

CHELSEA PLANNING COMMISSION

10/5/17 MEETING MINUTES

TOWN LIBRARY

Members Present: Dickson Corbett, Tim Courts, Susan Hardin, Neil Kennedy, Ed Kuban

Public Present: Deborah Baker, Carrie Caouette-DeLallo, Erich Golschneider, Sarah Gordon, Bob Haynes (GMEDC), Maggie Kerrin, Mary Riley

1. Bob Haynes from Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation gave an introduction and presentation about the role of GMEDC in promoting economic development in Vermont's villages and towns. GMEDC provides advice and support to towns that are looking to attract business and to businesses that are looking for assistance in starting up. GMEDC also offers loans and financing under the right circumstances.

As to Chelsea, Bob described a process of identifying Chelsea's message, both for the purpose of attracting new business and residents to Chelsea and for improving the quality of life for Chelsea's residents. As for existing obstacles, high-speed internet and cell-phone coverage were discussed, as were the vacant commercial spaces in the village area. Another obstacle mentioned was the lack of activities and restaurants. Chelsea attracts visitors to B&Bs in town, for example, but visitors must drive a lengthy distance for activities and meals.

At times past, Chelsea was a hub, a place where people came together from surrounding towns. It was a point of common agreement that people would like for this spirit to be reestablished in the community.

Another point of agreement was that there are many artists and entrepreneurs who work from their homes, and local products are being sold, but many people do not know who they are, and that these resources are underutilized in the community. Marketing was identified as an issue, and Mary Riley mentioned the impact of advertising expenses on a small business. One proposed solution might be the creation of a brochure or internet website or social-media account or internet forum for the dissemination of information about businesses and activities in our area. Sarah Gordon volunteered her husband Doc to look into this idea.

Carrie Caouette-DeLallo spoke about the potential for creating an arts council in Chelsea with an eye towards establishing an arts festival to be held on one of the town greens. Anyone interested in this idea is encouraged to contact Carrie.

Bob mentioned tax abatement as a potential incentive for redevelopment of some of the vacant downtown businesses. Dickson agreed to look into this.

A river walk was mentioned.

It was suggested that the commission reach out to some of the young farming families that have made their home in town and find out what their needs are, and how we might encourage more such families to choose Chelsea.

At the core of the task is identifying Chelsea's "hook": something that catches the eye and makes Chelsea attractive to potential residents and businesses as well as improves the quality of life for existing residents and businesses.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.