

**Charlemont Economic Development Roundtable
Charlemont Planning Board
Meeting August 8, 2011, 7 pm Great Outdoors
Draft Minutes**

The meeting had been properly posted in town hall and on the public bulletin board in front of town hall for several weeks as well as on the town website.

Planning Board members present: Gisela Walker, Chair,

Guests: State Representative Gail Carriddi, Amy Shapiro, Franklin County CDC; Mary Vilbon, SFABA; Jessica Atwood and Alyssa LaRose from the COG Planning Department; Diane Broncaccio, The Recorder

Others: 12 additional members of the public per attached sign up sheet

G. Walker opened the meeting at 7.10 pm, thanked the Carcio's for their unique accommodation in their store, welcomed Representative Carriddi and the other guests and started the round of introductions that included several new faces such as the Bellangers from Country Ayre Campgrounds, Ms. Hytinnen and her daughter as well as Dale Bulmer and Bill Harker. Walker then read the minutes from the last meeting on July 14.

In follow up to the last meeting;

- there was a sentiment that the town calendar still represents technological hurdles to some people as to how to enter information; we will address that at the next meeting.
- Hellen Carcio submitted a written report on her research about who in town has promotional rack cards and who does not but would like to; she also submitted information on the cost of making them. She and Bruce Lessels (who could not attend) will continue to pursue the Charlemont rack card boxes.
- Walker summarized that the Roundtable focus at this point can be categorized into three categories:
 - 1) Business promotion (calendar, rack cards, fliers, maps etc)
 - 2) Business support (workshops, see CDC, commercial property inventory)
 - 3) Comprehensive, long term strategies (Master Plan Chapter goals and recommendations)

Amy Shapiro, Business Assistance Director, then gave a brief overview of the kind of support the **Franklin County Community Development Corporation** can provide such as workshops on developing business plans and securing financing; help with securing financing, a food processing kitchen or even incubator facilities for start-up businesses. In addition they work with individual towns on assessing and responding to the needs of the business community.

On September 20 she will start her 12 week class on developing business plans in their office in Greenfield. Anyone interested contact Amy Shapiro at 774-7204 x 107

She suggested that a place to start in Charlemont maybe a **survey of the existing businesses** and thus to identify what their needs are so that the CDC then can respond more effectively. This seemed to make sense to people and there was a discussion about how to establish a good list of existing businesses and their email addresses so they can be reached efficiently.

Another survey idea emerged in discussion between the CDC, Ms. Atwood the COG planner, and Ms Vilbon from the Shelburne Falls Area Business Association was the extension of a presently operating **survey of empty commercial properties** in Shelburne, Buckland and Colrain. Having such detailed information at hand allows for more effective marketing of such properties. Ms. Atwood agreed to set some of the hours anticipated for finishing the Master Plan Chapter aside for starting up this project together with the help of the SFABA and the CDC. This was seen as very good news! Many other good ideas floated around the room – too many to be recorded here.

Next the Planners from the Council of Government went over the latest draft of their update with helpful handouts about the changes they have made based on the group's feedback and then led a speedy and lively discussion of all **the revised goals and recommendations** broken up into short, medium and long term and identifying who in town would take the lead on each of those. Several changes were suggested. The planners will return in October with the final version and encouraged people in the meantime to email their ideas and suggestion to Jessica at JAtwood@frcog.org. These materials have been posted at the town website under the link to the Economic Development Roundtable.

Representative Carriddi promised to do what she can whenever the town needs back up from the State or connections and commended the group on the energy and spirit of cooperation. Ms Shapiro and Ms. Vilbon also emphasized that in these days of limited financial resources, networking and collaborating on projects is the way to go.

The next meeting of the Roundtable will be on Tuesday, September 6 at the Warfield House.

Jerry is happy to employ a cook if enough folks want to eat there before the meeting. I will check back in about that later.

Respectfully submitted by Gisela Walker
Chair of the Planning Board