

Quality of Life Committee, Town of New Lebanon
January 27, 2023

Present: Bob Gilson, Tistrya Houghtling, Kyle Kuffel, Danielle Kuffel, Sharon Powers, Erminia Rasmussen, Josh Young

Tistrya Houghtling called the meeting to order at 9:30 am.

Healthcare: Tistrya Houghtling began the discussion saying that through Mike Tucker's efforts, a non-profit pharmacy (Wellness RX) has expressed interest in opening a branch in New Lebanon. There is space for the pharmacy at the Tilden Mall. Tistrya, Rae Gilson, and Mike Tucker (of the CEDC) went to Tannersville to meet the owner and learn about his current branch of the pharmacy. She said that the pharmacy focuses on wellness, and while residents will benefit from all of the functions of a normal pharmacy, there would also be other wholistic services like massage and counseling that would be available. Tistrya and the others were very impressed by the operation and think it would be a good fit for New Lebanon. The owner said that he would need to raise about \$300,000 to open a pharmacy here. The CEDC is working on finding funding through foundations and governments sources. The town has also been asked to contribute and Tistrya proposed using \$30,000 of ARPA funds to help entice Wellness RX in to New Lebanon. A contract would be written that ensures that if Wellness RX is unable to fulfill their commitment, the ARPA money would be refunded to the Town.

Supervisor Houghtling made a motion: *"I make a motion to recommend to the Town Board that we set aside \$30,000 potentially for the Wellness Center, with the understanding that they will provide a written proposal to the Town Board, including the amount requested and what it is going to be spent on, and with an MOU in place between the Town and the Wellness Center before the ARPA funds are authorized, saying that if a pharmacy is not in place and operational in New Lebanon by a certain date, the money comes back to the Town. (Added: including why they need it."* Erminia Rasmussen seconded. The motion carried unanimously. Marianna Anthonisen was absent.

Tistrya said that she had recently had a discussion with Columbia Greene Memorial Hospital about the possibility of opening an Urgent Care facility in New Lebanon. She said that there seems to be genuine interest. While the hospital itself is having financial difficulties, their urgent care facilities are doing quite well. It was noted that New Lebanon is strategically in a very good location. Tistrya spoke with the owner of the Tilden Mall, and he is interested in the possibility of opening a facility behind the Mall. Tistrya suggested that the Town Board should consider investing ARPA funds to help attract Columbia Greene to commit to building an Urgent Care here. Ordinarily, the Town would not be able to dedicate funds to a project like an urgent care facility or a pharmacy, but the ARPA funds provide a unique opportunity to help attract services that might otherwise not be available in New Lebanon.

Supervisor Houghtling made a motion: *"I am going to make a motion to request that the Town Board hold our Zumba and Yoga request amount and take whatever is left over from fulfilling the rest of the requests that get fulfilled and put it aside for the potential of an Urgent Care Clinic, with the understanding that if the Urgent Care does not pan out, we get back our Zumba and Yoga request amount to move forward at that time."* Sharon Powers seconded. Bob Gilson, Tistrya Houghtling, Kyle Kuffel, Danielle Kuffel, Sharon Powers, Erminia Rasmussen voted yes. Josh Young voted no. Marianna Anthonisen was absent.

Housing: Tistrya said that there was a meeting on Affordable Housing for Columbia County on January 25 sponsored by the CEDC. The focus of the initiative will be on shovel ready projects which means that a developer has been identified, land has been identified, and plan has been created for approval by the Planning Board. The developer would apply for funding, and the town would support the process. In a best case scenario, the town would have water treatment in place.

Josh Young said that he would like the town to consider facilitating zoning for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs,) to help create affordable housing. He and Tistrya said that they would like to eliminate the 75 foot setback rule to help make it easier for property owners to build ADUs. Bob Gilson expressed concern that there be some kind of regulation in place to ensure that ADUs could not just be converted into short term rentals. He suggested that we look at best practices from other towns to ensure that whatever decisions are made work for the benefit of the Town.

The next Quality of Life meeting, scheduled for November 25 at 10:00 am, will be held in person.

Tistrya moved to adjourn the meeting. Danielle Kuffel seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 am.

Respectfully submitted: Bob Gilson