

Essex Economic Development Commission (EDC)
Regular Meeting Minutes

November 2nd, 2023 8:00AM

81 Main St, Essex, VT and Zoom

Minutes Submitted by Clerk Ken Signorello, November 5, 2023

Approved November 16, 2023

Attendees

Commission Members:

Present: Rebecca Robinson, Chair, Ken Signorello, Clerk

Remote: Ta Tanisha Redditta (Arrived about 8:20)

Absent: Nick Fukuda, Vice Chair; Melissa Stewart

Staff: Jean O'Sullivan

Public: Sam Anderson, GBIC; Greg Morgan Rotary, Lorraine Zaloom, Patty Davis,
Austin Davis LCRCC, Jeff Lawson LCRCC

A quorum was not initially present

Sam Anderson gave her GBIC partner update

Redditta arrived about 8:20 creating a quorum.

Meeting called to order by Robinson at 8:23 AM 40:23

Updates to the Agenda: Signorello requested that action items on the agenda have related materials included in future packets, but no changes to agenda requested.

Public Comment: None

Presentation by Jeff Lawson - Vice president for Tourism at Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce

Lawson briefed the Commission on the LCRCC Hello Burlington Destination marketing initiative. The program promotes greater Burlington for leisure travel, business meetings and conferences, hoping to expand to talent attraction, real estate relocation and economic development. <https://www.helloburlingtonvt.com/>

There is an Essex specific page on the site:

<https://www.helloburlingtonvt.com/plan-your-visit/cities-towns/essex/>

Lawson said that municipalities will be able to manage their pages on the site including a calendar.

He said that Greater Burlington is about 40 years behind its counterparts.

Robinson asked what are the requirements to be involved? *Lawson* had no specific answer as to cost.

Davis asked if Hello Burlington reached out to the Fellowship of the Wheel.

Lawson indicated that they have spoken to the New England Mountain Bike Association and that Saxon Hill was included on the Hello Burlington site.

Robinson said that the EDC can communicate with resident businesses to make them aware of Hello Burlington.

Lawson reminded that there is no charge for a business to be on the web site and that they can activate their own web site presence and control their own listing.

Zaloom asked how long Hello Burlington has been up and how are they tracking success.

Lawson said at this point web site traffic is what they offer. He hopes to improve this to include phone location tracking. They also want to promote sustainability and attractiveness to more diverse communities. *Lawson* said that from their talks bipoc communities do not consider Vermont a destination. Vermont needs to change its outdated marketing message from “foliage, cows, maple syrup and covered bridges”.

O’Sullivan urged *Lawson* to meet with the Vermont Commerce committee to include a diversity of people in the state's graphic promotional material.

Presentation by Greg Morgan - Rotary Club of Essex

Greg Morgan presented a proposal to have members of the EDC and EDC staff attend their twice a month speaker lunch meeting where they invite entrepreneurs to speak.

The proposal was for Community Development staff from the City and Town to attend and then meet after with the speaker to introduce Essex and consider if they would qualify for tax stabilization.

Morgan cited a recent article in 7 days highlighting “Seven Vermont Tech Startups Worth Watching” as inspiration.

O’Sullivan said that the opportunity to get all decision makers together at one time is helpful.

Morgan asked about coworking space in the Town.

Robinson indicated that we put that into the Town plan and that there are a few places that would be suitable.

Morgan said that speakers would not be people with “ideas”.

Signorello pointed out that the EDC is currently meeting with local businesses once a month including one already met with that was in the 7 days article.

Signorello took issue with some text in the proposal: “Invited businesses should have the potential to scale to a significant employee base.” suggesting that maybe there should be a bias toward businesses owned by people that are part of marginalized communities rather than focusing on large employers. *Signorello* cited the goals the EDC put into the Town Plan.

Zaloom asked if any had gone to the Tech Jam and encouraged all to attend and mentioned some of the innovative opportunities for start ups that were presented. She noted that Austin had added to the chat the website: <https://www.launchvt.com>

Davis said she has visited Hula and supports space for small startups that enable people with high tech skills rather than manufacturing and distribution.

Approval of Minutes: Reditta did not respond to request for changes. It was determined that a quorum was no longer present.

Robinson and O’Sullivan suggested that individual commission members be asking via email for a volunteer to be a selectboard liaison.

Motion to Adjourn: by Robinson, Seconded: Signorello Passed (2,0)

Robinson adjourned the meeting at 9:12AM thanking all participants who joined the meeting.

Meeting recording available at <https://youtu.be/Hbk6RhIb20Q?si=GOQNBKW1yISX9InF>