

**Charlemont Economic Development Roundtable  
Charlemont Planning Board  
Meeting September 28, Federated Church Community Room  
Draft Minutes**

Planning Board members present: Gisela Walker, Chair, Trevor Mackie, Clerk, and Jerry Pratt  
As well as Rachel Porter, Cheryl Handsaker, Carla LaGrassa, Cara Hochhalter, Arthur and Lisa Belanger, Ken Hall,

G. Walker opened the meeting at 7.10 pm; introductions; review of agenda and minutes.

**Rte. 2 Detour Issue:** Members reported about their efforts to get the Rte. 2 detours be less detrimental to downtown Charlemont. There was much praise for Hellen Carcio's success with Mass Highway to have the signs changed at the intersection with Rte. 112; Cheryl H. experienced frustration in dealing with the Mohawk Trail Assoc and Mass Vacation but is working on an article about fall foliage experiences in Ch'mont that will go onto local websites; Gisela reported on a conversation with SFABA who just put regional recommendations together for the Governor's office re traffic routing. After much discussion about what else the group could accomplish in the short term that goes beyond these efforts (putting together a local fall foliage package, put up our own road signs, plan some event) and the efforts of the big businesses in town such as B East and Zoar Outdoors to get their folks to their sites, Gisela suggested that at this late date we may better focus on encouraging residents in the region to support their local businesses and rely on the big regional tourism organizations to do their job. One clear message was that it would be good for the Roundtable to have a presence on these Boards or have more members in them and have those members speak up for Charlemont,

### **Organizational Structure**

The group discussed the need for taking control of the Roundtable once the Planning Board pulls out; this involves simple administrative tasks such as agendas, minutes, communication and facilitation but primarily points of organizational structure: is the Roundtable a loose network of whoever shows up at meetings or is it a membership organization with mutual interdependence and collaboration or anything in between? How could the Roundtable be linked with the SFABA to take advantage of those efforts, resources and credibility? How about being the Economic Develop. Committee of town with a connection to the town government? The idea of some sort of Steering Committee emerged that would move the group ahead. Rachel Porter and Carla LaGrassa volunteered to give these ideas some thought and bring a proposal to the next meeting. They would like to have other members join them. Gisela will send out email about this.

### **Master Plan Chapter on Economic Development**

Gisela had brought copies of the final Economic Development Chapter of the Master Plan. People were impressed and very pleased with the usefulness of the document. This started the discussion of what the Roundtable's purpose and agenda should be. In the end there was agreement that the Goal as stated in the document was good wording for the overall mission of the Roundtable:

**To promote economic development in the Town of Charlemont that is consistent with its community character.**

There was also agreement to have more copies made and distributed around town to show the success of the Roundtable so far, to bring people into the initiative and to promote the recommendations made in the document. To take those recommendations and prioritize them and turn them into an action plan for the Roundtable seemed like a good next step. Carla will find out the cost of copies, Gisela suggested the Planning Board budget (depending on the cost) as this is a Planning Board document.

### **The business survey**

Rachel has finished the list of email addresses for businesses in town to 95%. There are a few more email addresses missing; the task is getting tedious; Carla agreed to call a few more people for their addresses but at some point this is the list! The next step is to get the survey questions from the CDC for review and edit and then to have the CDC send it out and tabulate the results. We realized that this list should take the place of the somewhat faulty list of businesses in the Master Plan Chapter. Gisela agreed to get in touch with the COG and see if they would be willing to make such changes at this point and to wait with duplicating the document until we have the final list and have heard from the COG.

Other questions were to what degree we could piggyback on the survey with questions to residents and local officials and to use it as a way of advertising the next Roundtable meeting to get more folks to attend. Right now we have no idea as to when the survey will go out. The purpose of the survey originally was to establish the needs of businesses for support from the CDC with business plans and marketing,

### **The Village Vision and Design Proposal**

G. Walker summarized last meeting's discussion about the proposal to engage the Conway School of Landscape Design to develop a **Charlemont Village Design** next spring. She had brought a large scale copy of the work developed for the town of Adams. Similar points were made as at the last meeting: This would provide future investments in downtown with a vision and template developed by residents with the help of landscape design students and faculty; it would give us a fresh view of outsiders about the appearance of the Village and opportunities for improvements; and it could be very helpful re attracting new businesses into town and to apply for funding for the improvement measure recommended.

Gisela reported that the Conway School is willing to reduce the price for the work to \$5,000 because they would like to support the town who has suffered so from the hurricane and because it is a local project. They also had just sent her a list of deliverables she will distribute. There was considerable enthusiasm for the idea. As to the funding, Berkshire East is willing to help with a fundraising campaign but does not want to put their wind turbine money towards this project but rather reserve it for paint. The idea of fundraising for the \$5,000 seemed to be a possible challenge. No decision was made but to bring this back up at a bigger meeting.

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, October 26 at the Country Aire Campground. It was decided not to rotate the meeting nights any more but to make meetings more predictable by putting them on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each month.

Respectfully submitted by Gisela Walker  
Chair, Planning Board