



# TOWN OF RANDOLPH, VERMONT

## Economic Development Council

Via Teleconference

Minutes of August 3, 2020

**Members Present:** Mary Richter, Damian DiNicola, Bethany Silloway, Megan Harvey, Jay Hooper, Ken Cadow, CJ Strump (quorum)

**Guests:** Peter Reed, John Lutz, Andrea Easton, Gary Dir, Wink Willett, Sonny Holt, David Palmer, Curtis Ostler, Jerry Ward, Julie Iffland,

**Town of Randolph:** Joshua Jerome

**Selectboard Liaison:** Perry Armstrong

**Public Attendees:** None

Mary informed this meeting is being recorded for the purpose of documenting minutes. Do I have any objections with the recording? No objections.

### 1. Call to Order

### 2. Public Comment

### 3. Welcome New Council Members and R3 members

Mary acknowledged and welcomes the new council members who were appointed earlier this month. Damian, DiNicola, Bethany Silloway and Megan Harvey.

In addition, Mary acknowledged the R3 members in attendance. The R3 Economic Development and Tourism Task Force members is now part of the Economic Council and all meetings are open to the public.

### 4. Randolph in Motion Updates

#### Summer 2020 Edition

Mary reported there was a core team (Valerie, Perry, Josh and me, and then we had Gary and John that helped us with the funding and printing with the development and distribution of the summer guide.

It sent it out electronically around July 8<sup>th</sup> on the difference social media sites.

We're hoping to have the insert in the Herald in this week's edition (Aug 6).

Extra copies (approximately 500) will be distributed to local businesses within the Randolph region. Summer 2020 Guide printing expenses were funded by Gay Dir, John Lutz and Carol Bushey.

## Fall 2020 Edition

Mary reported Valerie Schoolcraft who has been worked on the content and graphics is committed to additional responsibilities with her employer. Val provided guidelines, timelines and resources for us to consider as we move forward. Josh and I have been chatting about it and what we need to do to fill in this gap. We have looked at the InDesign application and Valerie provided the Summer guide link as a baseline with going forward.

The summer edition was focused on restaurants, retail, events, and recreation. We have gotten some feedback from folks. One is that we didn't hit the services, real estate sectors. Question to the group is what sectors should we add on to the next edition?

Additional discussions and feedback were to include education (Ken), farmsteads and energy (CJ).

We need to coordinate the R3 Newsletter that Gary and John work on and the guide to avoid duplication of efforts. The next R3 newsletter is scheduled for release in August.

The energy task force has been working with Michael Gray, and Vicki Johnson on figuring out some joint activities for the future.

The next steps regarding the fall edition and how we want to approach it. Mary asked members to please email her with your suggestions.

### **5. CARES ACT (VT Bill H.965 & H.966)**

ACCD CoVID-19 Recovery Center <https://accd.vermont.gov/covid-19>

We are waiting for the ACCD to formulate the requirements for the Marketing and Tourism Grant application.

Andrea re-emphasized CJ's question if there is any provision in food program that's been talked about for emerging businesses like new businesses that weren't eligible for anything because they didn't have an historical record of accounting by all the rules from both from the federal or the state programs before they were kind of left out. Is there anything that would give any of those hope for money going forward? Peter and Jay responded that they don't think there was anything envisioned there. And even for the businesses that are being helped, you had to have some pretty dire negative impact already there. There are other programs in the state that that incentivize new business investment and those will stay in place.

Concerns were expressed for those who were invested in eco-tourism and/or agritourism who were impacted by CoVID-19. Peter and Jay stated best to their knowledge, except dairy there's a program being announced again soon. That's everything but dairy. But the guidelines have not been released yet.

## **6. RACDC / RAMAN Updates**

Julie reported we're seeing a little bit more activity and anticipate after the six hundred dollar a week expires, we're going to see more than we have seen in the rental department and are anticipating that our funds could be used for bridge money before people get into the other programs and will be funneling folks into that. We're also going through Capstone, as one of the members and Capstone was applying for the Everyone Eats program for their other two areas.

We talked to them about adding the Orange Windsor area to their application and work jointly with RAMAN so that our area could participate. The Everyone Eats program is through the CARES Act as well, and it's five million dollars statewide to essentially buy meals from local restaurants who are willing to participate in order to feed people who are either food insecure or are experiencing challenges with CoVID. It's a nice way if it works, if everything comes together to get money in the hands of restaurants who are willing to participate. It also requires that 10 percent of the of the food comes from local sources and that helps farmers. I think that application is open now and we're starting to reach out to restaurants with some questions about whether they would participate and whether they see any challenges with that.

Brattleboro was the first place that initiated this, and they just launched there this week. We'll be looking to them for guidance and insights.

Julie mentioned they are looking into creating Randolph Community Dollars program on a smaller scale similar to the efforts done in St. Albans. Local businesses will be contacted if they are interested in participating.

Huggable Mug and Chef's Market have been having tent campaigns to hold small social distancing events. Perry has been working with Karen at the Chandler to utilize the band shell at Farr's Hill as well.

Tammy and David are running the Drive-In and the Playhouse Theatre is doing the concession section working collaboratively and have had a good response.

Gifford decided not to hold their concert series this year due to CoVID-19.

## **7. White River Valley Chamber of Commerce Updates**

### **a. Kiosk Update – Site meeting held July 17<sup>th</sup>**

Andrea and Jay updated the group the old Chamber kiosk will be removed, and the new kiosk will be moved by Labor Day weekend and to include a couple small picnic tables.

The goal is to have a video TV with revolving imagery like Randolph in Motion digital including Vermont Communities of Distinction narrated by Terry Bradshaw. Suggestions included short interviews such as Josh from the Economic Development perspective, Karen from the Chandler relating to the arts and culture, etc.

Andrea also added regarding the Chamber to take a twelve pane window, four by four that she did for the chamber and it has a visual topographical map with highlights of each town in our district of the eleven towns that surround the Randolph area so that it highlights recreational spots and town spots.

We're going to talk to the quilt group that's doing barn quilts, those plywood geometric designs that go with a farm or people order to kind of put the genealogy or the history or the functioning of their farm or homestead and see if that group wants to do one for the back of this little building to promote what they're doing and to show off their works for the area, something that represents the Randolph district in the mountain range and what we're trying to promote.

Conversations included reaching out to Jamie Gage to get Wi-Fi up at the kiosk. There is concern with theft of equipment at the kiosk and if a surveillance camera be set up. We will need to get legal advice if this can be done.

Another wall within the kiosk will be designated for Statewide information including New Hampshire and the Upper River Valley region.

Members would like a site visit. Jay advised the group he will set up a time and send out an email.

Jay wanted to thank the Chamber for their support in this project.

## **8. Harmony Park Update**

David Palmer updated the group on a yearlong project that's being led by the Sunrise Rotary Club that features the arts, recreation, and community building through the installation of outdoor musical instruments at the recreation field. Even with the disruptions that we've all experienced, over the last number of months, this project has actually been able to go forward in the middle of June.

We reached our initial fundraising goal of \$25,000 through grants that have been written and funded as well as local community contributions.

David thanked Bethany, who directed the project team to the Rise Vermont program as one of the funding sources for funds raised by the middle of June. We had two additional grants that were pending as we got into July. The \$25,000 allowed for the purchase of five instruments, installation and the shipping.

AARP held a community challenge grant funding 2,800 applications nationally. Out of all the applicants, this project was one of the 10% awarded a grant as well as funding from the Water Real Foundation, which is the charitable foundation for the music group Fish.

With these two additional grants, total fundraising reached \$34,000 for the Harmony Park project.

The additional funding has allowed the project team to expand the number of instruments from the original plan, and we're now able to look at adding benches and signage and a space that the recreation committee has made available down in the area of the playground area.

We have some really good talent within the Sunrise Rotary with Suzanna Gravel putting together an artist's rendition, Ted Elzy drafting the installation specifications and Colby Haupt will be doing the installation.

With a sign of optimism, installation should be completed by the third week of September. All the instruments have been ordered and site preparation is in progress.

Randolph will be known to be the largest installation of this kind of instrument and it puts us on the economic development tourism radar map as well.

### **9. CoVID-19 Regional Testing Strategy and Economic Recovery Update**

No update from Maury Smith.

### **10. Vermont Technical College Updates**

Pat was unable to attend and Curtis Osler provided the following update:

We are opening with a "hybrid" model this fall. Students will be remote delivery for lecture and face to face for 1 week lab sections. We expect most students will be here up to 3 weeks, at various times, throughout the semester. There are a total of 6 weeks when student would be here. That is primarily for our Williston and Randolph center campuses. The nursing sites are commuter based and will continue as usual.

We are enabling some students to be the entire semester because they are out of state, may have connectivity challenges or are in programs where they need to be on campus. We anticipate approx. 100 or so in Randolph and up to 40 in Williston.

Any out of state students are coming a week early and testing when they get here, quarantining for a week then tested again day 7. Any testing positive will go home and we will respond accordingly.

Students here throughout the semester are strongly encouraged not to travel more than 10 miles.

All students will go home at Thanksgiving to finish the semester at home.

We are providing masks to all students and employees.

Many employees are still able to work at home. We are doing this to enable fewer folks on campus and scheduling for employees with kids in K-12.

We know this will have a significant negative revenue impact but we are doing this as a public health decision.

We are still discussing sports with no final decision yet.

SHAPE will be closed to just students and employees when the students are here.

The Transformation planning continues with good progress. We won't have a final plan likely until late fall or December but there is good progress.

#### 11. Old Business

Sonny reported that he received good news from the Arts and Culture Committee. We've been working on trying to find funding for our first mural, and a matching grant for \$12,000 and we received \$6,000.

It has to be matched by the Arts and Culture Committee and the people in Randolph. The committee met last week to decide how we're going to try to raise that those matching funds. It will be a fairly large mural displayed on Ken's barbershop building and you'll be able to see it from Main Street. It has not been decided what the mural will be as of date.

#### 12. New Business

None.

Gary had one last comment, he thanked Mary for taking on the business portion of our story and pulling in new council members. *"And from the evidence of this this meeting, this group has got a great future with you leading the way."*

Adjourned: 5:52 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Mary V. Richter, Chair