



Whitingham Economic Development Group

Whitingham Municipal Center, Selectboard Office, Jacksonville, VT 05342

Minutes of Thursday, January 23, 2020

Attendees: EDG Members: Seth Boyd, Phil Edelstein and Jenepher Burnell. Gig Zboray, Selectboard Office Administrator. Stanley Janovsky, Fire Chief.

Call to Order. Additions or Changes to Agenda

Phil called the meeting to order at 6:01pm. There was one addition to discuss the Chamber of Commerce dues.

Welcome to Carrie Northrup

Ms. Northrup was unable to make the meeting tonight.

Approve Minutes of December 5, 2019 meeting:

A motion was made by Phil Edelstein to approve the Minutes of December 5, 2019 as written, seconded by Jenepher Burnell, all in favor.

Encourage the next generation to join FD/EMS

Seth explained to Stanley that Fire/EMS volunteers are a strength of the town and EDG would like to help the FD to gain new members.

Stan noted that the Career Center in Brattleboro is a benefit to them, there are 3 students right now from Whitingham taking the fire class and some students are scheduled to take the EMS training next year.

Stan said there were 16 people at training the other night. He said the first response squad brought in new members to the Fire Department. He noted that family has the biggest influence on the next generation of fire fighters. Seventy percent of fire fighters in the US are volunteers.

Stan suggested starting with the school for outreach. He had a verbal agreement with the prior principal to allow him to speak to groups of students about the fire department. Stan thinks 8th graders are a good place to start, they are allowed to start at age 15 as junior fire fighters until they are 18. Stan suggested sending a letter to the Freshman.

Jen wondered if instead of a letter it be more of a recruitment, like a job fair or education fair with recruiters. Perhaps have an event at the school with the fire trucks to show the kids what they actually do. Stan would like a letter sent to the parents because kids don't read anything. Parents can discuss the volunteer opportunity with their children. He suggested a questionnaire might help to discover if a fire fighter class or first responder class was offered in Whitingham would the students take it. He mentioned it would be good to meet with the school personnel. It would help Wilmington too.

Next steps – Seth and Stanley will talk to school and BDCC. There is an interim principal now and there should be a new principal within 6 months or so. Perhaps Peter Lynch of the state Division of Fire Safety could help out.

Talk ensued about how and who to create an email list of folks to distribute local information to local people. Constant Contact is a business that manages email addresses, it has an unsubscribe button on the bottom of an email. MailChimp offers templates. There is a monthly cost. No decisions were made but everyone liked Stan's idea to have a regular email newsletter to promote local news, events and items of interest such as Kenny got a new tractor.

Rewrite Whitingham description for Deerfield Valley Real Estate Magazine:

Whitingham is known for having more miles of shoreline on Harriman Reservoir, host of the annual Hungry Lion Bike Tour each fall, the annual Maple Festival every spring; home of the Twin Valley Middle High School. Phil will write a draft and send it out to EDG members for approval.

Connectivity Update

VTel tower is up but not turned on yet. There are nine members of the Broadband Committee that meet every two weeks with a wide variety of backgrounds to research connectivity options for Whitingham.

Discuss Chamber dues

It is unknown if Gretchen spoke to the Chamber about Whitingham's listing on the website, to be continued next meeting.

Review Action Items:

Everyone create a list of things to do for the February meeting.

Seth will contact BDCC about Fire Fighters Class to be offered in Whitingham and then if necessary, Stan and Seth will speak to the school.

Seth will invite the school to the next EDG meeting

Stan will reach out to the state to see if other schools have programs for Fire Fighters.

Phil will draft a new description of Whitingham for the real estate magazines to be reviewed by email.

Gretchen will update us in regard to paying the Chamber of Commerce invoice

Gig will look at old emails to find out about the Google analytics

Update

Seth did talk to Stacey Birch regarding photos for the website. She will look at our website and see how she can help. She has tons of scenic photos. Seth also spoke to her about taking pictures of people in their place of business.

Next meeting: Thursday, February 27th at 6pm.

Adjourn

Phil adjourned the meeting at 7:31pm.

Respectfully submitted,
~Gig Zboray

FUTURE MEETING TOPICS:

February 2020

Compile a list of things to do nearby.
Communicate and offer support to the school leadership

March 2020

Photograph locals at their place of business for social media/marketing
Record brief interviews with local workers for social media/marketing
Encourage the creation of new age/marketing/social media committee
Encourage students to join either the WEDG or the proposed media/marketing committee
Invite students to help create videos, take photos
Invite students to join the proposed marketing/social media committee
Advertise across the web
Ask Marli for professional help/guidance
Ask Patience Merriman to create short videos
Marketing to encourage families to move to town/connectivity needs

April 2020

Consider joining the Bi-Town group
Determine best way to advertise to the tour buses that frequent Town Hill and Hogback Mtn.

May 2020

Expand the list of resources for our businesses
Marketing of local businesses
Figure out how to support a declining business
Figure out how to support Briggs with sale or transition of building