

Minutes
Economic Development Committee
Assessor's Office
February 4th, 2020
5:00pm

Attendance:

Committee

Cody McEwen (Chair), Mike Madore, Gilda Stratton, Ailish Keating (Northern Forest Center), Lucy Van Hook (Our Katahdin), Mike Elliot (EMDC), Louis Pelletier, Randy Jackson, Jane Danforth, Heidi Wheaton, Missy Weaton, Deb Cowperthwaite, Sherry Dawns

Meeting called to order by Chair McEwen at 5:00pm.

I. Review of prior meeting minutes.

No changes.

II. Childcare/Microenterprise Grant Discussion

Lucy introduced Heidi, Missy, Deb, and Sherry. They all have had a preliminary discussion on potential grant opportunities to help start a Women's Recovery Center here in Millinocket to promote wellness and child care services for those families recovering from addiction. The Micro-Enterprise Community Development Block Grant is an initial goal for the group.

Lucy mentioned that the Letter of Intent for this grant program is Friday February 7th.

Cody mentioned that this would be a very short window to be able to draft information required for this program but thinks this is a great start for the opportunity.

Heidi summarized her needs:

- There is a gap in childcare coverage in the community and region and is a key component needed for future development.
- Current programs are maxed and there is nothing specifically for infants and school age children.
- We need to integrate a program to first assist mothers struggling with addiction and to then reunite them with their children under a community minded support structure.
- Currently there is up to 50% of our student population that require behavioral or other special needs services.
- We immediately started researching how to find a building to host the program that could support infants, toddlers, and children of all ages.
- Coastal Enterprises Inc, a Brunswick non-profit received a \$400,000 federal grant to expand access to child care in rural Maine communities. The Child Care Business Lab is a great resource that is being used to meet our goals.
- A child care center model seems to be the most appropriate approach.

Randy suggested we should reach out to the Department of Education and coordinate with the Superintendent of schools to see how we can integrate the school system.

- Sherry mentioned that currently for licensed child care services, you need to meet income guidelines, or there are no services. A child care center model makes the most sense.

Gilda asked what is the general recovery time?

- Heidi mentioned that 3-6 months is the goal to integrate mothers back with their children.

Mike Madore inquired where it would be located and concerns of management. Also how will a non-profit status work in this situation?

- Heidi mentioned there stressed the environment they go back to is a huge indicator if there will be program success. During program involvement, the children would go to their current family, foster care, or Child Protective Services temporarily. Residents of the program would be routinely monitored to be sure they are meeting program guidelines. The house environment will not be suited to have visitors in and out. All traffic would be monitored.

The group would be a non-profit while the house itself would be under a for profit entity so grants could still benefit the project.

Ailiish asked if this would be model based?

- Heidi confirmed that it would be and that she has worked with battered women in the past. The McCully House and Grace House are great program models that the group is referring to.

Wrapping up the discussion, the committee agreed that the Micro-Enterprise grant opportunity would not be feasible for this timeframe. The project however is of interest to the community and Heidi and the group are appreciated for this effort. We will continue to work together to build this program up for the next grant submission in 2021 and look towards other forms of assistance in the coming months.

III. Update on Citizen's Institute on Rural Design (CIRD) grant workshop..

Lucy updated the committee with the recent 'Save the date' flyer for the upcoming workshop. Over 60 initial invitations have been sent out to a variety of community members.

The workshop dates are set for Tuesday April 21st through Thursday the 23rd, ending with a presentation from the team at the council meeting.

IV. Update on BikeMaine event.

Cody informed the committee that he and John met with Mike Smith and Josh Firmin for our regular bike maine meeting. The team is looking at finalizing the site areas within town. Our current focus is using Veteran's Memorial Park downtown and Kermit Crandall Park on Congress St. Will Elting will review our concept and get back to us.

Our initial idea of having the event in the school athletic fields may not be feasible due to the timing of fall sports and the event in September.

V. Update on Comprehensive Plan.

Cody shared correspondence from William Harper, planner for EMDC. He will be sending phases for review soon. The committee will review the final phases for any last changes before EMDC compiles the final document.

VI. Update on Millinocket Annual Survey 2019 report.

Cody informed the committee that the survey report has been delayed. He will get the survey report out via email and will review during the next committee meeting before uploading to the town website.

VII. Update on Community Development Block Grant and Downtown Revitalization.

Cody informed the committee that John has reached out to a couple of engineers to request what costs would be to draw out plans that we can submit to the Department of Economic and Community Development.

The department is requesting this information in addition to the materials we sent in with our Letter of Intent.

The next committee meeting is set for March 10th at 5:00pm in the Manager's Office.

Adjourned at 6:00pm.