Great Barrington Economic Development Committee

Minutes of Wednesday, June 12, 2019 meeting

Others Present: Steve Bannon, Selectboard Chair
Staff Present: Chris Rembold, Mark Pruhenski

Call to Order:
Bannon convened the inaugural meeting of the EDC at 6:00.
As Chair of the Selectboard, which formed the EDC, he worked with staff to prepare tonight’s agenda.
He thanked the members for volunteering for the committee.

Introductions:
Each member then had a chance to introduce themselves and provide a brief background.

Officers:
Bannon called for nominations for EDC chair and vice chair.
Picheny was elected Chair.
Bannon turned the meeting over to the EDC Chair.
Picheny nominated Davis for Vice Chair, and Davis was elected Vice Chair.

Charge of Duties and Next Steps:
Picheny asked members to review the charge of duties.
Smith read the Charge of Duties aloud for the members.

Newman suggested everyone read the Town Master Plan and Berkshire Blueprint 2.0.

There was discussion about reaching out to people in the major economic cluster areas, perhaps having listening sessions or interviews with each area.

There was discussion about the talent pool in the area and the fact that many people who move to the area are entrepreneurial by nature. Getting more people to move here, not just visit, and to settle and establish businesses, should be a goal.

There was discussion about focusing on the local level, Great Barrington only, and/or about also incorporating a regional perspective into the EDC’s work.

There was discussion about the high cost of living in Great Barrington, particularly housing costs, and lack of convenient transportation options.

There was discussion about the importance of nonprofits to the economy. They are major employers and in many cases they are the reason people come to / discover the Berkshires in the first place. This is an innovative sector.

There was discussion about the need to focus on community development as well, in other words making everyday life in the town appealing to more people.

There was discussion about adopting a proactive approach, beginning new initiatives, rather than starting from a budget-cutting perspective.
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There was discussion about the recent Economic Impact Council (EPIC) and its recent work, and the importance of attracting and retaining small businesses in the area. These businesses as a whole employ most people and also are integral to community affairs.

There was discussion about involving other organizations in the EDC’s work, including the Railroad Street Youth Project, the AIER, the CDC, Construct, and schools at all levels.

Next Meeting:
June 26.
Readings / resources will be sent to the group for review.
There was discussion of setting up a shared folder / Google drive to contain reference materials.

Minutes prepared by: [Signature]