

Town of Farmington  
Economic Development Committee  
Thursday, May 24, 2018

**Committee Members Present:**

Denise Roy-Palmer, Vice Chairman  
Sharon McKenney, Secretary  
Ann Titus, Selectmen's Rep.  
Martin Laferte, Planning Board Rep.

**Committee Members Absent:**

Angela Hardin, Chairman, excused  
Randy Orvis  
Elise Haig

**Others Present:**

Dan DeSantis, Town Planner  
Barbara Wilson, Content Strategist,  
Explore Moose Mountains  
Collin Lentz, SCRPC  
Stephanie Casella, SCRPC

**1). Call to Order:**

Vice Chairman Denise Roy-Palmer called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

Mrs. Roy-Palmer said in the interest of full disclosure, she is the Executive Director of the Wentworth Economic Development Corporation(WEDCO) who is the fiscal agent for the Explore Moose Mountains initiative. She said she is also the Chair of the Explore Moose Mountains committee and a member of the Branch River Valley Scenic Byways Committee. She then asked the EDC members and guests to introduce themselves.

**Explore Moose Mountains:**

Mrs. Roy-Palmer said the first part of the meeting would contain a presentation from the Explore Moose Mountains initiative outlining its background and purpose. She said they are an avenue for marketing the 7 town region that includes Wolfeboro, Wakefield, New Durham, Milton, Middleton, Brookfield and Farmington and there is no other organization or project to market this area.

Ms. Wilson said the project began in 2014 when an industrial waste company wanted to install a construction debris dump in Milton. They planned to bring in 12 48-foot long tractor trailer loads of debris per hour and Milton residents fought back and succeeded in preventing the dump from coming to town. Once they had done that they decided they needed to promote and protect the town's existing assets and resources she said.

She said they also realized there is no traditional print media in town and the neighboring media sources are not doing the amount of hometown reporting they once did. After holding several roundtable discussions they determined that forming a non-profit group with the assistance of a fiscal agency would give them the best bang for their buck. They then started a Face book page called the Moose NH (Explore Moose Mountains) on May 10, 2017.

Ms. Wilson said that at first the page had no presence or followers but it soon took off after a

Farmington resident created an American flag out of stone in her front yard and then the manager of the Honey Dew Donuts created a stone flag in front of the Farmington Honey Dew Donuts store and posted their photos on the page. Others did the same and then through the year, they started getting traction by posting 8 posts a day featuring the culture, food, farms and retail available in the area and socializing and engaging with people from the region. She said the page has now reached 1.1 million feeds (the Moose's posts were seen 1.1 million times in other people's feeds over the course of the year).

Ms. Wilson then gave the following slideshow presentation:

*What is the Moose?* – the 7 town region along the backbone of the Moose Mountains between the Seacoast, the Lakes region and the White Mountains accessible by Routes 16, 11 or 28.

*What Does the Moose offer?* – Outdoor activities, scenic vistas, cultural attractions, farmland and local produce, locally crafted food and drink, antiques, artists and artisans.

*The Moose in 4 Seasons*– a series of snapshots obtained from photo contests and people who posted their photos on the Face book page depicting sky views, sunsets, water events/activities, winter activities, locally grown and prepared food, cultural and historic places/events of interest, hiking and wildlife. A series of photos taken in Wolfeboro while it was snowing were viewed about 30,000 times in other Face book feeds she said.

*The Moose New Hampshire Face book page*– Ms. Wilson showed the members the Moose's Face book page and said that they also have a website which is not quite ready for prime time. The goal is to make the site fully searchable so users can search for specific information such as gluten-free food in the Moose region.

She said that it is important to have other groups associated with your group where people can post their information and events and have discussions. She explained how postings on a group page are picked up and posted on the Moose page and seen by their followers and then shared to other groups and individuals so the outreach goes farther.

Ms. Wilson then showed the statistics for the number of "likes" received for their page and noted that it has grown by .7% showing that their group has the strongest growth in this area.

Mrs. Titus asked if they are promoting businesses in the area.

Ms. Wilson said they promote businesses, non-profits and events and have found the largest response comes from the photos which bring people back to the page. She said businesses are welcome to post events on the page but asked that they don't just post their business cards like a bulletin board but to give a little more information to attract customers and potentially build relationships with them. There is a business group page called Moose-Biz which is open only to businesses and non-profits who can offer tips and tricks to fellow business owners she said.

Mrs. Titus asked what the site offers for non-profits.

Ms. Wilson said they took a potential posting for the Farmington Woman's Club craft fair and added more photos to make it a little more dynamic, advertised the Friends of Farmington's Get Hitched at Hay Day event, the bicycle decorating activity and other events sponsored by

local non-profits.

Mrs. Titus asked if there is information available to the non-profit groups to help them advance their cause.

Ms. Wilson said she will contact the group to make suggestions on how to market events, how to post items on the Moose pages, advise them to go to the Moose-Biz page where they can participate in the discussions or just “lurk and learn” and that they also host meet-ups where people can come with specific questions.

Ms. Wilson added that if anyone sends a message through the Face book page with questions/comments or is seeking assistance with messaging for their event or group she will respond to them.

**New Hampshire Scenic Byway Program:**

Mrs. Roy-Palmer said there has been an existing byway in the towns of Milton and Wakefield for over 25 years and in an effort to market the Moose Mountains region she would like to talk about expanding the byway. The members reviewed informational handouts and a map of the 7 town region with the existing and proposed byways. She then asked the Strafford County Regional Planning Commission representatives to begin their presentation to the committee. Regional Transportation Planner Colin Lentz said the scenic byways program was formerly a federally funded program but a new transportation authorization bill was passed transferring the administration of the program to the states. There is Governor appointed council that meets twice a year to oversee the development of state’s byways. The scenic byways are managed by committee representatives appointed by the towns along the byway he said. Mr. Lentz said the Regional Planning Commissions provide technical assistance to develop the byways but the process is locally driven and the scenic byways do not impact the local control over land use except for restrictions against offsite advertising on a designated scenic byway. He said that Ms. Casella has put together a “story map” which is a free website using Graphic Information System (GIS) mapping to store, manage and display information about specific locations. He said a future story map could contain sites from all 7 towns to identify and promote sites in those towns.

Mr. DeSantis asked if the proposed scenic byway would go through downtown Farmington.

Mr. Lentz said that seems to be the most ideal route for Farmington.

Mr. DeSantis said there was a proposal in the 1998 where a charrette was developed by PLAN NH that proposed a major redevelopment of the streetscape in the downtown which is an expensive proposition. He said the town has begun the process to study linking the redevelopment of the former fire station to the downtown area which will be incorporated into the revised Master Plan. He asked if the byway would help the town to score more points on grant applications and assist the town with the redevelopment of the streetscapes downtown.

Mr. Lentz said the byway is a way to promote interest in the town’s historic sites and other assets and all of the interest being generated is part of the “political will” to invest in the plan.

He said he didn't think it will hurt the town's chances but that it would depend on the requirements for the particular grant.

Mr. DeSantis asked if the Board of Selectmen would be required to designate that portion of Route 153 as a scenic byway.

Mr. Lentz said that each community would have to appoint a representative to the scenic byway committee, vote to approve the marketing/management plan and then the application would be sent to the state byways council for approval.

Mrs. Roy-Palmer said the towns would be involved in identifying sites along the byway in each community.

Data Collection and Analysis Assistant Stephanie Casella said a story map is an interactive marketing tool somewhat similar to an interactive Power Point presentation. The pictures and descriptions are located at the bottom of the page and there is a map where users can zoom in and out to see exactly where in town the sites are located.

She said she met with the Branch River Advisory Committee and they chose points along the byway that they wanted to highlight which were compiled into the story map. People can use the site to plan a trip or pick out points of interest as they are passing through the area.

Mr. Lentz said there are 22 scenic byways in the state including 3 byways which were federally designated as National Scenic Byways and are historic byways (Connecticut River, Kancamagus and White Mountain Trail Byways). He said the Visit NH website and the NH Dept. of Travel and Tourism plan to set up links from their sites to all of the scenic byways providing a presence at that higher level for this area in the future.

Mrs. Roy-Palmer said there would also be signage with a Moose Mountains Scenic Byway logo.

Mr. DeSantis asked about the timeframe for the program.

Mr. Lentz said it is a long timeframe which is undefined at this time as they have to get the towns on board, get the representatives, start work on the routes, obtain approval from the Selectmen and then begin working on the marketing plan. He said the story map is editable at any point and encouraged the members to search online for GIS story maps where they will find hundred's of styles and examples.

Mrs. Titus asked if there is any cost to Farmington for the program.

Mr. Lentz said there is no cost to the town.

Ms. Wilson said it may be helpful for Mr. DeSantis to speak to others who may be interested in this type of program in the other towns in the region to lay the groundwork for the upcoming informational presentations in their towns.

Mr. Lentz said the SRPC serves 18 communities and is collaborating with all of them for this project (except for the Town of Wolfeboro) and with the Lakes Region Regional Planning Commission as well he said.

Mrs. Roy-Palmer suggested that there be two representatives from Farmington for the byways committee.

Mr. Lentz said he did not think there is a minimum or maximum number of representatives required for the committee and that he will find out.

Mr. DeSantis expressed his interest in the position to Mrs. Titus as the Selectmen's Rep. to the EDC.

Mrs. Titus suggested that the SRPC give a presentation to the Selectmen and that Mr. DeSantis should speak with the Town Administrator and request that the presentation be placed on the agenda for a future Selectmen's meeting.

Mr. DeSantis asked if the SRPC would be willing to conduct a presentation for the Planning Board as well.

Mrs. Titus suggested there could be joint meeting with the Selectmen and the Planning Board.

Mr. Lentz said they would also give a presentation to the Planning Board.

He suggested if there are any other questions members can contact him at the Rochester SRPC office or through the website at [strafford.org](http://strafford.org).

Mrs. Roy-Palmer said that although many New Englanders are very independent for things like this we need to think of ourselves as a region. We don't have to drag people to this area as we have thousands of cars on these routes every day throughout the year. If we could get just 2% to come and visit in these communities that would be a significant improvement she said.

Ms. Wilson added that the Explore Moose Mountains initiative started with Face book but would like to expand to become more promotional in all different areas such as print, radio and television media tours and other social media sites.

**Adjournment:**

**Motion:** (DeSantis, second Laferte) to adjourn the meeting passed unanimously at 7:05 p.m.

Respectively submitted

Kathleen Magoon

Recording Secretary

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Denise Roy-Palmer, Vice Chairman