



TOWN OF RANDOLPH, VERMONT

Economic Development Council

Via Teleconference

Minutes of February 1, 2021

Members Present: Mary Richter, Damian DiNicola, Ken Cadow, Bethany Silloway, Sarah Jackson

Guests: Gary Dir, Jerry Ward, Andrea Easton, Dan Bennett, Larry Satcowitz, Julie Iffland, Pat Moulton, Valerie Schoolcraft, Kezia Frayjo

Town of Randolph: Joshua Jerome

Selectboard Liaison:

Public Attendees: None

Mary informed this meeting is being recorded to document minutes. Do I have any objections to the recording? No objections.

Establish Quorum (Quorum)

Call to Meeting to Order: Mary called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM.

Public Comment: None.

CoVID-19 Update (Dan Bennett)

Testing

People know the difference between maintaining an asymptomatic testing program for the community since May 2020. People who are sick and those who have had contact with others. Last week there have been over 11,500 tests Gifford has done. There have been no charges for CoVID testing as the hospital received funding through the CARES Act last year. Funding should last for the next two to three months, at which time Gifford will reassess what to do next.

From December to January, Gifford handled increase cases 80 to 90 tests per day coinciding with the holidays. Testing cases have returned to approximately 50 to 60 per day, and the number of testing has been coming down.

Gifford has an incident command system set up last March and is currently meeting twice a week. Dr. White provides clinical and other information. His most recent report shows an encouraging downward trend since January 6th in Vermont and nationwide, and there is hope this trend will continue.

Vaccination

Gifford has participated in the initial phase, Phase 1A providing vaccinations to health care workers and other essential workers in our communities. Gifford has vaccinated over 1,400 people in Phase 1. Since this phase is wrapping up, Gifford will continue to have vaccines available. New medical field hires will have availability to the vaccine. Last week the State expanded to the next phase of the 75+-year-old bracket, and the State will continue to move forward to the next phases using the age bands approach.

The State decided to select partners to administer vaccines subject to a request for proposal (RFP) as they thought there would be a large number of partners located in different communities throughout the State. Based on the Biden

administration information, there was a national stockpile of vaccines available and to release them more quickly; however, there is no national stockpile of vaccines. The State had to reduce the number of partners, and unfortunately, Gifford was not selected to participate and administer the vaccine to the 75+ age band. The decision was frustrating and disappointing to Gifford as the hospital has done an excellent job for the community as part of its mission. Perhaps shortly, Gifford will be chosen for the next phase as the State has notified Gifford that they are looking to bring on additional partners; however, there has been no confirmation. Gifford hopes to be involved again around February 17th. There are indications that Vermont will be getting more vaccines. Vaccines are being administered at Kinney Drugs.

Johnson & Johnson is in the process of going through the regulatory cycle, and hopefully, they will be approved here in the coming weeks

Center on Rural Innovation (CORI) Project / Digital Economic Ecosystem Project (Bob Haynes)

The CORI team held several workshops throughout January assessing scalable tech entrepreneurship, support incubation and access to capital, and digital jobs. The workshops provide an opportunity to identify the community assets and how to build upon them.

The Randolph group works with two other communities, one Southern Vermont, located in the Brattleboro area, and the other is a community located in northern Iowa.

There are a couple of weeks left for the project, and the core team is at a point to finalize gathered information, document, and circulate. The next step is to get feedback and start formulating the application this Spring. The anticipated time to circulate the document is the need of the week.

REDC School System Team Update (Damian DiNicola)

A core group has been established with members from the school system, community, folks with children, and the business community. A meeting with Layne Millington has been set for May 4th to hear his goals for one-year, three-year, and five-year for the school system to understand his views and challenges. The group's goal is to work together and make a difference as a team.

Childcare

Quick update on childcare; the Orange County Parent Child Center has agreed to partner in terms of being the provider for the childcare center in time, which is a huge plus. The site has been identified, the Enterprise Center, and the goal is to secure the site. Applications for grants have been completed to support the center. There are numerous partners with the state and local community to get this done—the hope I to secure the final grants to allow confidence with an open date.

Randolph in Motion (RIM) (Mary Richter)

Quick update on the next issue of Randolph in Motion; Josh and Mary met with Maryellen to outline the plan and get a quote. The next hardcopy and digital release will be mid-May with a focus on camping and other outdoor activities. Topics that were discussed during the Fall edition are being considered for the summer guide. We plan to expand the guide from 16-page to 20-page highlighting local businesses like the Lucky Bugger Winery and some other initiatives.

A RIM business directory has been updated. We will work on another local business sponsorship and advertising program with a broader approach with mailings, email, and follow-up phone calls. A project plan will be developed with assigned tasks to meet the publication timelines. Other members of the group will be involved in the coming weeks.

Takeaway: identify digital distribution channels, i.e., Front Porch Forum, RACDC, Chamber of Commerce, Randolph Senior Center, Vermont Department of Tourism, The Vermont 251 Club, etc.

RACDC / RAMAN Updates (Julie Iffland)

Randolph Brick Bucks

The initiative went pretty well, and there is time to redeem Randolph Brick Bucks, and approximately \$8,500 were sold, including bonus bucks.

Incentives were paid for about \$6,000 based on raw data and estimate that the leverage is approximately 34.5%, meaning if someone when into a participating store to make a purchase, paying with Randolph Bucks and an additional form of payment. About 30 businesses participated, and about 14% were bought or used by people outside of Randolph.

As a first-time effort, it appears to be a success. After March 31st, the participating businesses will be contacted to get feedback on whether this should be a continuing initiative.

Downtown Wi-Fi

Downtown Wi-Fi is working; however, more routers need to be installed. The downtown kiosk is problematic because the lights that plug into the streetlights go off during the day. To resolve the problem is to place a battery to provide power during this time. Also, batteries do not like the cold of winter, and we need a workaround for the kiosk location. There are rooftop routers, and work is starting on the street level routers to expand Wi-Fi to sidewalk areas.

Randolph House Upgrades

RACDC has raised approximately \$4M for upgrades. The Randolph House is a large and old building requiring life safety upgrades, expansion in the rear with a graded entrance, additional common spaces, additional parking and makes it a safer, livable, and affordable place for the next 40+ years. If RACDC gets the remainder of the funding, work can start in the Fall.

Salisbury Square Phase II

RACDC has received one Grant and worked with new architects to have another path for funding the project. There has been some good news from the Governor and his attempt to fully fund the Housing Conservation Board and potentially another \$20M from one-time funds. That may be good news for the Salisbury project and continue fundraising for some state tax credit funding starting this Spring.

These are some of the initiatives underway because the Designated Downtown Program (DDP) requires annual reporting, and additional analysis is being done about improvements and investment in the downtown area.

Josh added that he and Julie are working on a better connections Grant for a downtown master plan for transportation and multimodal, including economic development and marketing. The Grant is a two-year cycle, and the town did not want to wait another two years to apply.

White River Valley Chamber of Commerce Updates (Andrea Easton on behalf of Linda Runnion)

Kiosk at The Barn

Andrea updated the group that Jay and Jake Garner are building the ramp and using the donated rails.

Other

A new tenant is an organization working with veterans, and it presents an opportunity to connect with the local American Legion Club. Perhaps this group can connect with Clayton Butterfield and the geriatric equipment loaning program to continue the program.

Also, the Chamber is looking into the Vermont 251 Club to help with promotion and expand the Chamber into a bigger tourism arena.

February 9th will be the first Chamber Board meeting of the earlier. If anyone has any agenda items, contact Andrea.

The Chamber is assembling approximately 50 to 100 welcome bags for its realtors; if anyone has literature or brochures, they can be dropped off at the Chamber lobby by the end of February.

Old / Ongoing Business – Updates as needed

VTC Updates

Pat reported today was the first day of classes. The college is still remote learning and limited residential. VTC residential students from Fall to Spring are down by 20%. Students feel if they need to be online, it is best to stay home and not be on campus.

VTC hopes to be close to normal in the Fall when face-to-face classes and labs may be possible based on the Governor's requirements. The goal is to get more students back in the halls.

VTC is moving forward with the new additive (3D printing with metals and ceramics) manufacturing lab \$12M-\$14M project that Senator Leahy spearheaded will be within the Morrill Hall building. It is a great teaching opportunity and benefits small businesses and other manufacturers in the State.

In addition to the exciting campus activities, VTC is looking to sell some assets and reducing our footprint by providing work from home opportunities. A campus master planning process has started and identifies investment priorities for the next 15 to 20 years.

New Business

Maple Fest

Valerie Schoolcraft introduced a new seasonal event since March is a quiet month in Vermont. Sugaring is a Vermont tradition, and it is celebrated in St. Albans with a three-day Vermont Maple Festival. The event would go beyond syrup and candies and introduce cooking and maple foods. Events would be staggered throughout the month and allow the sugar makers to be in charge of preparation and distribution for a small fee.

The group brainstormed, and Val hoped the Council would take the lead.

Mary explained she did not have the bandwidth to take the lead; however, can participate and asked who would be willing to do so. Julie offered to have Sarah Shaw work with Valerie and Bethany Silloway. Julie will send a Doodle Poll to set up a meeting to continue brainstorming and set up a plan.

Adjourned: 8:09 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary V. Richter, Chair