

**BRANDON AREA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
NOVEMBER 21, 2013**

**Call to Order** - The meeting opened at 8:40 am

**Present:** Janet Mondlak, Alyssa Zollman, Bernie Carr, Steve Beck, Jeff and Linda Stewart, Jim Leary, Dennis Reisenweaver, Devon Fuller, Stephanie Jerome, Liz Gregorek

**Minutes** - Motion by L Stewart / Carr to approve the minutes of the Oct. 16, 2013 as written. Passed

**This meeting was a general discussion about many economic development things going on in and around town.**

- Congratulations to Steve for VDAT. Steve said there is a meeting tomorrow with Leann. Steve said they promised us a YouTube video of the final presentation and it is not available. Jeff said it is corrupt. Alyssa has an audio of most of it. Consultants have slides. Steve will let them know about the audio and to contact Alyssa. He said there will be follow-up meetings in the spring.
- Blue Seal retail is moving this week. Blue Seal grain has closed. There are some lost jobs. Brandon could become a mecca for nursery, plants, gardening. Let's look at it as an opportunity, and not competition for each other with Blue Seal, Pinewood and Wood's all in the same neighborhood.
- Discussion about a number of downtown buildings.
- Smith Block - Devon suggested calling the owners more frequently. They are a part of our downtown and own a big building. Devon suggested that the consultant Steve Beck is in touch with who put together financing packages in Brattleboro could be involved with the Smith Block owners and the owner of the old Brandon High School. Perhaps Smith Block could re-apply for the tax credits.
- Compass - Alyssa said VDAT team visited Compass and "were blown away." Compass has a lot of space and are eager to get tenants in there.
- Helping find tenants for vacant commercial space: Steve says he is often asked "Why is Steve Beck promoting Bob Read's building -- that is benefitting Bob Read." Steve said he doesn't agree with it but needs guidance on convincing people that by helping a private landowner do something with his / her building, it helps the town in the long run.
  - Someone wanting to do a start-up.
  - Incubator businesses
  - Increases the tax base
  - Helps to sell real estate (homes)
  - Brings in people to support other businesses.
  - Matchmaking
- Green Block - Jim said he is concerned we are going to have another summer with the park being empty. He said he read work was going to begin last summer and it didn't happen. It would be a shame to go through another summer. Devon said we have a more pro-active town manager now. Employees are looking at FEMA worksheets. The culvert is one issue and we don't want to repair that portion of the park. Devon said he will stay on top of it.
- Clarendon - Steve said he heard about a FL company bringing 21 light manufacturing jobs to Clarendon. He pursued different avenues to see if the company would be interested in moving to Brandon. There could be a zoning problem in Clarendon. Discussion about that particular company. Steve was advised that to be pro-active, he should call companies direct. Steve should know exactly what Brandon has to offer. Tax credits? Revolving loan fund. Discussion about the

availability of selectboard approved tax stabilization. Devon suggested Steve talk to the town manager and stay well informed. Stephanie said Steve should be receiving newsletters from the state Buildings & Grounds. Liz suggested Steve talk to Ray Ault, commercial realtor in the region.

- Dennis asked Steve what he needs to do his job more efficiently. Steve said he needs resources. The town needs a better website. Devon asked for town names for examples. Dennis asked that for the next meeting, Steve put together a list of what he needs to do his job better.
- Janet said many businesses are moved or opened in a particular place because people have a connection to the area. Transfiguration Farm was sold to someone with roots in Killington and Lake Dunmore.
- Stephanie urged that we need to get the word out. There is good space available. With good electricity and internet, professional spaces are available. Steve needs to be that person to promote that. She suggested a monthly column about economic development happenings in town. Send to chamber e-news and local papers "Growing your business, selling your business, contact me: I'll help you."
- Devon suggested the department put on workshops once in a while for people who have small businesses. Accountant. Workshops such as Word Press, Facebook. Webinars. Bernie said they can be organized through DBA and that "ticks" off one of their boxes. The OVUHS library could be really helpful and a great location.
- Steve said if anyone hears of something please send it to him. He said he is working with someone who has a biomass energy plant.
- Bernie suggested Steve approach the business owners in town who are "graying" and talk about succession planning and how he could help. Selling the business? Selling the building and dissolving the business? Selling the models, patents and the equipment?
- VDAT - Alyssa said they had great tag lines. Steve can be promoting that. Put them in press releases.
- Discussion on the McKernon owned J building at Park Village and the proposed incubator space. Steve said he thinks the J building ideas are "dead" for now. McKernon wants to sell the building. There needs to be interested investors. Discussion about how to grow businesses who might be interested. Alyssa said the Gahagans have a kitchen that could be used and is already built. We need to start small and Gahagan's could be used and then people could grow from there to something bigger. Steve said one thing from the exercise is to start small.
- Dennis asked about some of the other buildings that were highlighted at the last meeting. He asked that at every meeting, the open items from the previous meeting be updated and discussed.
- Steve said he will be the minute-taker for meetings in the future.

**Adjourn at 9:55 am.**

**Next meeting: Jan. 16 at 8:30 am at SAD.**