

Windham Economic Development Committee
Strategic Planning Steering committee
Approved Meeting Minutes
04/18/14

Attendance: Regular members – Ed Gallagher (Chair), Jim Coburn, Charles Roberts, Michelle Farrell, Adjunct - Joel Desilets (selectman)

Meeting Called to order at 8:40

Ed Gallagher opened the meeting and introduced Joel Desilets, who will be an adjunct to this committee. Joel is currently serving as a Windham Selectman. Ed reviewed the minutes of the 4/4/14 meeting, which were accepted 3-0-1. Jim Coburn abstained due to not having an opportunity to review the minutes prior to the meeting.

The Committee reviewed the Mission Statement of the WEDC strategic plan. Jim suggested a couple of changes to the mission statement. Ed thought the statement was ok as is. The committee agreed to review it and make minor recommendations based on the updated Mission Statement of the Town.

The Committee reviewed the We Serve statement and decided it should be rewritten to reflect the current subcommittee.

The Committee reviewed the Strategic Goals. A broad discussion revolved around questions about a detailed marketing plan to bring businesses to town, how do we reach businesses, the need to take a pro-active approach, what type of business do we want to attract, what are our methods of outreach, do we have a public relations campaign, how does zoning impact our businesses, what are the top three businesses we would like to target?

Members suggested the need for our goals to be aligned with the Town Strategic Plan, the goals should be measurable, and we should have a timeline. Jim also suggested that we review the past plan to determine how many goals were achieved. This review will also help to determine what are our biggest challenges.

Additional questions surfaced. Do we have a goal for the percent tax that we would like to see from commercial business? Do we require or encourage builders to add to our infrastructure, such as parks and fields? Do we want all businesses to look completely alike? What is the biggest obstacle to getting businesses to town? Can we get a copy of the Town's Master Plan? When was the last Master Plan? What areas are zoned for commercial business that our town is trying to promote? Do we have a charge from the WEDC, and if so, what is it? What is the amount of taxes generated by commercial business since 1980? What is the percent of undeveloped commercial land compared the percent of undeveloped residential land? What are our best PR strategies, Windham Independent, website, other?

Strategic goals were furthered discussed. Jim pointed out that #4 is not strategic, but procedural. Ed stated the importance of defining the right type of business for Windham and then the need to market to them. Joel added that zoning would be key for determining what type of business can be established. And possibly it will be necessary to re-zone properties.

Jim stated there are benefits to bringing certain types of businesses to town. Windham is concerned about the quality of life. And there should be a balance between rural and commercial business.

Charles discussed the importance of buy-in from the community and used the example of Lowe's not passing.

The committee discussed the importance of nurturing the businesses that already exist in our town. Someone should reach out to the current business and asked what the town could do to make it better for them.

Michelle suggested that Laura Scott and Ralph Valentine might be willing to come to the next meeting and answered the long list of brainstorming questions that have risen during this meeting.

The committee agreed to think about what type of businesses add to the quality of life in Windham and to bring their top three choices. The community survey would be a good reference point to look at possibilities.

Action Item for next meeting is to have Laura Scott, Ralph Valentine or Al Letizio attend the meeting to help answer our many questions.

Next Meeting: April 25th at 8:30.

Jim made the motion to adjourn. Charles seconded the motion. 4-0 Meeting adjourned.