

RICHMOND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

July 13, 2016 - Minutes

MEMBERS PRESENT: David Woodmansee, Ed Smith, Josh Comerford, Larry Casey, Meredith Westner

GUESTS: Karen Pinch, Henry Oppenheimer

Call to order: 8:06 am

Review/Approval of 6/8/16 minutes - MOTION: Approve the 6/8/16 minutes with the corrections as noted below (Josh Comerford/ 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed Smith /All in Favor)

- a. Correct all references to "Ed Sheehan" to "Joe Sheehan"
- b. Change 500 room hotel to 150 room hotel in reference to information on The Preserve

Review/Approval of 4/12/16 Minutes - MOTION: Approve the 6/8/16 minutes with the corrections as noted below (Josh Comerford/ 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed Smith /All in Favor)

- a. Correct all references to "Ed Sheehan" to "Joe Sheehan"

It was noted that the March minutes should be added to the next agenda for approval

OLD BUSINESS

- b. Richmond Community Marketplace
  - i. Chariho Furniture donated small stuffed sheep for distribution in the "I love Richmond" bags. One of these sheep has become the market mascot. To raise interest, a sheep naming contest will be held with the winner awarded a gift certificate. The possibility of reaching out to students in the Parks & Rec program for name suggestions was discussed.
    1. Reach out to Parks & Rec
  - ii. The response to the e-mails and mailings to local business was very limited. While some items were collected for the "I love Richmond" bags, the "Richmond Business Day" is not looking feasible. Gift bags have been distributed and well received by recipients.
  - iii. The market is still struggling to attract customers and vendors. The town will "share" market facebook postings for events of particular interest.
  - iv. It was suggested that another attempt to reach out to the other market may be warranted in an effort to combine two small events into one larger event.
- c. Commerce RI Grant
  - v. Commerce RI sent an agreement for the business process program for signature. The town solicitor does not see the agreement as a good investment as the scope seems very limited. There
- d. EDC Website
  - vi. The logo for the EDC website has been modified to remove the golf ball.
  - vii. Letter to businesses if they want to be listed
- e. Commercial vacant property letter discussion

- viii. Currently there are only 3 public listings of leases in town- Walgreens, offices over eye doctor, Cycle Brothers. Also, there is only currently only one commercial property is listed as for sale – 5 acres along route 138 Given the low number of listings, it may not be beneficial to put these listings on the EDC website.
  - ix. Josh Comerford is working on a letter for commercial property owners to include and introduction and a note to please contact EDC for help listing properties
  - x. It was suggested that the website should perhaps list reasons to come to Richmond. Further discussion is needed to expand on the suggestion of “Traffic Flow”.
- f. EDC Budget
- xi. The EDC asked for \$3500 in the fiscal 2017 budget and was allocated \$4500. The additional \$1000 is for the potential project with RI Commerce. A question was raised about a discrepancy in price between the discussed and listed \$500 and \$1000 on the quote from RI Commerce.
- g. New Slogan
- xii. The new slogan discussion was tabled until the new website up and running. At that time, a contest or poll of local businesses and/or residents may be conducted.
- h. Business owner consortium
- xiii. The consortium discussion was tabled until the new website is up and running. There was further discussion on how best to reach out to local businesses. Basically all agreed that sending letters, e-mails, and using social media is of very limited effectiveness - face-to-face interaction is probably only truly effective way to reach out to businesses. Further discussion ensued on what the “selling points” should be for these interactions – this included:
    - a. Asking businesses are what issues they are having?
    - b. Noting the support business on the new website
      - i. It was mentioned that the Westerly Sun has a program promoting business advertisers on-line
      - ii. Events calendar
    - c. Asking how would like to see town grow?
    - d. Asking what can we do for you?
  - 2. It was suggested that someone reach out to Lisa Caniky at the Ocean Chamber of commerce
  - 3. Josh Comerford is to create a letter to hand out during these face-to-face visits
- i. Website and marketing update
- xiv. It was stated that a beta version of the new website should be up in 2 weeks
- j. Rt 95 Welcome Center
- xv. It was noted that currently Hopkinton is opposed to the state backed exit 1 proposal. In the meantime, the state may still be open to re-open the closed “Welcome Center” in Richmond. It was noted that even if the Welcome Center

is re-opened, this may not help traffic in Richmond. It was suggested that Geo-fencing which highlight nearby businesses may be helpful to draw Welcome Center traffic off the highway and in to Richmond. It was discussed if this should be investigated as a potential offering of the EDC.

B. New Business

- a. EDC support at planning and town council meetings
  - i. Josh Comerford has been checking agendas and attending Town Council meetings as appropriate as a show of support for issues important to Richmond Businesses. It was suggested that it may have the most impact to attend the required public hearings related to business issues. It is also possible to reach out to businesses involved in these meetings with the names of the EDC members, when meetings take place, and offer help if needed.

C. Open Forum

- a. A policy about insurance related to groups using town property has been established.
- b. It was noted that Senator Whitehouse 7/19 10:00 am at CCRI in Warwick with a presentation Federal EDC programs

The next meeting is scheduled for 8/10/16 8:00 am

- D. Motion to Adjourn – (Larry Casey / 2<sup>nd</sup> Josh Comerford / All in favor)  
Adjourned 9:31