

1 Town of Middlebury
2 Economic Health Committee
3 Minutes of Meeting
4 December 14, 2018
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6 Present: Fred Kenney, Mary Cullinane, Ben Calvi, Becky Dayton, Farhad Khan, John Freidin and Karen
7 Duguay. Absent: Mike Capra, Steve Boyce and Scott Gemignani.
8

9 Also Present: Ex Officio Member Jennifer Murray
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11 Approval of November 29, 2018 Minutes – Deferred
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13 Discuss Schedule and Work Plan
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15 Kenney said he'd like to invite business owners and managers to the January 10, 2019 meeting and
16 developers and property owners to the January 24th meeting, to hear their thoughts on economic
17 development in Middlebury. He said he had a list of people to invite, and asked the others on the
18 Committee to provide him with names of people they'd like to invite. They discussed various ways to
19 get the invitation out to these people, and the possibility of the Addison Independent doing an updated
20 article with these dates. Kenney said he would be asking people to RSVP, and Freidin requested the
21 names of those attending be circulated to the Committee prior to the meeting.
22

23 Murray asked instead of asking everyone to come and give opinions, if they'd considered having a panel
24 of 8 or 10 different type of businesses so you could have more of a back-and-forth conversation than
25 you'd have in a group setting. She said when you invite a great number of people, there is some sort of
26 expectation from the group that something will come of their comments. Calvi said the panel idea was
27 an interesting concept and he could see the benefit, but Kenney was afraid some would be offended if
28 they weren't included. Duguay wondered if individuals would feel represented in a panel format, when
29 everyone has different issues. Cullinane said perspectives would be different due to variables, such as
30 location of the business, and thought the format may prevent some from attending. She didn't think
31 some people are comfortable just coming in to provide feedback so thought it would help to make the
32 process less intimidating.
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34 Murray said if there was only 6 months for this Committee to produce a report, then an all-inclusive
35 process to include everyone would be fine. She said since they have up to 2 years to do the work, she
36 thought having a panel with invited attendees to provide a more in-depth look into the issues would
37 make more sense, and then open it up to a broader group later in the process.
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39 Kenney suggested a combination of the process. He suggested inviting everyone and then call and invite
40 specific people for a panel from different backgrounds to answer moderated questions. The Committee
41 then discussed who they wanted to specifically invite to this discussion, and whether or not to include
42 non-profit groups with the businesses or to have them come to a separate meeting.

43

44 Cullinane said there is this movement from an economical development standpoint, but at the same
45 time the school district is looking at long-term planning for facilities, and she feels at some point there
46 needs to be an intersection of these two conversations.

47

48 There was more discussion on whether to include the non-profits with the business group discussion.
49 Dayton said while they are important, other than the hospital and Counseling Service, she doesn't think
50 they play a role in contributing to the economic viability of the community. Cullinane said their business
51 decisions for their organizations will be different than a for-profit company. The consensus of the
52 Committee was they needed to be heard from, but at a separate meeting.

53

54 Long and Short Term Goals

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56 Kenney said the short term goals were to hold these roundtable groups with businesses and developers.
57 Freidin felt the SWOT analysis should be done next, and it might identify items to focus on.

58

59 Cullinane asked who would have the expertise to help the Committee with the economic stimulus
60 component. She used the Middlebury Money handouts at the first Midd Night Stroll as an example of
61 an initiative that brought people back to the second Midd Night Stroll to spend it. Freidin suggested the
62 National Downtown site or Brookings Institute might have samples of stimulus programs that have
63 worked for other locations. Dayton also suggested the Orton Foundation.

64

65 Duguay said she would like a deeper conversation with some of the other communities in Vermont that
66 have done economic stimulus projects to see how they're working and to get a better understanding of
67 how applicable any of those methods might be to Middlebury. Freidin thought that would be more
68 valuable once we have determined what we want to focus on. Calvi said he would like to see a running
69 list of all the economic tools they've heard about so far and to decide if there are any that they should
70 explore further. Kenney said he would work on that from the minutes and from what he remembers.
71 Murray said she had compiled all the economic reports done in recent years that have a lot of good
72 recommendations and economic tools, and offered to make packets for each of the Committee
73 members.

74

75 Kenney suggested they do the SWOT analysis at the February 14th meeting and schedule 2 hours for this,
76 and at the February 28th meeting the Committee will reflect on the SWOT analysis.

77

78 Cullinane asked if the Committee was aiming to report to the Selectboard this coming summer. Kenney
79 said they could do an interim report for summer or fall. Duguay said when she had gone to the Board
80 meeting with Dayton, the Board had indicated they would like to hear some kind of progress report
81 from the Committee. Khan said the Board had said the only time the Committee needed to report to
82 them was when there was any benchmark decisions made. Murray suggested some type of report
83 before Town Meeting might be useful in case someone asked about the status.

84

85 There was discussion on the Development Opportunity Profile of Addison County by ACEDC, and the
86 Buxton Retail Leakage and Surplus Analysis prepared for Middlebury. Kenney said the ACEDC report
87 makes a good point, that one of the strategies we should consider is helping retail businesses transition
88 into the local sector, meaning things that sell well in this area. He said this is all to address internet
89 sales. Calvi said he'd like to sit down and brainstorm how municipalities effect change and what are the
90 economic tools they can use. Freidin said Middlebury will have to look at its geography, because there
91 isn't much room downtown for large retail establishments to be located, and the opportunity for space
92 is being taken up by market development. Dayton said that sounded like a Planning Commission issue.
93 Cullinane said this Committee's job would be to support and encourage Murray and the Planning
94 Department in any way possible, and encourage the Selectboard to continue supporting their efforts.
95

96 There was continued discussion on the results of the Addison County Development Opportunity Profile,
97 and how they should look at that more closely and identify the things the Town can do and make
98 recommendations to them, but also the things the Town can't do and make note of those as well.
99

100 There was discussion on the large role retirees play in the economy and how there aren't family
101 members available to take on the family business, and how issues like these are impactful to a rural
102 economy. Kenney said since this is becoming the largest demographic, you need to plan for businesses
103 to serve that age group and be sure the downtown area can accommodate them.
104

105 Duguay said the businesses doing the best downtown now are ones who can bring an experience to the
106 shopper that you can't get on a screen. She said any future businesses coming into the downtown will
107 impact the others, and instead of looking at the downtown as lots of individual businesses, you should
108 look at it as one, since what one business does as far as events or hours open, impact the other
109 businesses.
110

111 The next meeting of the Economic Health Committee will be on January 10, 2019 at 12:00 noon in the
112 Town Offices at 77 Main Street.
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114 The meeting adjourned at 10:32 a.m.
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116 Respectfully submitted,
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117 Beth Dow