with Brian Zweig a PR specialist, we have 10 hours of consulting time. Tistrya, Monte, and Rae are working with us on a Strategic Marketing Plan. We are to Identify the target audiences was the first suggestion.

Find out what other communities have done to obtain what we want.?

We will meet with him again next month-if we’re ready.

Suggestion: Put our new brochure in the Pittsfield Train station.

**Submitted by:**

Stephen Abramson

Rae Gilson