

## **Notes from Spencer Economic Development Committee Meeting**

**Saturday, January 26, 2019 @ 8:30 a.m.**

**Spencer Town Hall/Conference Room A**

### In attendance:

Tony Pepe, Chris Woodbury, Shirley Shiver, John Stevens, Pam Crawford, Paul Dell'Aquila (Town Planner)

c.t.o 8:35 a.m.

Paul forgot to bring print out of the 12/4/18 meeting minutes for all members, so review and approval will wait until next meeting.

John gave an update on the "Spencer Street pARTy". There have been several meetings stemming from an initial Creative Economy discussion. The plan is to have a downtown street festival with local artists and performers and could involve temporary closure of some downtown streets this summer. There will be another meeting next week to get more specific on logistics. Dylan Roy from West of Worcester on Mechanic St. has been involved. John will also likely have a metal working demonstration of some kind. John is also reaching out to Jen O'Brien at Prouty regarding possible student help with logo design. Tony suggested that John reach out to Roberta Monette who organized recent craft fair; John noted he is already doing so. Shirley asked about the mechanism for donations; Paul will organize this on town's end, pending a public presentation to the Selectmen. Barnstorm will participate and potential host a beer garden. Tony noted group could use and adapt the festival checklist that he prepared for a potential beer festival. Tony also asked about a Tech Review through Brenda in the Selectmen's office; Paul noted he would be coordinating that. There was further discussion about focusing on local Spencer businesses, inc. FlexCon. Shirley noted "passport" idea from a past "Backyard Studio Tour".

Tony gave an update on potential Beer Festival. He and Paul have met with Atlas (local beer distributor in Auburn), but that the barrier at this point is the up-front cost of the beer (which needs to be purchased ahead of time). There is a question of whether the Town could/would/should be a purchaser of beer, so one solution would be to partner with another non-profit or a group like the Spencer Ag. Assoc. Tony noted a recent event in Burlington Vermont and also noted that there could also be synergy with food trucks and Barnstorm.

Tony also spoke about the desire to re-energize the Celebrations Committee, which has previously put on Christmas & Halloween events in town. Chris also recalled a previous committee that used to decorate Town Hall and also recalled that there are electrical outlets installed on the new streetlight poles. John suggested a possible renaming of the committee to expand their mandate beyond just holidays and also noted the challenge of too many meetings for volunteers. Tony emphasized the need for a Downtown Business Association or Merchants' Association outside of Town gov't to take on some of these tasks and suggested outreach be done to key downtown businesses inc. Barnstorm. Paul noted that business outreach could dovetail with outreach for the Street pARTy. Chris suggested an "adopt a pole" idea. John noted Bemis' involvement with decorating poles with flowers and the need for coordination amongst various competing ideas on pole treatments. Tony noted speakers in a New Jersey

downtown which played music. Chris noted that there are Bose employees in Town. Shirley noted her past experience with large event committees in Virginia.

There was a discussion about the Town's blight bylaw and initiative. Tony noted that the term "blight" is problematic...we don't want to be the heavy hand of government, so "revitalization" is a better term. Chris noted the barriers of fees and taxes for new businesses...we've been speaking about it at EDC for a while, but we need to get the word out publically. John noted the need for communication and personal relationships to work with owners...he noted the issue of the persistent unsightly "blue tarp" on one Main Street building. Paul noted that there are different models for downtown entities such as a Merchant Association, a Business Improvement District (BID), Redevelopment Authority, or Main Streets program.

Shirley noted that Spencer was well-represented at CMRPC's recent quarterly economic development meeting.

Paul gave a brief update on the status of the Sugden Block and Lake Street School.

Next EDC meeting: February 21<sup>st</sup> at 6:30pm (Tony will call in remotely, if necessary)

Meeting adjourned at 8:05pm

*Notes compiled and submitted by Paul Dell'Aquila*