

The Town of Brooklyn
Economic Development Commission

Chairperson, Robert Simons

(860)774-6544

*Meeting the First Tuesday of every month @ 4pm at the
Clifford B Green Memorial Center*

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, May 16, 2019

Members present: Jeff Gagnon, Cary Garcia, Chris Landis (6:35), Robert Simons

Also present: Earl Starks, Jana Roberson

- 1) Call to order – Mr. Simons called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.
- 2) Approval of minutes – Mrs. Garcia made a motion to approve special meeting minutes of April 2nd. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gagnon.
- 3) Public Commentary – None
- 4) Brooklyn EDC Goals
 - a) Commissioners reviewed the feedback from the April meeting commenting on the suggestion to do focus groups using other boards and commissions, as well as conducting an online survey.
 - b) Mr. Simons suggested it might be possible to obtain a consultant from a local university for help.
 - c) The group discussed improving communication with other boards and the public via social media, and the possibility of conducting a survey.
 - It was suggested at the April meeting that when a business comes into town, EDC should have a checklist for what they need to do. Mrs. Garcia asked Jana Roberson if something like this already exists within Town Hall. She explained there is one but it has a permitting focus.
 - Discussion continued regarding a survey and the ability to add a surveymonkey link to the EDC page as well as the front page of the town website.
 - Mrs. Garcia offered to create a facebook page but asked if there are any restrictions or specific permission to do so. Ms. Roberson offered to ask Michelle on P&Z who also recently created a Facebook page.
 - Mr. Landis expressed concern with the idea of a survey, specifically that it is not scientific. The group agreed that EDC would need to make clear that it is a snapshot of opinions.

- d) There was discussion lack of support from the Selectmen and removal of funds from budget.
 - e) Filling vacant buildings - improving appearance and reducing blight, business recruitment and retention
 - There was discussion regarding potential penalties if commercial property owners keep their spaces vacant for a long period of time. Conversely, the Town could assist landlords in finding a suitable tenant if they know the property is vacant. This role would be taken on by an EDC Coordinator.
 1. Mr. Landis does not feel the EDC or Town should not have any say in price of rent. Mrs. Garcia suggested looking at surrounding towns, but felt that an EDC Coordinator could focus on filling those spaces, eliminating the need to penalize landlords for empty spaces.
 2. Ms. Roberson brought up the CERC website and that it does not list all vacancies in town. She stated that she would look into it and find out how the EDC can access the information. It was also discussed how real estate vacancies could be shared on the website/social media.
 3. AJ Kerouac discussed that he obtained information that there will be a shuffling of location of town offices.
 - f) Improving Brooklyn's desirability as destination - recreational resources, historic, and cultural attractions
 - Mrs. Garcia brought up the lack of use of the river frontage. While the baseball field is used, many outsiders don't know there is a boat launch or that the park is there.
 - Discussion led back to the potential use of social media to support events going on within town such as Paddle for a Cure, Ag Days, etc.
- 5) A discussion took place regarding comments about the EDC in the April 11th Board of Selectmen minutes.
 - 6) NECOG Branding discussion - Mr. Landis raised the question of the status of this proposed project. Based on status of surrounding towns that utilized the service, Mr. Simons feels it isn't worth it. The group agreed. Mr. Kerouac stated that he attended the Pomfret meeting and that created risk for negative attention rather than fostering unity.
 - 7) Adjournment - A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Landis, second by Mr. Gagnon.
 - 8) The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 4th at 4 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Cary Garcia, Secretary