

## Economic Development Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: February 14, 2022

Present: Gerry Morrison, Kevin Raye, Manuel Moreno(from Spain!), Jeanne Peacock( liaison from City Council), Michael Morse, Greg Gordon(guest), Kate Devonshire(ex- officio), Vicki Rusbult ( EMDC)

Absent: Billy Boone, Laura Stanczyk

Vicki Rusbult of Eastern Maine Development Corp opened the meeting with a summary of and Economic Adjustment Act update: the funds are going fast and there are many applicants. Our Economic Development district head, Allen Brigham is retiring in April. Any grant idea needs to go before him- Vicki has an in and can get our idea before him.

Chris Gardner conducted interviews with Greg Gordon and Laura Stanczyk, business owners who have chosen Eastport as a place in which to invest. Chris asked them "What drew you to Eastport and what could the city have done to make you come sooner?"

Greg Gordon owner of Full Fathom Five Gallery, responded: The vitality, energy , and interesting vibe distinguished Eastport from the other coastal communities he explored. It was clear that other people had made a big push to improve the downtown so he felt that investing in his building would be a contribution. People who want to get a quick financial gain are going to other larger communities. It is the quality of the Eastport living situation that was the draw.

Laura Stanczyk, owner of The Phoenix on Water Street: it is challenging to comb through the regulations needed when remodeling. Getting info from the state difficult due to unanswered phone calls. Dealing with fire marshall 's office a new experience. She suggested a clearinghouse of information which people need when setting up business in Eastport rather than having to figure it all out on your own.

Manuel Mareno, co-owner of Bocephus, related that they chose Eastport from other Washington County communities because it seemed "on the way up", it was the most developed, things would unfold while they were here. They did not find setting up a new business difficult to navigate.

Jeanne Peacock mentioned that the Camoin Report which was completed in 2019 had a blueprint for economic development. Michael Morse said that several of the items had been accomplished and goals such as attract new people to Eastport had occurred the past few years. Jeanne listed some of the ideas she had read in the Camoin report: paving street, parking lot, developing a city link on the website for new businesses with start up information, performing an inventory of available buildings for sale that could be used for business or industry, providing incentives such as TIFs to entice business to Eastport.

Vicki said that the paving would not be favorable for EAA funding,

The idea of an economic development position to be paid for through the grant was discussed. It must be sustainable so city would need to show it could retain the position with city funds, foundation funds, or extension of EAA grant, Larger cities like Bangor, Brewer have Economic Dev personnel, smaller towns rely on their local Economic Development agencies to provide that service.

Kevin Raye spoke on the time and research that has gone into seeking funding for their Mustard Museum project. It takes time to develop a strong grant and feared that we are up against an impossible time frame to accomplish a cohesive plan. Eastport does not need just a person to help with

marketing it needs to develop in-house expertise to navigate getting business here. The Camoin report was written taking info from focus groups, community forums.

Jeanne Peacock spoke that it would be good idea for the Ec Dev Comm to read the Camoin report and use it as a guideline that we can not rely of the federal grant but on ourselves to read the plan , update it by crossing off accomplished goals, picking out goals that the committee wants to accomplish and setting up the means to accomplish the goals.

Chris reiterated like the Port Authority come up with goals for which we will need state or federal assistance but have them ready to go when funds become available. The city has seen a lot of turnover in leadership since the 2019 report, it needs to "pick a lane and stay with it" as we look at econ development.

Michael wondered if getting help with the Sewer rebuild could qualify for funds, Vicki thought that I more of a Rural Development project.

Jerry wanted to know if development of the Mac Nichol property on Deep Cove for marine interests could qualify. To get float out there as the basin is getting so busy. Chris said it could be looked at for small harbor improvements between Port and City.

Vicki announced that Northern Border Regional Commission has a next round of economic funding of up to a million dollars coming up in March.

Vicki thought that maybe a façade grant to refurbish the remaining properties that need to be improved could qualify to get a grant in before the March 31 deadline. The 80/20 match is more generous than previous grant opportunities.

It was agreed that we would meet TUESDAY FEB 22 at 1 pm rather than on the President's day holiday. Vicki will attach the Economic and Community Development Action Plan(Camoin2019) to the Zoom invitation.

Respectfully submitted, Jeanne Peacock, Secretary Pro-tem