

1 Town of Middlebury  
2 Economic Health Committee  
3 Minutes of Meeting  
4 February 28, 2019  
5

6 Present: Fred Kenney, Mary Cullinane, Farhad Khan, John Freidin, Karen Duguay, Scott Gemignani and  
7 Steve Boyce. Becky Dayton arrived at 12:30 p.m. and Mike Capra was absent.  
8

9 Also present was Ex-officio member Jennifer Murray, who arrived at 12:45.  
10

11 Kenney called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m.  
12

13 Minutes Approval

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15 The minutes of February 14, 2019 were approved as presented upon motion by Khan, seconded by  
16 Freidin.  
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18 Citizen Comments – None  
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20 SWOT Analysis  
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22 Cullinane said the Committee made good progress at the last meeting, and today they would be  
23 focusing on the Opportunities and Threats, things that are external factors that haven't happened yet,  
24 but might impact economic development in Middlebury. She said following a SWOT, you begin to  
25 develop 4 or 5 Critical Success Factors; the critical things to do to reach the goal of increasing our overall  
26 economic development opportunities. She said once you have your Critical Success Factors, then you  
27 develop recommendations that would allow for the Critical Success Factor to be achieved.  
28

29 Cullinane said the Middlebury school system is in the process of being reviewed to be approved as an  
30 International Pre-K through 12 International Baccalaureate Program, and if approved would make us  
31 one of 10 in the country. She said that is an example of an "opportunity" that might happen that could  
32 be a benefit when recruiting promoting for businesses to come here.  
33

34 Some of the opportunities identified:

- 35 • Potential International Baccalaureate designation
- 36 • Take advantage of our strengths: recreation, arts & culture, agriculture and beverages, to  
37 attract and encourage vertical integration
- 38 • Be ready to take immediate advantage of future funding opportunities, such as broadband,  
39 childcare or housing
- 40 • A growing demand for pop-up and start-up businesses
- 41 • Need for increasing downtown nightlife

- 42 • Growing senior population as a contributing sector
- 43 • Growing acceptance of remote working
- 44 • Focus on Vermont renewable energy industries
- 45 • Identify trends of future funding opportunities

46

47 Some of the threats that were identified:

- 48 • Future demographic challenges
- 49 • No support for entrepreneurs – lack of awareness and availability of resources
- 50 • Potential concerns over current K-12 academic approach
- 51 • Town acts too slowly, too timidly or not at all
- 52 • Cost of living increasing at a greater rate than the ability of employers to pay livable wages
- 53 • Low unemployment rate
- 54 • Varying perception of Middlebury’s identity, vision and strengths.
- 55 • Climate change impact
- 56 • Short-term impact on downtown businesses (loss of access for 12-14 weeks in 2020)
- 57 • Declining number of volunteers
- 58 • New legislation threat to businesses

59

60 The Committee then discussed the next step in the SWOT process, which is to take the list of  
61 weaknesses, strengths, opportunities and threats, and put it in a form that identifies what is critical to us  
62 as a community to increase the overall economic development opportunity in Middlebury, and develop  
63 specific Committee recommendations to achieve this.

64

65 The Committee talked about the best way to analyze all the SWOT data. They discussed having  
66 someone on the Committee do the work, or to see if the Middlebury College student consulting group  
67 would be able to do the work. Murray felt this had been just a casual exercise that didn’t fully capture  
68 all the information the Committee had heard to date, so felt it should simply be used as an exercise to  
69 help the Committee going forward, and didn’t think a consultant was needed. Cullinane said she would  
70 like to think that while some of this has been casual, it was done with a mind-set based on data and has  
71 a little more substance.

72

73 Kenney said the end result of this process is meant to be used as a tool for the Committee to work with  
74 and not the final product that will be given to the Selectboard.

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76 It was decided that John Freidin would begin the analysis process and then forward it to the Committee.

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78 The next Committee meeting is on March 14<sup>th</sup> to hear input from developers and property owners.

79

80 Respectfully submitted,

81 Beth Dow