

Essex Economic Development Commission (EDC)

Meeting Minutes

Date	June 17, 2021
Location	Online via Microsoft Teams
Members	Chair Brian Shelden, Vice Chair Jeff Benjamin, Clerk Botur Kosimi
Staff	Owiso Makuku, Robin Pierce, Darren Schibler
Partners	Sam Andersen (GBIC)
Public	Irene Wrenner, Ken Signorello

Call to Order

- Chair Shelden called the meeting to order at approximately 8:06 am.

Changes to Agenda / Review and Approval of Minutes

- There were no changes proposed to the agenda.
- Minutes from the previous meeting of 05/20/21 were not available for review at that time.

Public to Be Heard

- There was no public to be heard.

Updates from Partners and Staff

- Ms Andersen reminded participants about a public meeting on Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) that is a joint project of 4 regions in northwestern Vermont. She mentioned that it will be submitted to federal EDA next year and if approved will bring in funds for infrastructure projects.
- Ms Anderson also talked about allocated funds, specifically \$20M allocated for economic recovery REACH program with another \$10M. She stated that it will start on June 7th with the first 30 days exclusively reserved for applications from businesses that did not receive any assistance from federal funds. Ms Andersen mentioned about additional \$10.5M that the legislature allocated for capital investment grants that businesses can apply for in order to expand operations and hire more people.
- Ms Makuku shared updates about Essex's first Juneteenth celebration with many people on the ground volunteering for various events. She expressed hope that future celebrations will incorporate music and dance that can bring more economic impact on Essex. Ms Makuku also touched upon the planning commission's approval of several projects, including the use of a stage at the Essex Experience which can turn it into an amazing musical venue and entertainment hub.
- Mr Pierce spoke about projects in development such as Autumn Pond 2 and affordable housing of 43 units in Chittenden Crossing as well as possible opening of another brewery in the village. He remarked that unfortunately there is no one from Essex community in Vermont Rail Council which although has a plan for railway to Boston is envisioned to go through Springfield making the trip about 7.5 hours and not appealing to masses in his opinion. He advocated for a direct train line to Boston from Essex that can be as short as driving there in 3-4 hours, so more people find it as a viable option. Mr Pierce noted that for

that to happen a portion of rail in Concord, New Hampshire needs to be reinstated which would make the trains from Essex station a competitive form of transportation.

Business Contact List Status

- Chair Shelden said that the Doodle invite did not work appropriately and asked for suggestions to coordinate a separate meeting on the business contact list. Mr Benjamin noted that his day job doesn't leave him much available time to help with this project and the toughest thing is contacting businesses in the middle of a work day which is difficult due to busy work schedules. Ms Andersen suggested turning one of the two monthly meetings into a work session and try to get this project completed.
- Mr Kosimi expressed his frustration with EDC being stuck in the outreach phase of the project and said that a couple of months ago he thought the best way was just getting together in person to coordinate in real time the best way to reach out to businesses and start actually dialing on the phones or making visits to businesses. He suggested that maybe a better way is splitting contacts by geographical locations and having each member update info on businesses within their area of residence.

Next EDC Meeting

- Chair Shelden mentioned that the next meeting will be held on 07/01/21.

Adjournment

- Chair Shelden asked for a motion to adjourn at approximately 9:03 am, moved by Vice-Chair Benjamin and seconded by Mr Kosimi, passed 3-0.

Submitted by Clerk Botur Kosimi 09/15/21

Minutes approved 10/21/21