



WEST MILFORD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
West Milford Library 2nd floor
JANUARY 10, 2019
MINUTES

Time: 7:30 pm Call to Order – JoAnn Blom

Roll Call:

Andie Pegel
Claudia Logan
Dave Ofshinsky
Gary Steele
JoAnn Blom
Karen Phelan
Mark Werner
Melissa Brown-Blaeuer
Michael Gerst
Steve Drew

Absent: Mike Chazukow (Secretary)

Guest: Chris Garcia, West Milford Planning Board Chair

Election of Officers:

Steve Drew made a motion to nominate a slate of officers for the WMEDC; seconded by JoAnn Blom. All in favor (unanimous), as follows:-

JoAnn Blom – Chair
Mark Werner – Vice President
Steve Drew – Vice President
Melissa Brown-Blaeuer – Vice President
Mike Chazukow – Secretary
Dave Ofshinsky – Treasurer

Secretary's Report:

JoAnn Blom motion to accept minutes of 12/13/18; Melissa Brown-Blaeuer seconded. No one opposed.

Re: Tax Relief for WM

- Dave Ofshinsky shared the draft of letter he wrote re HERA (Highlands Economic Revitalization Act) proposal for WMEDC approval.
- Sales tax could be lowered by 3.5%
- WMEDC will provide input/edits at 2/14/19 meeting.
- The letter outlines 7 key tax relief features. (Refer to draft 1/8/18 D. Ofshinsky) and proposes that the NJ State Legislature enact a bill to address ways to compensate WM for being NJ's steward of clean water.
- HERA is modeled after the Urban Enterprise Zone (UEZ) program.
- Ofshinsky referenced the NJ State Legislature bill (No. 888) sponsored by Sen. Jos. Pennacchio that 'provides for reduced sales tax imposition on certain sales in certain Highlands Region Preservation Area municipalities.'
- The bill was introduced January 16, 2018. Ofshinsky said it was a 'no brainer' for WM and WMEDC to pursue.
- Andie Pegel offered suggestions regarding Governor Murphy's NJ business initiatives; she cited recent articles in NJ Business Magazine as background.
- Here is link to related article: <https://njbmagazine.com/monthly-articles/2019-industry-forecasts/>
- Ringwood might be included in the proposal contained in the Tax Relief letter.
- WMEDC decided to table further discussion to February meeting.
- It is anticipated that WMEDC will approve the letter and present it to the town council.

Re: Proposal for a town park complex

Guest, Chris Garcia, presented ideas to WMEDC surrounding how the town might move forward with a plan to aggregate or centralize various outdoor/sports activities around Belcher's Creek into a cohesive town complex of some sort.

He introduced an idea with many components which might involve some combination of one or more of the following:

- Cleanup Belcher's Creek – short-term
- Designate land for multi-use – athletic fields, events venue, and other activities
- Ability to navigate the creek by kayak (other vessels)
- A boat launch
- A boardwalk
- Connecting the creek to the Wallisch Homestead (Union Valley Road)

Mark Werner and others cited some issues that might appear if this process were undertaken.

Here is a brief list: Eminent domain, public access rights to a boardwalk, ability to purchase green space, EPA wetlands regs, buffers for wildlife, the Highland Protection Act, de-snagging versus dredging, ownership (local, town, and county, state), and abatements.

Werner recommended talking to Doug McKittrick (McKittrick Engineering) – and possibly inviting to WMEDC meeting as a guest to talk about some of the potential obstacles.

Karen Phelan mentioned that her husband as president of JORBA might have valuable input if the plan includes hiking or cycling.

Melissa Brown-Blauer said this might fit with contiguous greenways.

Garcia primarily wanted to air the idea to see if WMEDC could work with other committees in town like the Beautification Committee to co-ordinate cleaning up Belcher's Creek. He is looking to accomplish it this spring in conjunction with the regular town spring cleanup. It might also be the sole focus of WM spring cleanup depending on feedback/approval from the Beautification Committee.

Steve Drew suggested to Garcia that he would be welcome to prepare a proposal and present it to WMEDC at a future time.

Gary Steele made a motion with two parts:

- 1) WMEDC would recommend that spring cleanup of Belcher's Creek should be the focus of WM spring cleanup with the approval (if not cooperation with) of the Beautification and Recycling Committee (BARC) with Dave's approval first before the Town Council.
- 2) C. Logan and J. Blom would draft a letter to the Beautification Committee outlining the proposal. May require input from H.E.A.T (Highlands Economic Development & Tourism Corp.)

Steve Drew seconded the motion. All in favor (unanimous).

As part of the effort, it was agreed that the WMEDC would publicize the event in local media (WM Messenger) (Assigned to C. Logan.)

It was also suggested that one or more WMEDC members attend the next Beautification Committee meeting on February 12, 2019.

See photos of Belcher's Creek and Wallisch Homestead at end of Minutes.

Re: Status of Cable TV Advertising

Gary Steele provided a brief status report re possibility of WM businesses running 'testimonials' (ads) on the WM77 Cable TV channel. He said anyone who wants to get involved in this project can. Next meeting of the WM77 TV Cable TV Commission is February 27, 2019.

Re: DMO

K. Phelan is looking into how to connect trails to downtown (?) with NY-NJ Trail Conference. Link: <https://www.nynjtc.org/>

She will have more at next meeting re her earlier proposal.

Re: Trails & Tourism

K. Phelan, M. Brown-Blauer are looking to invite Carl Richko, NJ Highlands Council chair to a WMEDC meeting. Topics: Feasibility of trails, tourism (DMO – see above).

Re: Airbnb – Potential Ordinance

Mark Werner and others (Mike C., S. Drew, G. Ofshinsky, etc.) are pursuing ways to handle short-term vacations rentals in the area (mostly Greenwood Lake) via Airbnb. UGL allows and has permit and other procedures in place.

Issues to be discussed and resolved:

- Liability
- Homeowner’s insurance
- Noise levels
- Fire inspection
- Septic tanks – proper size for household

Chris Garcia offered that the WM Planning Board is looking into this; Mayor M. Dale is as well.

Gary Steele made a motion to support the Planning Board in their rules or regs when/as it occurs; and Gary Ofshinsky seconded.

C. Logan offered that she would begin the process of writing ‘concerned citizen’ letters to local NJ papers regarding the areas of forest devastated by Hurricane Sandy, etc.

Motion to adjourn was made by S. Drew at 9:30 pm; Gary Ofshinsky seconded. All in favor. Unanimous.

Photos:

Belcher’s Creek



Wallisch Homestead



Submitted by:

Claudia Logan, Member, WMEDC

2/10/19