



TOWN OF RANDOLPH, VERMONT

Economic Development Council Via Teleconference Minutes of October 5, 2020

Members Present: Mary Richter, Damian DiNicola, Megan Harvey, Bethany Silloway, Jay Hooper (quorum)

Guests: Peter Reed, John Farrow, Wink Willett, Sonny Holt, David Palmer, Dan Bennett, Pat Moulton, Sarah Jackson, Maury Smith

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. Establish Quorum
2. Call to Meeting to Order
3. Public Comment

None.

4. Regional Marketing Initiative
 - Collaborative project between REDC / RACDC Update (Josh Jerome / Mary Richter)
 - Randolph in Motion, Business Sponsorship Program, Randolph Bucks

Mary reported the Randolph in Motion core team have been meeting weekly and the Guide is close to being completed. Maryellen has sent a draft to Josh and Mary for review, Josh reported he has done a cursory review and there are a few edits that will be sent to Maryellen.

The final draft will be completed in a few days with an anticipated insert into the Herald for the October 22nd delivery.

The sponsorship program has raised \$3,800 greater than the anticipated \$3,700.

The Randolph in Motion website is a work in progress and anticipate completion October 22nd to coincide with the electronic and hardcopy versions of the Fall/Winter Guide.

Josh updated the group on Randolph Bucks and work to be completed by RACDC to fall into place to incentivize consumer spending awarded by the State of Vermont.

The goal of this initiative from the State is to incentivize consumer spending specifically towards the businesses that are most impacted by the pandemic. These would be retail, food establishments, and specific service sectors. There is approximately \$8,000 to fund this incentive.

The goal is to leverage local resources, leverage additional spending and trying to determine if all the businesses that can participate. We've been asking local businesses to offer some sort of incentive, such as a coupon of perhaps \$10 off or another form to generate some foot traffic to their business.

The State adjusted some of the requirements from the initial program for money to be spent by November 15th, and has been extended the date to December 1st is the deadline which allows more Randolph Bucks spending time and gives us a whole month to work the campaign.

Additional marketing plans include radio and social media ads and some additional paper ads. Hopefully, it gets people to come out, spend some money and help some of these businesses that really need it.

A question came up to Josh "about being able to use that money for purchasing gift cards so that those could be used for the holiday season? So, if a business wanted to offer a gift card, could that be used as a qualifying product?" If someone purchases Randolph Bucks and then go to a business and purchase a gift card / gift certificate instead of a product with the Randolph Bucks is this acceptable? *"Well, I'm not quite sure just how that works, but I think that you could promote this program so those gift cards could be purchased and then they could use them for the holiday season and maybe so maybe as maybe has to be spent, because once the transaction happens with us to the business, the business is then the end user."*

The question was posed to our local representatives and responded *"Well, wouldn't the purchase of a gift card be the delivery of the product or service being the gift card? That's what I believe. Yeah. So if they're used before 12, 30, I mean, it's I think you have less, less of an issue. But, you know, I am not as close to the regulations as people like in our finance department."*

An additional question was asked as to where the Randolph Bucks can be purchased. Josh responded they can be purchased at RACDC in person, phone or online and perhaps another location such as the banks. Julie has been on vacation for two weeks and those components need to be finalized. Comments from the group included it would be easier to go to the bank or a local business to purchase Randolph Bucks. Josh informed the group that the State is requiring data on the actual use of the funds and how many incentives, how much money it leverage, how many customers, and how many businesses participated.

Another question to Josh was if someone buys Randolph Bucks online, would they be able to print them from a computer? Josh responded this may be an option however he did not know how it would work and Julie needs to work on the details.

Mary responded to the group that there are many details to be completed by RACDC and we are pass the deadline. Josh will reach out to Julie.

5. RACDC / RAMAN Updates
 - Illuminated Downtown, Downtown Wi-Fi
No Update / No Representation.
6. White River Valley Chamber of Commerce Updates
No Update / No Representation.
7. CoVID-19 Regional Testing and Economic Recovery Updates (Dan Bennett)

Dan updated the group that not much has changed and will provide an update on the numbers.

As of October 4:

5,558 tests completed.

22 positive tests (0.4 %) - Indicative of Vermont compared to the rest of the country and then here in Orange County and Windsor County, lower than other parts of the state.

In August communications went out about GMC's testing program. GMC were doing approximately 60 to 70 tests. The goal was about 40 to 50, in part because GMC was trying to stretch it out over a longer period of time and due to resource availability GMC needed to manage 40 to 50 more in the range of what we are able to do on a daily basis. The number of tests is back down to approximately 50. The numbers are down because the travel demand went down a little bit.

GMC's phone line has staff who are dedicated to our phone line, who are scheduling and prioritizing test for people and also calling people back with the results of their test.

A question to Dan of how long it takes to get tests results? People who are a high priority, someone who has symptoms, somebody who has potential exposure or people who are getting tested prior to a surgery, we're getting those back in 24 to 36 hours. Lower risks take a little bit longer, approximately 48 to 72 hours. There have been no problems with turnaround times.

GMC has the machines but not the supplies to do in-house testing. *"One of these days, I'm going to be able to announce to you that we're able to do some of that testing in-house, which will allow us to prioritize our allow us to turn around those high, prioritize those high priority tests much more quickly."*

8. New R3 - Energy, Environmental and Agriculture Initiatives Updates
No Update / No Representation.
9. Vermont Technical College Updates (Pat Moulton)
 - Bridge funding approved by the legislature

Pat thanked Representative Peter Reed and Representative Jay Hooper for their support of the bridge funding that the legislature approved, and the governor signed.

It has helped VTC to close the gap for this year and avoid draining the reserves. 2022 is going to be a whole lot better if CoVID doesn't resolve by next Fall. Pat is aware that the two budgets are going to be a

challenge and is hopeful VTC can be back to regular programming in the Fall. VTC is down about 13% in enrollment this fall, a combination of CoVID and the former chancellor's announcement.

- New \$12 million dollar contract with DOD re: Additive Manufacturing lab

The big news is VTC received an \$8M to \$12M contract with the Department of Defense (DOD) and entity of that department called the Industrial Base Assessment and Sustainability ARM, which is focused in part on workforce development.

VTC has received a first tranche of \$8 M to update our mechanical engineering labs to add additive manufacturing which is a prominent feature in our mechanical labs. Additive manufacturing is 3D printing, with metals and ceramics and multiple types of metals and large things that can be done with 3D printing.

This is coming out of the Department of Defense recognition that they need to better arm their workforce with technology and understanding. VTC has a great machine, but we need to staff it. Renovations will start this winter, mostly over the summer. We're fitting that all into the existing Morrell Building taking over a couple of classrooms, will be moving some people around to facilitate because some of these are big machines.

GW Plastics is heavily engaged in additive manufacturing and this process really was driven by manufacturers in the state who came to us and said, we need students who know how to design in this new additive world and not so much the subtractive world.

Pat noted she will sing the “praises of Patrick Leahy and till the end of time, *because he's really the one who facilitated this for us.*” Pat is hoping the second tranche of \$4M will be coming in shortly as the pot of money gets replenished. This will enable VTC to do renovations, purchase machinery, design curriculum that really is going to put us in the same par with a Penn State or at MIT in terms of our capability to educate students, which is really exciting for this little college on the Hill.

- Sale of property at VTC

On the property sales front, we have approval from our board of trustees to market and sell a number of properties.

They include:

- (1) Alan House,
- (2) Red School House. But that also has a town of Randolph Lease,
- (3) The Enterprise Center deal, as some of you may be aware, is experiencing a hiccup. Hopefully, that's all it is. Pat had to recuse herself from discussions when Jamie was considering buying the property. Pat has been working with Bob Haynes with next steps. The Board was excited about the potential sale, especially when I indicated it could help facilitate a new day care facility in Randolph.
- (4) A house on 44 Water Street.
We have sold the house on forty four Water Street.

Pat reported they haven't done anything in terms of moving forward on a potential sale, like as appraisals or listings for Alan House or land division or Red School House at this point.

The properties are on the list to sell as our bandwidth enables. We want to engage a local realtor on that, particularly that which could conceivably be residential properties such as the Allen House which is where the Admissions Office is located. They will be moving into the central administration building.

VTC is doing some office consolidation such as looking at permanent work, at home solutions for some of our staffing, which will mean that we can reduce our footprint. That's some of VTC needs to do to look at long term sustainability of the campus.

- Accreditation Visit

October 25-28 is VTC's 10-year accreditation visit by the New England Commission on Higher Ed (NECHE). This is a biggie for all of us in higher education and it is done every 10 years.

Being accredited enables our students to access federal financial aid, it enables us to transfer credits, and it's the seal of quality that every institution wants. Pat advised the group as some may be seeing an invitation to a community forum. The Commission want to hear from members of the community about Vermont Tech. Pat does not know what they'll ask, and it may just be how does the college affect Randolph and how well do we work together, et cetera.

NECHE is extremely focused on financial health of institutions throughout the Northeast and this 10 year visit is a retrospective. It looks back at the last 10 years and it really doesn't focus on the future. *"So, like all our transformation planning, we're going to give them a map date. But they're really looking at how is it gone for the last 10 years. So that's exciting for us. We fully expect that there might be issues, but we fully expect to be accredited again."*

- Update on COVID on campus

Pat thanked Dan, and their partnership between VTC and Gifford with testing and help provided. VTC had one positive on the campus here in Randolph; the Department of Health did a fabulous job contact tracing, that student isolated in Vermont and then released.

VTC has had some, one recently with a student on Friday. It turned out they had strep throat, but it's that season where you just don't know. The student was tested to be sure.

Two students were expelled from the campus, and from residence housing for failure to comply with the protocols of masking and social distancing, et cetera.

- Spring 2021 Semester

VTC has been debating about Spring, right now we're doing all our lecture delivery remotely and students are coming in for one week labs with each student having up to three weeks a semester.

There are approximately 100 students on campus all semester. These students are from out-of-state, others who are too far to commute, who have technology challenges, learning environment or might be homeless.

The semester will be ending at the Thanksgiving break, students will go home and not come back this Fall.

VTC expects doing the same in the Spring because it doesn't look like CoVID will be getting any better. The start of the semester will be delayed starting February 1st and there will be no traditional spring break. The Spring semester will have many breaks and will likely do the last two weeks online like we're doing the last two weeks online this Fall.

10. Old Business

- Childcare Update (Damian DiNicola)

Not too much other than some of the things that Pat alluded to. Progress with many things coming together after many years of work, potentially securing the building and a big major grant application. At the same time that would give us the bridge funding we need to get things going on the next level and continue on with the consultant that we had, as well as some potential interests from both Vermont based and nationally based child care providers in potentially running the center with the basic business plan that we had developed so far, which was all super positive.

One of the major factors for the grant is you have to have a building secured as a prerequisite. The prerequisite to moving everything forward is the money from the grant as well as the building. And as Pat mentioned, there has been a hiccup related to what was something that was looking very positive. And we hope still is, again, not surprising, and pretty standard type of hiccup that you would expect. But still, it's put us in a place where we're still waiting on whether we'll be able to work that out.

The grant application committee's decision, especially, which gets put in jeopardy the more unstable the building situation is. We are in a waiting mode to see if we can work those two things out and get a positive resolution at the same time if we can.

It's we're being a very, very good position to get something going. We were looking at by next year.

So, within a year, having both the provider in place, building ready and a program started, so. We'll just have to wait and see how these things work out and then go from there. I think that with a close to 100 student program if things didn't work out.

- Elm Street Park Sculpture Update

Sonny Holt reported his club is going to install two benches at the Elm Street Park donated by Larry Diving from Days Funeral Home. They're really nice wrought iron benches and need some restoration and repair to be done.

Green Mountain memorial is doing the granite base as well for the sculpture, and they'll be doing the install because they are the most efficient in installing these type of granite stones.

- Harmony Park Update (David Palmer)

Mary, you expressed Harmony Park in terms of a dream that became a reality. And last Tuesday night it did. We had a wonderful opening ceremony with approximately 50 people in attendance, Damian, and Bella where part of our ribbon cutting team and by all accounts, just a fun event all the way around.

A few amenities to be added such as some plantings, getting some benches put in around the instrument venue and rule signs. This is working out, working on a time to explain what this is and recognize the sponsors. But by the end of October, all those things should be in place. And all the work that was envisioned for this year will be completed by other interest in having a chance to speak to the R3 group.

Tonight, is just to express appreciation. Over the last year I've had a chance to talk to this group pretty much in all its meetings. *"It means a lot for a project and we've been talking about all kinds of projects tonight. But certainly, this want to have a place to check in with and have a place to bounce ideas off of it and gauge reaction from people. And all along, the R3 committee was just very supportive of this project and did a lot for the morale of the project and really gave it some lift that, yeah, there's something here that that is really worth going for. And then R3 group really gave us some energy just to make it all the way through a project that that took just over a year to accomplish. But it's there and by all means, get down and do your group thing with the instruments, young and old, all ages. It's proven to be pretty neat and living pretty close by."*

"But the lion's share of funding came from grants outside of the community, although I do need to recognize and I was one of the contributors, but particularly for those grant sources that we went to outside of the community, again, it just meant a lot in preparing those proposals to say, yeah, we're checking in with sound committees and you were getting input from them and this has connection in the community and getting R3 gave us that. And your point is well taken for projects going forward, you know, to have a place to check in and kind of ground a project in the sense that the community is just been a tremendous amount."

- Kiosk Update (Jay Hooper)

Jay had to drop to attend another meeting and provided the following update via chat.

The building permit has been printed and laminated. Zac Freeman and Jay installed the sliding barn doors and hope to see the ADA compliant handicap ramp/stairs installed sometime this coming weekend. R.A.S.T.A. will install some trails maps soon and we hope to install a split-rail fence around it

- Mural Matching Fund Update (Sonny Holt)

The Arts and Culture Committee received a \$6,000 matching Grant. \$3,000 has been received and the remaining \$3,000 will be raised in some sort of a Go Fund Me project as well as a local initiative for donations.

- Shared Spaces / Business Opportunities and Center on Rural Innovation Update (Matt Dunne)

At our last meeting there was a great discussion to invite Kenzia Frayjo about her business and what drew her to Randolph.

Josh will be reaching out to Kenzia and invite her to our next Council meeting in November.

11. New Business

- Hotel feasibility study update, Perry informed the group that Michael Hall may be reaching out to several businesses and others. Perry feels they are in a good place and will be moving forward with the process.
- Perry informed the group, ACCD is coming out with another round of CoVID relief funds for businesses who need assistance who have experienced losses from March through the end of September as qualifiers. Perry lobbied hard for this and it is based on the New Hampshire model who did a better job funding their businesses. Funding will be dedicated to hospitality, lodging, and those businesses have been impacted.
- A thank you from Pat and Perry to Peter Reed and Jay Hooper for a \$2.3 M in the budget the Governor passed in Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF) funds for the Vermont State Colleges to provide training, short term skills certificate based training targeted at unemployed, those who've lost hours, those whose industry sector has been seriously affected by CoVID.

It's the programs VTC is offering and this money can fund the costs of enrolling and so does the scholarship essentially to enroll in these programs. All the programs VTC is offering is our continuing ed programs that start now and are completed by the end of the year.

- A question was raised for advertising in the Randolph in Motion guide. Josh responded that sponsorships were offered to approximately 130 businesses and that's part of the funding paying for the guide.

The guide is meant to provide as many business contacts as possible. Josh also believes as the guide develops there will be an opportunity to add additional ad space on there, which will increase cost of the production. We wanted to keep it the same sizes as last the first issue.

- Town Manager's position, Damian asked if there have been any discussions or decisions, *"In the process, especially for I think it's going to be important to have somebody who is, you know, business and economically development minded, among all the other things in the role, and that would mesh well with some of the things we put together."* Perry responded, *"you can be assured I'm going to lobby for that."*

Adjourned: 7:33 PM
Respectfully submitted,
Mary V. Richter, Chair