

## Whitefield Economic Development Committee

Minutes of Meeting March 21, 2018

**Participants** –Bill McKeen, Karl Richards, Louis Sell, Steve Sheehy,

### **Internet Connectivity**

The committee discussed next steps in the new cable franchise agreement. Steve Sheehy will prepare a revised draft contract reflecting the ordinance recently adopted by the Select Board, that can be presented to Spectrum at the opening round of negotiations. The committee agreed to retain the 3% franchise fee from the current contract and to explore with Spectrum steps it might be prepared to take to assist in expanding internet access, possibly including public Wi/Fi hotspots in locations around town and creative ways to share in financing the extension of cable connections in areas that are currently underserved.

### **Branding and Community Outreach**

Bill McKeen informed the committee that he has a list of people who want to help in putting together the planned Whitefield map and guide as well as a number of local firms that want to take out ads in it. Bill is still on track to have a completed product ready by May.

### **Other Business**

The committee discussed additional areas in which to focus its activities over the coming year:

*Cell Phone Coverage:* In view of the critical importance that good cell phones play in economic activity and in almost every aspect of daily life and in light of the problems with reception that are reportedly experienced in parts of Whitefield, the committee agreed that over the coming year it should work on improving this situation. As a first step, members of the committee will drive the town's roads and map out areas where cell reception is weak. Working with the Select Board, the committee will ascertain the situation with respect to the cell phone tower that was to have been built on Town House road and seek to reenergize that or other projects. The committee will also invite Dennis Merrill, who has experience and ideas on the subject, to its next meeting.

*Land Use Regulations:* The committee agreed on the importance of exploring appropriate land use regulations to facilitate the dual goals of expanding economic development and preserving the town's rural character which respondents to the committee's survey highlighted as an important concern. Building on research already undertaken on TIFs, the committee will explore measures such as Development Districts that are intended to provide incentives for businesses to locate or expand activity in Whitefield as well as other measures that would keep economic development in areas where it makes most sense in light of the dual goals outlined above. As a first step, the committee will put together a map locating current businesses in town.

Following up on a previous discussion, the committee will explore the possibility of putting together a summary of key economic, social, and demographic indicators in Whitefield. A first step should be contacting the Maine Development Foundation, which puts together an annual

report on performance measures and benchmarks for the state of Maine as a whole, to learn if relevant material of this nature at the town level is available.

**Next Meeting**

The committee agreed that its next meeting will be held Wednesday April 18 at 3 PM at the Sheepscot General.