

TOWN OF ASHFORD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

MINUTES

Selectman's Room

Ashford Town Hall

WEDNESDAY, April 26, 2023

7:30pm

Present: T. Wakeman, R. Ignatowicz, , M. Chatey (Acting Chair), J. Rettenmeier, R. Fenn

Absent:, J. Calarese, M. Gantick

Guests: N. Thaller,

1. Call to Order at 7:36 PM

2. Seating of Alternates-none

3. **Approval of Minutes – March 22 Meeting** T. Wakeman motioned— B. Ignatowicz seconded.
Approved

4. Budget

- a. M. Chatey reported that \$250 had been submitted for C. Fields expenses for articles and \$150 had been authorized for CEDAS dues.

5. Communications and Announcements

a. Announcements/Presentations-

- i. I-84 and PZC regulations update: The group informally discussed updates from April public hearing of PZC. R. Ignatowicz provided brief update on the meeting which closed the public comment on the text amendment.
- ii. Question raised about Moore property and its cleanup and whether there is action being taken to market it. Check with Selectmen.

b. News from Other Commissions-none.

c. Correspondence and Meetings

- i. Ashford Our Town Our Future-No report. Next online meeting May 1.
- ii. ABA Update-J. Rettenmeier reported that the Executive Board of the ABA has initiated action to dissolve the organization with the Secretary of State's office. Discussion about their website and whether the url AshfordBusiness.org is still under their control if EDC wanted to take it back to provide robust business listing.
- iii. News about Ashford businesses-
The plaza on Rte. 74 has been sold by T. Samperi. Vacancy there where antique business operated, but Lunging Tiger may absorb some of that space. Building trusses stockpiled near Midway, but no sense of timing on work or reopening. Group discussed concern for the increasing number of blighted properties, especially along main roads where visitors travel, which negatively impact image of Town, plus safety and health concerns. T. Wakeman will draft a letter to Selectmen for review by EDC urging action be taken.
- iv. Eastern Regional Tourism District appointment-Received correspondence from Selectmen's office that Robert Ignatowicz was voted to represent Ashford, accepting the EDC recommendation.

- v. Ashford Citizen-Colleen DePercio will be taking over as editor for the *Ashford Citizen* starting on June issue. Selectmen will be revisiting advertising policies and rates as part of the transition.

6. Old Business

- a. EDC Marketing and Communications (Chatey)
 - i. Active Business List-C. Fields had distributed the update active business list by email, and generated it on labels for upcoming mailing about ARPA grant opportunity. Members encouraged to fill out information on each business assigned to them.
 - ii. Appointment of Member to Eastern Regional Tourism District. R. Ignatowicz listed some of his plans for focus to bring visitors to Ashford including creating unique event such as a Chili Cook-off to attract visitors, promoting summer concert series more robustly, and connecting to the Nipmuck Trail races that pass through. Discussion about how to utilize the Historic Society's building for exhibits and a tourism center to distribute information using volunteers, or during set times as a way to stop those passing through..
- b. EDC Website and on-going *Ashford Citizen* Updates.(Chatey/Fields) Shared with EDC submission of article featuring landscaper Triple T, LLC for May. Impact of tourism, including Brialee, will be focus of June issue with expanded story on Brialee Family Campground on the EDC website.
- c. Potential ARPA Grants to businesses-No progress. Coordinate next steps with Selectmen.
- d. POCD-EDC Input. No discussion
- e. Election of Officers- Election tabled.
- f. New member recruitment- N. Thaller has submitted an email to the Selectmen indicating his interest to serve on the EDC.

7. New Business

- a. Restaurant Strategy-The group reviewed a sell sheet for 55 Nott Highway which had been created for the property about five years ago. Agreed that in the Town's best interest to attract food service establishment. Follow up with M. Gantick and owner.

8. Input from Public None

9. Member Input for Next Agenda

Invite M. D'Amato to share resources from CEDAS; Update on AgBotic Greenhouse

10. Adjournment R. Fenn moved, R. Ignatowicz seconded. Adjourned 8:35 PM

Submitted by M. Chatey, Acting Chair