

**Economic Development Committee
Meeting Minutes – January 3, 2022**

A meeting of the Economic Development Committee was held on January 3, 2022 in the Irene Martel Meeting Room, Webster Town Hall, 350 Main Street, Webster, MA.

Present from the Committee: Chairwoman Carole Marchand, Vice Chairman Marc Becker, and Members John Milas and Nancy Healy.

Present - Ex Officio Members: Director of Community Development Carol Cyr; and Director of Planning & Economic Development Ann Morgan.

Chairwoman Marchand called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

1. Action Items

- a. Meeting Minutes of November 1, 2021. The Committee reviewed the draft minutes. No changes were made. Motion to approve the minutes as drafted made by Mr. Milas, seconded by Mr. Becker. Motion passed unanimously 4-0.
- b. Meeting Minutes of November 29, 2021. Tabled to next meeting.

2. Old Business

- a. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds Update and Review Application: Ms. Marchand provided an update. Thirteen applications have been received, five have been approved, six have been denied and two require additional information. Applications that were denied did not meet the requirements of the program. It was noted that there are several businesses working on applications to be submitted. Ms. Cyr noted that this a very simple / easy application. Mr. Becker stated that the “wheels are moving” and money is starting to be approved. Ms. Marchand stated that it has been a slow start but the Fund Allocation Committee has to be careful about ensuring that award recipients are meeting the guidelines set by the Federal government. The Town does not want to be in the position of having to repay funds in the future. Ms. Marchand asked if there were any additional questions or comments from the Committee. There were none.
- b. Program / Events Update: Ms. Marchand provided an update. A new event, Winter Festival, is being planned for February. The dates will be finalized at the next Cultural Council meeting. Some of the scheduled activities include hula dancers, fire dancers, a food truck, and ice sculptures. Details and vendors are still being finalized. The event is expected to run 3-4 hours, the timing which has not been finalized. The fire dancers would prefer an early evening / sunset performance time to best highlight their work. She’s been told that the hula dancers typically perform in advance of the fire dancers. Ms. Morgan asked if there would be enough light at sunset for people to see the hula dancers. Ms. Marchand noted that there lights that could be used.

Ms. Healy asked if local businesses would be asked to donate funds towards the costs of the event as sponsors. Ms. Marchand stated that she would be reaching out but it has been difficult in the past to get sponsors. The Committee had a general discussion about local business support for sponsoring and participating in programs and events. Other towns such as Putnam, CT and Wells, ME were cited as having very successful events but it took years to build that support. Mr. Milas cited the example of the Chowder Festival in Wells, ME which started as one booth 15 years ago and is now a major event with many booths and activities. Ms. Cyr noted that, in Putnam, the local business association has been the driving force behind the downtown revitalization through sponsored events for over 30 years.

It is driven by the businesses with Town support. Ms. Healy noted that Webster should develop a signature event and stick with it so that it builds local business support a following. It was also noted that COVID has made it difficult to plan events. Mr. Milas noted that sponsoring and participating in local events is difficult for small businesses that may have only one or two employees. Larger businesses have more flexibility to have a presence and to sponsor programs and events.

Ms. Marchand noted that after Winter Festival planning for the Annual Easter Egg Hunt and Earth Day would begin.

3. New Business / Discussion Items

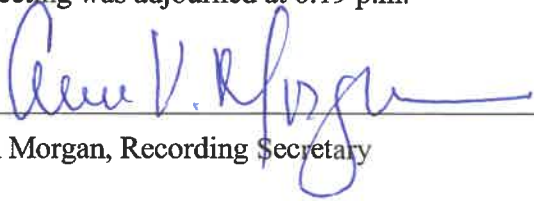
- a. Mobile App: Ms. Marchand noted that she has reached out to the communities identified in the article as working on apps: Brockton, Stoughton, Easton, and Avon to discuss the development of their apps. To date no one has returned her calls or emails. Ms. Morgan noted that she was familiar with staff in some of the towns and would also reach out. It was noted that the development of the app could be funded by a grant but that there would be annual costs for maintenance. Ms. Morgan suggested that the Economic Development Fund, a revolving fund approved by Town Meeting, might be a source of funds. Ms. Cyr thought it could be funded that way but that the Town would have to make sure that the costs are earmarked every year. Ms. Marchand suggested that funding should be discussed with the new Town Administrator.

4. Next Meeting

The Committee agreed that the next meeting would be held on Monday, February 7, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. in the Irene Martel Meeting Room, Webster Town Hall.

5. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Mr. Milas, seconded by Ms. Cyr. Motion passed unanimously, 4-0. The meeting was adjourned at 6:19 p.m.



Ann Morgan, Recording Secretary



Date

EXHIBITS

Article from the Massachusetts Municipal Association website (www.mma.org); Apps Promote Business Recovery in Avon, Brockton, Easton and Stoughton; published November 15, 2021; 3 pages.