

Town of Middlebury
Economic Health Committee
Draft Minutes of Meeting
November 29, 2018

Present: Ben Calvi, Karen Duguay, John Freidin, Scott Gemignani, Fred Kenney, Farhad Khan
Absent: Steve Boyce, Mike Capra, Mary Cullinane, Becky Dayton

Call to Order: The meeting began at 12:00 p.m. in the Conference Room at ACEDC, 1590 Route 7 South Suite 8, Middlebury

The minutes were approved upon motion by Dayton, seconded by Khan. The vote was 7 in favor, 1 absent, 1 abstention (Cullinane).

Kenney asked group to comment on “take-aways” from presentations at last two meetings. Gemignani said for him it was that this group should find something that can be recommended to the town that can be implemented quickly. He cited the signage for Frog Hollow as an example. Duguay mentioned that others are working on this issue. Freidin stated that even if others are working on it, this group can still make a recommendation to the town about the need for better signage that helps drive customers to businesses. Gemignani also said he was surprised to hear that municipalities are buying empty buildings and redeveloping. The group discussed the possibility of this in regards to the Ben Franklin building.

John Friedin asked how we could determine if the town is being friendly to development or not. He wondered if the town manger form of government leaves residents with no one person to go to with problems and issues. You have to go to the same people who regulate. Should evaluate leadership structure and mayoral form of government so there is someone to go to. There are so many moving parts it is hard for a select board to keep track of everything. There is no champion with overall vision to push initiatives forward. A town manager does what is required and as directed by select board. Not in a position to be visionary.

Friedin also appreciated Gary Holloway’s statement that the municipality, and thereby the committee, needs to know what it is trying to accomplish. Really need to do a SWOT analysis and build on strengths. Also need a comprehensive list of all properties and status of availability.

Kenney commented on the many ways described by Gary Holloway that municipalities can set up to handle economic development. There was no one modal for everyone. Committee should discuss what might work for Middlebury and craft a recommendation. Duguay recomended funding a position, but should discuss how and where. Gemignani stated that we should have a plan first then create a position to implement it.

Group discussed getting input from businesses. Should ask what are their challenges, what are their ideas for improvements to business climate and business needs in town, what tools would help them grow and prosper. Need to address the changing landscape on retail.

Group discussed plan for meetings. New date needs to be found for next meeting due to Merry Middlebury events. Kenney will send a Doodle poll. Plan is to discuss short-term and long-term goals for the committee, details on the input sessions in January, including Middlebury businesses on January 10 and developers January 24, then hold a longer meeting in February to do a SWOT analysis.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 1:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Fred Kenney

DRAFT