

Town of Mount Desert
Economic Development Committee Meeting
October 12, 2022
Draft Minutes

Attending:

In person: Jamie Blaine, Martha Dudman, Matt Hart, Dan McKay (chair),

By zoom: Megan Bailey, Kathy Miller, Stephanie Reece, Kerri Sands, Tony Smith, Rick Wheeler

By phone: Averel Wilson

Absent: Don Graves, Nancy Ho, Jen Judd-McGee, Durlin Lunt

Dan convened the meeting at 4 p.m.

1. Minutes. Matt moved the approval of the minutes of the July 20th meeting. Rick seconded. Unanimously carried. Kerri asked that the attachments intended to be sent with the minutes actually be sent with these minutes. Attached.
2. Updates
 - a. Broadband. Kathy reported that the Broadband Committee had received only two responses to its request for proposals: Consolidated Communications and Spectrum. The latter will present at tomorrow's monthly meeting. The Committee has not asked for anything specific; it's just trying to gauge interest and parameters at this time. Currently 96-97% of the town has access to Spectrum cable.
 - b. Skating Rink. Kathy reported that the rink group has received solid support from all relevant townspeople and committees, as well as an enthusiastic reception from the Select Board, which affirmed its interest in accepting the rink when it is built and paid for. The Community Development Corporation is now set to take donations – and has already received \$5,900. She is hoping the rink will be up and running this winter but is not guaranteeing that just yet.
 - c. Main Street. Tony said that work is scheduled to resume on Monday, Oct. 17th. Work to be done includes running electrical connections, erecting lampposts on the east side of the street, and taking down the overhead wires that cross the street. The work is supposed to be finished by Memorial Day. Matt asked if some of the things that had been removed from the project due to the costs would put back in. Tony said that depended on the economics, but it is certainly possible.
3. Stakeholders Meetings.

This committee is well represented on the Stakeholders Committee, with Dan and Megan representing us, Kathy representing 365, Jenn representing the Chamber, and Durlin representing the Town. Participating organizations, in addition to this committee, are: the Chamber, 365, the Town, the SRA, Island Housing Trust, both Acadia National Park and Friends of Acadia, COA, and the YWCA. There is unanimity that the island's most

pressing issue is housing, both affordable year-round housing and seasonal workforce housing. And a good deal is actually happening on that front.

Kathy reported on 365's projects: (a) the four lots on the south end of Main Street will ultimately produce 15 apartments and about six commercial enterprises. The apartments and commercial spaces are for year-round use only. The project will also provide parking. (b) The project proposed for Neighborhood and Manchester roads will have six residences, including the house that is currently there. The mix will include two duplexes, and the garage will be used for storage. All the units will be moderately priced for year-round occupants only.

Inness Hancock of the Neighborhood Road Association, who was attending by Zoom, asked Kathy if two duplexes increased the number of people, as Kathy had told the group there would be no more than six units. Kathy replied that the original plan involved removing the garage, but, because they had decided to keep it for storage, the second duplex was added to keep the number of housing units at six. After some further questions from Inness, Dan broke in to say that, while this was indeed a public meeting, it was not the proper forum for debating Kathy's report. The project is a 365 venture, not the EDC's, and the place to raise substantive questions will be at the planning board meeting.

Continuing with the report on the Stakeholders Meetings, Dan said that COA expects 15 students, faculty, and staff in its new Main Street building. COA students must commit to community service, and Dan suggested the college consider a summer work opportunity in town as well. COA president Darron Collins appeared open to the suggestion. COA has a growing concern over faculty housing. Many of the senior faculty own houses they bought a long time ago, but the newer members are having trouble finding housing they can afford. Likewise, the Park was short dozens of employees this summer, primarily due to the housing shortage.

Noel Musson is leading an effort to form an island-wide housing summit, which will include the island's major stakeholders and employers. The hope is the first meeting will convene sometime in midwinter. Megan said that Noel had noted that all four towns are in the process of redoing their comprehensive plans, so it's a good time to address this island-wide issue. The village meeting last evening in Seal Harbor attracted 75 people, a very encouraging number.

Dan reported that 2 Rock End Road is no longer under contract. The most logical developers are 365 and IHT; the SRA is, hopefully, a potential source of funding.

The next Stakeholders meeting will be in early November.

4. Comprehensive Planning and Short-term Rentals

As noted above, all four island towns are in the process of updating their comprehensive plans. A central issue is the impact of short-term rentals and the possibility of licensing and/or regulating them. This is a big issue, said Dan, not only here, but across Maine and across the country. As speculators buy properties for short-term rental use only, they take more and more housing off the market. “It’s hollowing out our communities,” Martha said. Any regulation will not prevent people from renting out a room or their house, particularly in the summer months, as long as they are the primary resident.

5. Dan noted that he had received “a notice of non-renewal” for directors and officers insurance for the CDC because there is so little money coming into the account. He is talking to the insurance company, and he also wondered if the Town would consider setting aside funds, maybe \$1,500, to cover CDC and EDC administrative costs (taxes, insurance, annual reports, maybe some fees). Martha said we should bring the matter to the Select Board.
6. Tony Smith has agreed to stay on as a regular committee member after his retirement at the end of this month. **There will be a retirement party for Tony next Wednesday, Oct. 19th, from 4-6 p.m. at the Neighborhood House.**

Respectfully submitted (with attachments)

Jamie Blaine

Attachments

July 6th Stakeholders Draft Minutes

SRA Spring Newsletter

EDC Main Street Report to SRA (May 18, 2022)

Updated Committee List