

Vernon Township Economic Development Committee

March 28, 2023, Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 PM.

Statement of Compliance was read by Sally Rinker

Salute to the Flag

In Attendance:

Sally Rinker Chairperson

Jennifer Lubliner Co-Chairperson entered 7:55PM

Michael Gelfand

Jason Pierce absent

Beth Ziba

Carl Contino

Keren Gonen entered 7:55 PM

Nick Pirro absent

Susan Berkley

Peter knipe

Heidi LeBris

A Motion to approve February 14, 2023 minutes was made by Gelfand and second by Ziba. All in favor.

Chair Comments:

Sally Rinker addressed the committee with the following points:

With the agenda we need 48 hours to make legal notice.

With eleven members it is the largest it has ever been.

The minutes will be longer with Special Meetings. After the minutes are voted on by our committee they get handed to the Mayor's office and gone through to delete any personal info before publishing. This is due to "Daniel's Law" which protects people in law enforcement.

Everyone should have the Mission Statement. Please read over.

The Conflict-of-Interest Statement should have been signed by everyone. This is to affirm that no one is here for personal interest or gain.

EDC Communication policy is that we should always speak as one.

Sally Rinker passed out the policy for everyone to sign.

Michael Gelfand added that we are one group and one voice. You can argue before the vote but when the consensus is done all should be in agreement.

Carl Contino agreed.

Discussion on this subject among committee members.

Heidi LeBris mentioned she will look over the statement and get back to us.

Issues in Town include the budget, projects, etc. We are representatives of the Town, and our image is important. We need to take the high road with team effort and respect for our group. Civility and Respect are essential.

Dr. Lahr's Presentation:

The EDAC had a special meeting on March 7, 2023. The discussion was about what Vernon has and what Vernon wants.

The cost estimate for Phase One \$50,000

Phase Two \$100,000

Phase three \$60,000

Sally Rinker stated we need other estimates.

Peter Knipe mentioned that in 2009 the County and Plan called Vision 20/20 was created and holds true to what we want to do here. Before we get into a study, let's look into the Vision 20/20. Nothing was ever done with this.

Michael Gelfand found Countryside Exchange from 2000, and said we should look at both.

Sally Rinker stated we should still look into two more presentations. Free presentations.

Michael Gelfand said let's look at the two reports. We need to look at what problems we are trying to solve. What are our opportunities? We have vacant land and empty store fronts.

Peter Knipe mentioned Frankford and the limited access to gas and sewers. We need a map of commercial land to target certain businesses.

Sally Rinker mentioned sewer hook-up fees of \$10,000.

Peter Knipe stated that some areas of Vernon do not have the ability to hook up sewers.

Sally Rinker asked each member what they think is important for Vernon:

She stated that Real Estate taxes are an issue. We need every piece of Commercial Zoned property to attract businesses to come to Vernon to look around. Let's bring in business.

Carl Contino stated knowing the level of business that would want to come in to Vernon. That is why the study is important.

Peter Knipe stated we need more ratables and businesses. We need to attract more residences with children/school system.

Sally Rinker stated that there are pros and cons to residences.

Jennifer Lubliner stated that residences need children services.

Peter Knipe mentioned Peddlers Village with its Historic blend of stores.

Heidi LeBris said the taxes are too high and the vacant properties and new business costs are high.

Discussion on the Farmers Market, MountainCreek, The Appalachian Hotel with empty store fronts.

Michael Gelfand said we should table the discussion until we review the reports.

Website and Budget:

Sally Rinker said that the EDAC needs to be on the Homepage.

Keren Gonen stated that we should show up at a town council meeting, all eleven members and keep showing up to discuss the website.

Sally Rinker mentioned the Social Media Proposal and how it needs to be brought up again.

A motion was made by Keren Gonen to have the EDAC be put on the Councils Agenda for the next meeting, a second by Sally Rinker. All in favor.

Jennifer Lubliner will send out a copy of the Social Media Proposal to all members.

Sally Rinker was not happy with the budget amount of \$500.

DECA:

Keren Gonen stated after talking to the High School Deca program it would be too late this year to implement the program but next year looks promising. Maybe starting in the fall through Winter.

Jennifer Lubliner explained DECA to the new members.

Facebook:

The new car wash on Omega Drive is not going to happen.

Susan Berkley started a conversation about Maplewood and how they promoted a section of their town on Facebook and advertising. They filled up empty store fronts and brought life back into the town. We could pick a small section of Vernon and make it our goal to promote.

Public Participation:

Carl Contino made the motion to open the meeting to the public, second by Peter Knipe.

Peg Distasi discussed how she handles Facebook and Social Media by keeping politics out of it and never has a response to it.

The website for the Environmental Commission always has a problem. The Master Plan is under documents on the website. The Highlands has grant money available for projects.

Sean Clarkin discussed farmland turning into Industry. The Land Use Board votes to make farmland development. We have two committees with two different ideas and are going in two different directions.

A motion to close the meeting to the public was made by Carl Contino, second by Susan Berkley. All in favor.

Jennifer Lubliner made the motion to bring the Directory and Social Media Proposal up at the Council Meeting. Second by Keren Gonen.

Carl Contino mentioned having a liaison with the board of the Council. Peg Distasi said she will bring it up at the meeting.

Jennifer Lubliner mentioned a Grand Opening on April 8, 2023, at noon at Vernon Tire and Auto.

There will be Senior Housing on Omega drive for 55 and older.

Sally Rinker mentioned that on Wednesday night at 7:00 there will be a special meeting for revaluation.

Sally Rinker mentioned the Western Scenic Byway Management Plan for the National Scenic Byway which is tied to Economic Development.

Michael Gelfand made a motion to adjourn the meeting, second by Susan Berkley. All in favor. Time was 9:20 PM

Respectfully Submitted:

Debbie Coulson