

Wilton Economic Development Commission

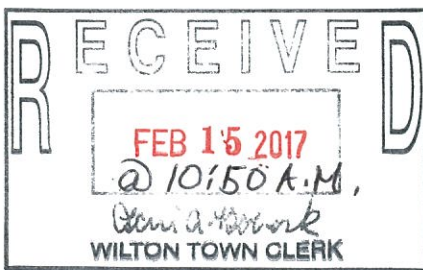
Wednesday 2/8/2017; 7:15PM

Attendees: Dan Berg, John Clasby, John Kelly, Phil Lauria, Vivian Lee-Shiue, Tracy Serpa, Jennie Wong, Brad Unger, Jim Jarvie, Lori Bufano (Non-EDC / BOS)

Absent with Notice: Gil Bray, Peter Hubbard

Special invited guest: Gail Lavielle - CT State Representative; Marianne Gustafson - Wilton Resident

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:23 PM by Vivian Lee-Shiue.
2. Approval of Minutes from 1/25/16 meeting: Approved with the following amendments under Item 3 "Old Business / Project Updates / Marketing Project" - *We will resume the conversation [with CGI] in two months (end of March) if the collaboration with WHS isn't progressing.*
 - T. Serpa moved to approve, D. Berg seconded the motion and the minutes were approved: 8 Approve / 1 Abstain / 1 Absent (J. Wilson abstained, and J. Jarvie was absent at time of vote due to late arrival)
3. Approval of Minutes from 2/1/17 Marketing Meeting: As this was a working group meeting, only the following EDC members were present at the meeting: Jim Jarvie, Vivian Lee-Shiue, Tracy Serpa, Brad Unger (arrived late), Jennie Wong.
 - V. Lee-Shiue moved to approve, T. Serpa seconded the motion and the minutes were approved: 4 Approve / 1 Abstain (B. Unger abstained)
4. Administrative Items
 - Budget – summary of presentation to BOS on 2/6:
 - Out of \$35,000 budget the EDC so far has spent less than \$5,000. The Board of Selectmen asked the EDC to evaluate our realistic spend given that we have only spent \$5,000 to date and prior years, have never exceeded this amount. It was pointed out to the BOS that prior years' EDC had a very different member composition and goals.
 - A revised estimate of \$22,000 for FY 2017 was provided to the BOS with a few major assumptions:
 - Majority of deliverables to date have been done on a volunteer or donation basis, yielding a lower spend than originally anticipated
 - Website maintenance spend remains flat compared with prior years (~\$3,000)
 - Video would be produced by WHS video team – this poses a risk if the quality is not as expected
 - Some amount will be allocated to a "printed" (versus video) marketing brochure targeted at: Phase 1 – residential prospects (to align with Sun products' timing of relocation of staff from AZ to CT); Phase 2 – Commercial businesses.
 - Remainder of spend is allocated to strategic plan and website review – for access to data, additional resources, and tools
 - A revised estimate of \$16,500 (minimum); \$19,000 (requested) for FY 2018 was provided to the BOS with a few major assumptions:
 - All community outreach activities will be eliminated.



- There is no allocation for any staff/consulting fees. All work related to grant, rapid response, and work with any outside agencies will need to be done by EDC members and/or volunteers.
- Majority of remaining funding will be allocated to website update, distribution, Ph. 2 of marketing/branding campaign, Strategic Plan.
- Rapid Response team will be deferred until the right players can be identified. It is assumed that this will be under the management of Bob Nerney once established.
- The hope is that the remainder of the budget will be allocated to the Plan of Conservation and Development, as we see that as a precursor to any further activity.
- Some discussion:
 - EDC appears to be a “Catch All” for any item that seems like a good idea, but has no home: Bon Fire for example.
 - It appears that \$ have correlated to Action in the eyes of the BOS. This can give a warped sense to the BOS and BOF. Because EDC has not used budget, the assumption is that we are not active. The EDC has actively tried to solicit volunteer time and donations to reduce spend so that we can use it on the marketing and strategy work - but it does not mean there is not activity.
 - B. Unger pointed out that other EDC groups put out an Annual Report. L. Bufano agreed, and mentioned that he Bridgeport/Fairfield EDC puts a report out quarterly. Lori will forward the last one to the group.
- The group agreed that we would have an Outline of Goals for the 2/21/17 BOS meeting. P. Lauria will take first pass.
- Marketing/Publicity Update
 - Script will be shared with J. Wilson, P. Lauria, and T. Serpa. J. Jarvie has reviewed the first draft and provided feedback.
 - J. Wong will inquire a realistic timing for WHS TV Studio to preview the first edit of the video for the Commission. This does not have to be a final copy of the video and does not need to include all voiceovers/music.
 - Flip Book Publishing Tool Discussed – J. Jarvie and J. Wong to continue to research – trial periods are available – licensing prices for the two options are roughly \$150 or \$300, with an additional amount for maintenance and publishing.
 - Brad U. requested a rough version of the “Flip Book” so he can add content and get a prototype generated soon.
- Signage Update – No new updates. Team has been identified but meeting has not yet been set up.
- Alcohol Ordinance
 - Proposal will be presented to the Selectmen at the 2/21 meeting.
 - Will have a public hearing at May town meeting

- Ordinance change will be part of the followup town vote.
- EDC would like to recommend that the change be limited to elimination of the local ordinance; allowing the restrictions to default to the state restrictions. This would put it in line with our neighboring towns.
- Strategic Plan – Phil – Work in progress.
- Guest Attendee – Marianne Gustafson presented to the group:
 - For context, she provided her background (corporate real estate) and her experience with large corporate moves.
 - Opened a discussion on how the EDC/BOS and the Town of Wilton could/should proactively reach out to the Corporate base and local developers in town.
 - Suggested proactive outreach coming directly from First Selectman to the corporate leaders and developers is a good way to “open the door” to further discussion. This could come in the form of a letter to the relevant parties. Also, suggested that an “Ambassador” role that regularly reaches out to Corporate HR could be a productive way to keep the discussions open.
 - Used some examples including the Sun Products move and how getting ahead of these corporate decisions could help avoid the loss of large companies and the workforce base they provide. Alternatively, if the companies are going to relocate to more central locations (like Stamford), it is a way to get foot in the door to promote the town as a place for the employees to live.
 - Discussion by the commission on some experiences on corporate relocation, with the main points being:
 - Some corporate moves are unavoidable and turnover will occur regardless of outreach efforts of town.
 - Recent NEDA conference outlined some of the drivers of businesses in any town: Lower Taxes, Fewer and Clear Regulations, Ready access to transportation.
 - Anecdotally, Wilton is known to be a bit “difficult” and restrictive to work with.
 - T. Serpa brought up a recent CON application for a company looking to relocate to the Cannondale area – the group was intrigued by how the company found Wilton - it was recommended that the EDC reach out to find out more.

5. New Business

- Gail Lavielle, CT State Representative, attended the meeting and spoke to the group about the impending CT State Budget issues and how these issues could possibly affect Wilton. She prefaced her discussion by stating that she had not had a chance yet to discuss with anyone in Wilton including the First Selectman, and that all commentary is entirely preliminary.
 - *(NOTE: The EDC invited Gail with the intent of brainstorming (after her presentation) some ideas to build revenue base in town given the possible*

impact of the state budget proposals. This brainstorming session was deferred to the next meeting due to time constraints.)

- Some details:
 - State deficit is expected to be ~\$3.5B/2 years (\$1.75B/1 year). Gail discussed state-level if goals are not met.
 - Currently, teacher's retirement fund is carried by the state, with a 6% contribution from the teachers. Under the new proposal, each town would be required to come up with 1/3 of the cost, resulting in a ~\$4MM/year transfer to Wilton.
 - Gail mentioned that this is a first pass at the proposal and historically, the first pass has not ended up being the final solution.
 - V. Lee-Shiue read the email provided to the commission by the First Selectman prior to the 2/6 budget meeting (also read at the 2/6 meeting), which corresponded to the details provided by Gail Lavielle. One additional note is that with the anticipated cuts to municipal aid, this could amount to tax increase at the local level if no additional sources of funding are identified.
 - As a preliminary discussion to our brainstorming session, the EDC discussed some of the findings from the analytical study on ways to increase the tax base in town, specifically: changes in zoning to increase residential density, improvements to infrastructure (sewer, water, gas) and direct transportation line to attract more large businesses into Wilton.
 - Gail informed the group that a bill has been submitted to "Improve the Danbury [Metro North] Line." Aside from some changes at Merritt 7 station (to electrify the line to allow for turnaround), there has been some discussion around a potential "shuttle" service between the main line and spur locations on the Danbury line.
 - She suggested we garner support from surrounding towns (Redding, Ridgefield, Weston) to surface further discussion. She will have more info after her Tuesday committee meeting.
 - V. Lee-Shiue will reach out to L. Vanderslice to get her up to speed. She suggested that collaboration with the Ridgefield EDC may be productive for this effort. Gail mentioned that "Rudy" (First Selectman of Ridgefield) is very strongly in support of the proposal.
 - West COG Economic Focus Group – B. Unger will email list of sessions to the EDC and strongly suggested that if possible, someone from the EDC attends each session. Many are to be held in Wilton at Comstock.
6. Other topics
- Brainstorming Session on Impacting Grand List - V. Lee Shiue suggested that we table the brainstorming session to next meeting. J. Wilson motioned to move it, D. Berg seconded the motion, and the motion to defer was unanimously carried.
6. Adjournment – with no further business, a motion was made by J. Wilson to adjourn the meeting; the motion was seconded by D. Berg and the motion was unanimously carried. The meeting was adjourned at 9:50PM.