

## **Upper Valley Economic Council**

Meeting Minutes: June 15, 2020

***Next Meeting: Monday July 20, 2020 at 7:00 pm.***

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The meeting was brought to order at 7:00 pm.

**Present:** Alvin Theriault, Lois Eash, Julie Johnston, John Qualey and Jeff Packard.

**Guests:** Fred Michaud - Policy Development Specialist, Scenic Byways Coordinator, Bureau of Planning.

Trisha House - State Office Representative for Senator Susan Collins - Caribou Office.

**Minutes:** It was moved, seconded and passed to accept the minutes of February 24, 2020.

**Treasurer's Report/Sign Warrants:** Office Manager Packard presented the Treasurer's report for June 15, 2020. The Board voted to approve the report as read. The Board signed the warrants.

**Millinocket Lake Project:** Fred Michaud updated the Board: Fred went over all the records from the Maine DOT. Originally there was \$50,000 from the DOT and there was not enough funds to construct the Bathroom because it had been over bid. The DOT had over \$400,000 for the project. It came in at \$72,000 under budget. Those two funds are still there for the project. Fred has also secured funding from: The County of Piscataquis for \$50,000, USDA \$68,000, Nature Conservancy \$20,000, Private Donation of \$5,000. The County of Piscataquis has committed \$25,000 for 10 years for Maintenance. Fred has proposed with the New Administration to close two little used Rest Areas - Bell's Field in Haynesville, and the Rest Area in Orient. The Architecture Design has been done for the Bathroom which is required when using Government Funding. The Septic Chamber and Well will cost about \$50,000. The Septic would have 48 Chambers. The Building should cost approximately \$180,000 to \$200,000 to construct. If the DOT Commissioner approves the closure of the two rest areas there would be enough funding to build the Bathroom Facility and maintain it for 15 years with no new funding coming in. A decision needs to be made quickly whether to do the project. If the Project is not done then some funding would have to be turned back. Fred stated that he would find a new owner of the property whether the Bathroom Facility is built or not and UVEC would no longer own the Property. If the Bathroom is built, there are Business Owners at the location that would form either a 501 © 3 or an LLC. Fred is hoping for a decision on the proposed Rest Area Closures in the next three weeks. Fred has the Katahdin Woods & Waters Scenic Byway apply for National Designation. If successful this designation would bring more Visitors to the Road and make the Bathroom Facility Project even more of an asset to the area. John Qualey asked who would be in charge of maintaining the Bathrooms. Fred said there are 4 or 5 Businesses that agreed to do the maintaining of the Facility. The Facility would be open from May 15 to October 15 then closed for the Winter. John Qualey asked if UVEC is under any obligation with this Facility. Fred said that UVEC would not have any obligation with the Facility and he will write up a document and sign it stating this. Fred updated Trisha House on the location of the Bathroom and with State Funding a paved Parking Lot was constructed with Kiosks and Informational Panels.

**UVEC Chairman:** Phil Knowles has declined the Chairman position. The Board will look for another person to fill that position.

**UVEC Elections:** A motion was made by Julie Johnston to appoint John Qualey as Treasurer and Alvin Theriault as Secretary. Lois Eash Seconded the motion. The motion unanimously passed.

**Broadband/Fiber Optics:** No Update

**Solar Project:** The Town of Sherman received this inquiry: We are a consulting engineering firm in Brewer and have a client that is interested in developing in your area. Could you please advise us to the Town of Sherman's procedures for a Site Plan? Does the Town have a Zone Map and Ordinances? We hope to hear from you soon. They were referred to the Code Enforcement Officer.

**County Wind Project:** The Town of Sherman received this inquiry: We are currently working on permit applications for 4 proposed meteorological towers (MET towers) to test wind speeds around the project area, one of which is located in Sherman, near the ITS trail northeast of Macwahoc Lake. We have submitted MET tower applications to the Land Use Planning Commission (LUPC) before and I am working with them on the other 3. They were referred to the Code Enforcement Officer.

**Office Manager's Report:**

1. Food Pantry Report: We are getting approximately 70 Families per month and this is up about 20 Families per month.
2. A Thank You Card was sent to Peter Qualey from the Board.
3. Business Guide: A draft was passed out to the Board. The Board will review and contact Jeff with any changes.
4. Mobilize Maine Zoom Meetings: Jeff has been meeting Bi Weekly with them and Bi Weekly with Local Pantries as well.

**Business up-date:** No Update

**Scenic Byway Update:** Jay Kamm: Last Friday, the nomination for the Katahdin Woods and Waters Scenic Byway was submitted to the National Scenic Byways Program and endorsed by MaineDOT. The submittal could not have been completed without your assistance. Susan, Jeff, Kristen, Eldon, Harry, and Peter kept me on task and provided photographs, letters of support, and editing content, a huge task. I would also be remiss if I didn't thank Fred. Other states did not have the support from their Scenic Byway Coordinator or DOT's that we did. Fred is a great advocate for all of the byway nominations and the Kathadin region. Fred informed the UVEC Board that a proposal by Rosengren Landscaping was received to redo the seeding at the Heritage Park in Millinocket. Fred explained that the prior contractor did not properly do thee job and the seeding and landscaping were not done properly and very little of the seeds came up. The Board asked questions to Fred as to why the first Contractor was not made to correct this. The Board held discussions on once the project is finished all the options available to UVEC to transfer or sell the property to another entity.

**KRDB Update:** Mike Michaud reported the Town of East Millinocket voted to purchase the Paper Mill. Notes from Mike Elliott:

**1. Community Committee w/ MDF:** Maine Rural Development Authority will be voting in June to approve the final slate of subgrants to support the top 1-3 priorities in each chosen community. In the Katahdin Region, that would be \$210,000 for East Millinocket and \$216,000 for Millinocket. Lincoln is set to receive \$185,000. I have also been officially added to the Market Attraction Committee, which is a great opportunity for this program, as I will get line of site to potential businesses that are being courted to Maine.

**2. Two New Business Opportunities:** I have been contacted by two individuals who are looking to start a business in the Millinocket area. One has already completed his first draft of the business plan with some guidance from me, and now is working with SBDC on finalizing it. I have already discussed loan options with him through EMDC's 504 lending program, so this one looks good. It is two separate LLC's: one for owning a commercial building, and another for owning a cafe in downtown with outdoor seating.

**3. Katahdin Tourism Partnership:** I have officially joined the KTP board and will be looking for ways to connect them to other organizations where possible to ensure less duplication. I believe I can leverage my rapport with the Chamber to help accomplish this.

**4. Penquis Transportation Committee:** Deb and I have been involved with discussions to set up transportation between the southern portion of the region and Bangor. EMDC (Kevin and Vicki) is also involved, and Vicki will be moving forward with a grant application to fund a study.

**5. Knot Plastic:** I am working with them to find funding (they need about 200k) to buy a plastic mold machine. If they are successful, that would create 3 FT jobs to start in Medway at the D&M building. They make biodegradable plastics, such as shopping bags and zip ties.

**6. Opioid Response:**EMDC has received a significant grant to combat the issue of opioid addiction in the communities they serve. I have been in touch with Heidi Wheaton and Michelle Anderson, who have started two organizations focused on recovery, and have connected them to Doug Dunbar at EMDC, who is leading the charge with this grant. This should help them, especially on the reintegration side, as there is a workforce component. As well, those who may not have been in recovery, but have an interest in working in those fields can potentially receive training to enter that field through this grant.

**7. COVID-19 Response:** I have secured 25 reusable masks for first responders on behalf of KRDB and EMDC (they supplied the EIN needed to get the donation). They arrived last week, and I will be delivering them this week. I continue to help the businesses in the region with various needs.

**8. Multi-organizational Meeting:** I had a great call with Peter Jamison of the Chamber and Carole Martin, the consultant working with The Nature Conservancy, regarding ways to better integrate organizations and how to ensure the Accelerator position doesn't duplicate effort. One of the key takeaways was the importance of

connecting the boards to each other. I think this is a great way for me to stay informed at the top level as to what other organizations are working on, and to proactively connect each of them to existing efforts in the region. If KRDB can be the first board to really do that, it would be a great example of the collaboration this program is fostering.

**9. Economic & Community Recovery Series:** I have a meeting with Shelley Farrington on Wednesday to strategize an ongoing series where I talk about various needs in the region, but mostly about the good news happening in the region, and how this program has helped make these things possible. It will be good news only, which we both agree is sorely needed.

**Zoom Packages:** The UVEC Board decided to continue with using the free conference number and not use the free package.

**UVEC RBEG Update:** There is \$35,232.49 available for loans. Two Businesses have paid off their loans.

**Sherman Boralax Plant:** Mervyn Yan:Jeff, I am still waiting for the state's conditional licensure, hopefully soon.

**Trisha House:** Senator Collins was one of the authors of the bill for the Pay Check Protection program. This had brought in 2.2 Billion Dollars into the State of Maine and overall the State has received over 3.7 Billion in Funding. There is more money that has been allocated to the State that has not been dispersed. The Economic Disaster Loans for Businesses was refunded and was initially only open to Agriculture related Businesses. As of this afternoon it was learned that it is now open to any Small Business. Businesses can apply through the USDA and the portal for applying will open back up this Evening. The Cares Act which was passed to help state and local governments, required Municipalities to have a population over 500,000. No City or Town in Maine qualified. Senator Collins recently authored the SMART Act, which would eliminate the current 500,000 population threshold so that every state, county, municipality, U.S. territory, and the District of Columbia could qualify for direct federal assistance. The bill has not yet been taken up in the Senate. Hopefully it will be addressed by the Senate soon.

Meeting ended 7:55 pm.

Respectfully Submitted

John Qualey, Treasurer