Great Barrington Economic Development Committee

Minutes of October 29, 2019

Absent: Tony Blair, Malcolm Fick, Sean Flynn

Call to order: Picheny called the meeting to order at 6:00.

Minutes of October 3: Watkins moved to approve, Newman seconded. All were in favor.

Housatonic School Reuse Recommendation:
- Picheny read the DRAFT recommendation and asked for input.
- Andelman suggested we include specific timing for the process. It aws agreed that 18 months would be a reasonable timeline (from the date that resources are allocated at Town Meeting). We should recommend the town allocate resources to develop a plan and 18 months to do so.
- Picheny suggested we don’t get hung up on specifics of which floor each function would take.
- Smith referred us back to the committee’s charge: to “recommend potential reuse scenarios”, and suggested we remove much of the language around people’s feelings and should stick to the facts.
- Newman emphasized that Town ownership is the main thrust of what we’re proposing, and that we not try to direct the actual logistical details.
- It was agreed we should strike Development & Management duties.
- O’Dwyer proposed that we add something about the economic benefit of our proposal, and offered suggested language for the concluding statement that would incorporate that.
- Ruth questioned whether we should include specific expenses/costs, and it was felt that that’s the Selectboard’s responsibility.
- Picheny asked for final comments, and proposed the following next steps: All edits will be incorporated into a new DRAFT, which Picheny will distribute to the committee on Thursday. Barring no major objections, Picheny will present that draft to the Selectboard on Monday.
- Smith moved to proceed as described, Orlowski seconded. All were in favor.

Picheny reported that Tony Blair has resigned from the committee. As he represented the Real Estate community, committee members are asked to consider alternate candidates, with the understanding that conflicts of interest be considered.
Vision/Mission Statements

Draft Vision/Mission Statement was distributed and open for comments. Orlowski suggested we add the words resilient/resiliency to the draft in several places, and that we change the word economic “growth” to “development”. Other edits were collected (e.g., that we create initiatives to enhance healthy and sustainable employment opportunities).

Newman moved to accept all edits as noted, Davis seconded. All were in favor.

Next Steps:

Smith suggested we need to ascertain what data we HAVE and what data we NEED to conduct our work. Picheny suggested that trying to attract business to town without addressing the impediments to successful business development would be a mistake. Picheny proposed that we spend time at the next meeting identifying impediments.

Next meeting date: Tuesday, November 26 at 6pm, location TBD.

Other Business:

Orlowski suggests if we can't attend a meeting we can send thoughts by email.

Ruth reminded the committee that there is still a link on the town's department listing that says “Doing Business in Great Barrington” and we should make sure that’s directed to Chris Rembold.

Member Speak:

Speaking as a member and citizen, Orlowski encouraged everyone to consider the petition on House Rule that would give citizens a vote on the question of horse racing in Great Barrington.

Newman encouraged participation in the coming weekend’s Start Up Weekend, run by TechStars, and reported on a very robust and well-attended EforAll event in Pittsfield. We should watch and support these entrepreneurial activities.

Picheny thanked all for a productive meeting.

Adjournment: Davis moved to adjourn, Smith seconded. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 7:12.

Prepared by: Karin Watkins