



Town of Hopkinton

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES **DRAFT**

Thursday, February 15, 2024 – 6:00P.M.

Hopkinton Town Hall

Members Present: James Fredyma, Andrea Folsom, Amanda Gilman, Ian Hart, Alexander Pooler, Steven Whitley

Members Absent: Louise Carr

Staff Present: Anna Wells, *Economic Development Director*

CALL TO ORDER: Ian Hart Called the meeting to order in Hopkinton Town Hall at 6:02 pm.

APPOINTMENTS: Mr. Hart introduced the *Business Leader Speaker Series*. He introduced Larry Morgan, President of the Board of Two Villages Art Society (TVAS), a volunteer-run non-profit organization housed in the Town-owned Bates building in Contoocook. Mr. Hart described a workshop he attended last fall at the Radically Rural Summit in Keene, NH, which emphasized the importance of the arts and artist communities on the economy.

Larry Morgan provided an overview of TVAS, highlighting its evolution, current membership (about 200 members), and the goal to offer aspiring artists the opportunity to have a show.

Mr. Morgan shared details about TVAS operations, including:

- They charge a significantly smaller fee than most galleries
- Use of digital media and advertising is helping foot traffic and membership sales
- Gallery was featured on NH Chronicle this week: <https://rebrand.ly/e4yeam7>
- Website gets 4,400 visits annually, 8,000 views on Facebook
- Annual foot traffic of roughly 3,000
- Open 4 days a week with 10 shows a year
- Scouts and campers visit the gallery
- Hopes to establish a scholarship program
- Board of directors and 9 volunteers managing the gallery
- Annual budget of \$18,000 with \$11,000 for rent
- They point visitor to other local businesses
- One drawback is that their space for artists' displays is limited, especially easels
- They are hosting a concert by the Luggnuts on April 27

Committee member questions:

- Steven Whitley inquired as to ways the town can help the success of TVAS. Mr. Morgan suggested the one most obvious way would be rent reduction.
- Amanda Gilman asked if they have any concerns about foot traffic and the group briefly discussed finding ways to attract visitors from the heart of the village.
- Andrea Folsom asked whether they have membership drives at certain times of year, and mentioned this meeting was a good reminder to renew her membership.

The Committee thanked Mr. Morgan for all he is doing for the community and his time visiting the Committee.

Ms. Wells then introduced Dave White from the Riverway Association, the non-profit group that owns and operates the Contoocook Depot and Visitors Center. The Visitors Center is open for limited hours during the summer. He described the group's desire to have their Visitors Center open more days a week, longer into the fall, and more hours per day. This would require more staffing at the center, which requires additional funding. Mr. White wanted to know if the Committee supported the idea and would assist them in securing some funding, potentially from other local grant-making groups such as Hopkinton Rotary.

Ms. Gilman expressed that she sees great potential with having the Visitors Center open more. Discussion ensued about the Riverway Association's various funding sources, including an online auction, events, and on-site donations. Mr. White described the plans for the brick sidewalk/patio they intend to install along the edge of their parking area, along the edge of the building that houses Indigo Blues and Maple Street Mercantile. That walkway/patio area will contain engraved bricks purchased by donors to the Riverway Association.

The Committee unanimously agreed that having the Visitors Center open more hours is a benefit to local businesses and economy. **Andrea Folsom made a motion to write a letter of support** for this concept. Amanda Gilman seconded. Brief discussion took place regarding to whom the letter would be addressed, and it was decided to be an open letter for the Riverway Association to use in their fundraising efforts as they see fit. **MOTION PASSED 6-0.**

Mr. Whitley asked how else the Town might be able to help the Association be more successful. Mr. White responded that the group has already taken part in discussions about the Fountain Square Intersection in NH DOT's Ten Year Plan, and has agreed they would reorient the entrance to their parking lot as needed when the time comes.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES from [January 25, 2024](#): Mr. Fredyma made a motion to approve the *Economic Development Committee minutes of January 25, 2024*. Mr. Whitley seconded. There was no discussion. **MOTION PASSED 5-0-1. Mr. Pooler abstained.**

DISCUSSION OF EDC MISSION, VISION, VALUES, AND GOALS – This discussion will be continued at a future meeting.

UPDATES

- AARP Walk Audit + Downtowns and Trails Report: The community showcase of these two efforts will take place at 5:30pm on April 3 at the Slusser Center. Ms. Wells will post and promote the event.
- Wastewater Expansion: The Committee reviewed the proposed scope of services for the beginning phases of the Exit 6 Wastewater Expansion project. **Ms. Gilman made a motion to recommend the proposed scope to the Select Board**. Mr. Pooler seconded the motion. There was no discussion. **MOTION PASSED 6-0**.

OTHER

- Ms. Wells informed the committee about some discussions she had recently with local businesses about procuring highway signage for businesses and attractions. The Committee agreed that these signs could be immensely helpful for bringing patrons to our local businesses and fully supported the effort. However, the cost is significant for small businesses and non-profits (\$1,750 per sign per direction per year). Ms. Wells is looking into this further and will report back at a future meeting.
- Mr. Hart reported on efforts to be more collaborative and communicative with other boards, mentioning that has met with Michael Wilkey, Planning Board Chair and Tricia Morin, Housing Committee Chair. One idea that came from those discussions is to possibly co-host a showing of the film series “Housing Fact or Fiction” for the community. Discussion ensued regarding the EDC’s focus with regard to housing, that business groups in the state recognize housing is a top economic development priority, and that simply helping to organize a screening of the film would not take away resources from the other important work the Committee and the Director are doing. Ms. Wells will work with Mr. Hart and the other board/committee chairs to organize the screening.
- Upcoming EDC meetings: *first Wednesday of each month at 6:00pm*

<i>March 6</i>	John Herrick, Excalibur Wood Products	Town Hall
<i>April 3</i>	Public Presentation of UNH Downtowns & Trails Project <i>and</i> AARP Walk Audits	Slusser Center
<i>May 1</i>	Rich Houston, Pine Lane Farm	Town Hall

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Whitley moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Andrea Folsom. There was no discussion. **MOTION PASSED 6-0.**

There being no other business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 7:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Anna Wells
Economic Development Director

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