

Town of Mount Desert
Economic Development Committee Meeting
November 21, 2019 5:30pm

Minutes

Attending: Dan McKay, Wendy Wood, Minot Weld (Zoom), Averel Wilson (Zoom), Jamie Blaine, Rick Wheeler(Zoom), Nancy Ho, Kathy Miller, Stephanie Reece, Don Graves(Zoom), Tony Smith, Jackie Hewett (Zoom)

Absent: Martha Dudman, Matt Hart, Seth Singelton, Durlin Lunt, Heather Jones,

- Review & Approval of minutes from EDC meeting on October 15, 2019
- Consideration of ME Broadband Coalition membership
 - o Highly effective statewide group
 - o No cost to join
 - o The town has to initiate membership
 - o EDC votes to recommend that town do so.
- Broadband research and objectives
 - o What level of connection is necessary to support professional, educational, telehealth and other needs?
 - o Given the speed at which technology is changing, the Town and its residents must be forward thinking as to the Town's potential needs, not just its current, immediate needs.
 - o Upload speeds are the significant barrier to any tech related business in Mount Desert. Currently Spectrum can only offer a max of 35mbps upload in their existing coaxial service
 - o Spectrum can offer a fiber connection, but it is prohibitively expensive
 - Requires install of dedicated fiber line to customer
 - 200mbps synchronous service currently cost \$1,100.00/month from Spectrum
 - o To attract the type of small, tech centered business that could thrive in Mount Desert, the town needs to provide fiber speeds at a reasonable cost. Several models of doing so are available:
 - The town can develop and own a fiber network
 - A contracted Internet Service Provider can build and own the network (generally with significant investment from the town)
 - Consultants are available to walk the town through options
 - o What is a reasonable or desirable level of connectivity for our town?
 - o Can we create a vision of what we want?
 - o A consultant who has worked with Bar Harbor and Swan Island has offered to speak with the committee. We will contact him to see if he can attend an upcoming meeting.

- NEH Medical Center
 - The center would like to be on the committee's radar...
 - Space is available for medical professionals
 - Can we attract a health practitioner to the town?
 - Part of the problem is housing...
 - Make a property available to attract someone with key skills needed in our community.
 - What works to make this happen?
 - Funding
 - Housing
 - Pay-off of medical school loans (if a doctor is sought)?
 - What can the committee's role be in this effort?
 - Can we get a doctor or nurse to list essential requirements so that we can better address the question?
 - Agreement to talk to local hospitals to see if there is any interest
 - Who are the visionaries at the MDI hospital with whom we can consult to give us the perspective to make this happen?
 - Is it possible to augment/tie into the Seacoast Mission to coordinate with sophisticated on-line medical support/diagnostic skills. Northern Light?? Fast internet speeds would be needed for this.
 - Dartmouth Medical Center in New Hampshire has been an advocate of this on-line process and is considered the strongest resource between Boston and Toronto.
 - A shortage of physicians who want to live in communities like NEH exists, but loan repayment and housing costs might lessen this. How can we support a fix?
 - Dan McKay will talk with Seacoast Mission about coordination.
 - Kathy Miller agreed to talk to Christy Seed.
- Discussion about Promenade Park. Town staff will prepare a warrant article for the Selectmen to review and act on when the timing is right. The article will ask the voters if they will accept a gift of the park.
 - What is the best timing
 - It may be best to defer the warrant until Phase I of the Main Street project is completed.
 - The project needs to be presented as it is conceived: a beautiful park, designed and built with private funds on land owned by the Town of Mt. Desert.
 - The corporation will raise the money to build the park.
 - Consider a 2021 campaign and 2022 construction.

- Discussion about innovation and how it can work in other communities

The Maine Community Foundation is collaborating with Maine Downtown Center, in presenting a forum on "Building Downtown Networks that Foster Entrepreneurship & Innovation".

- This forum will be held in Skowhegan on 12/11/19 from 8:30 – 4:00
 - Discussion will include ordinances around housing and downtown development.
 - EDC members are encouraged to attend.
- Inviting speakers to upcoming meetings:
 - January – Broadband
 - February – Medical Building
- Next meeting January 9th, 2020 at 5:30PM.
- Meeting adjourned at 6:51PM