

Town of Middlebury
Economic Health Committee
Minutes of Meeting
April 25, 2019

Present: Fred Kenney, Farhad Khan, John Freidin, Ben Calvi, Becky Dayton and Mary Cullinane
Absent: Karen Duguay, Scott Gemignani, Steve Boyce and Ex-officio member Jennifer Murray
Also present: Jodi Covey

The minutes of February 28, 2019, March 28, 2019 and April 11, 2019 were approved as presented upon motion by Calvi, seconded by Cullinane.

Kenney asked the Committee if the Critical Factor document looked okay to them and did they agree with the three Critical Factors listed. The Committee agreed with the three Critical Factors chosen and discussed the details of each one.

Critical Factor #1 is to develop a brief economic vision for the Town. One of the details listed under this Factor is the need for a new economic plan before developing the vision. It was discussed whether the Town needed a new economic plan or if the economic section of the existing Town Plan could be updated to express the goals and vision, and it was felt a separate plan wasn't needed.

Having a committee, or a hired or elected person, to create the vision was discussed.

Critical Factor #2 is having a dedicated office or individual to act as Middlebury economic health ambassador. Kenney summarized the way different communities handled economic development identified by Downtown Program Director for the State Gary Halloway when he came to speak to the Committee.

- Montpelier has a non-profit person paid for by the local option tax. Someone who business can have guide them through the town process.
- Springfield has a separate, ad hoc partnership.
- Bellows Falls and Randolph have non-profit entities.
- Wilmington contracts with someone.
- Bennington has a municipal community development Director and also partners with the Regional Economic Development Corporation.

- 41 • Albany and Cabot each have non-profit entities formed by the community with no town
42 employee, but both are much smaller projects.
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44 Freidin thought there should be an ambassador separate from a staff person who does the detail work,
45 and felt it should be an elected official such as a Selectboard member or mayor. Khan said members of
46 the Selectboard had jobs and businesses, and didn't have the time or qualifications to act as
47 ambassadors. This led to a discussion of whether the ambassador should be elected or staff. Freidin
48 said he'd like to hear from these other towns on how they determined whether to have staff or use a
49 non-profit group. They also discussed if a non-profit group should be a new group specific to economic
50 development, or to utilize an existing group, such as the Better Middlebury Partnership or Addison
51 County Economic Development Corporation.
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53 In what time was left in the meeting, the Committee began discussing Critical Factor #3, which is the
54 need for the Town maintain and advance basic amenities and infrastructure to keep and attract
55 businesses and families to the region. Kenney said when providing these suggestions to the
56 Selectboard, the Committee should also provide the action the Board should take to achieve them.
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58 Freidin said he would work on shortening the list in #3, and Fred will work on #1. Freidin said he would
59 like to have Susan Clark, one of the authors of "Slow Democracy" attend a meeting, and Dayton said she
60 would like to hear from the City of Montpelier on their economic development structure.
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62 The meeting adjourned at 1:25 p.m.
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64 The next meeting of the Economic Health Committee is Thursday, May 9, 2019 in the Town Offices at 77
65 Main Street.
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67 Respectfully submitted,
68 Beth Dow
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