

4 TOWN REGIONAL ECONOMIC VITALITY PLAN

MEMBER TOWN TEAM COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES

May 26, 2021 – via Zoom

2:00pm – 3:00pm

Welcome! - Attendees were welcomed to the meeting between the 4 towns who have worked together to prepare the 4 Town Regional Economic Vitality Plan.

Reports from Committees:

Community Calendar has a meeting tomorrow to discuss which route to go. They have taken a step back to develop a policy of what type of events to include and get logistics in order.

Open Space Mapping met with CRCOG representatives who have been very helpful. Started with looking at Wandering Our Watershed and gathered resources. Looking at CT Trail Finder which becomes active on June 5. Maine has a trail finder application and website which is great and very useful. Looking to enhance the visual inventory – taking photos of trails or a unique amenity of a property to be revealing of the property. June 7 is the next meeting and CLEAR will be at the meeting to show some of their products. Things seem like they are making great headway.

Regional Destination Tours hasn't met since the last meeting but will meet after Memorial Day. Finishing the asset list and looking at how to connect things or advertise. Eric brought up looking at destination trails and discussing the overarching themes that link the four towns but also what might be themes outside our area which make it a bigger. The Windham Regional Tourism Group is meeting tomorrow so there should be more information from them.

Marketing – Eric introduced Wendy Bury who is the Executive Director at the Cultural Coalition which supports the DECD replacing Windham Arts at the former DHSO. Wendy is our liaison to the State for the Arts through DECD. She is helping groups understand how Arts supports what is going on in towns. The Marketing Committee met with Amy at Elements Graphic Design last month and discussed whether municipal or regional branding is worth it or should we look at another approach? Amy's experience with her work for New Haven would argue that it municipal branding should be encouraged. Amy gave a quote (\$8500 or approximately a little over \$2000/town) to look at what it might cost. Eric discussed that we tried branding before but it didn't work out as we thought it might. It would seem that not all consultants would be geared to municipal branding. Eric also attended an ICMA branding webinar which addressed the specifics of this type of branding. It was mentioned that cities in particular have had a lot of positive experience in place branding (what we are trying to do) but also public branding. One of the keys is to get as much input as possible in developing a brand. Cautioned on a regional situation when communities have their own brand and that messages don't conflict. Marketing Committee tried to focus on what's our ultimate goal and our mission? And may need to take some time to focus and identify and understand that – is it tourism, EDC, business support, or

all or more? The Marketing Committee will look to get things together in early June and report back to the whole committee.

4 Town 'campaign' creation with Nichols College – Tim Liptrap reported on the phenomenon that students are not signing up for internships or summer classes so there have been a lot of classes canceled and no students to do the work, so this will be paused.

Team Stakeholder and Committee list – Reminder of the ongoing inventory in real time so people can keep track online.

Review and consideration of next steps to be taken in May/June – Subcommittee level reports, Kate of Metro Hartford Alliance will be invited to attend our meeting, reporting on grants, check on budget funds in town budgets.

Other business – Cynthia and Ryan met with Kate of Metro Hartford Alliance (MHA). Ryan reported that she provided an overview and what it could do for Mansfield and Ryan thought the Chambers could be involved. There may be some help MHA could provide this group and we should have Kate meet with us and talk about ways they could engage with us on goals of mutual interest. Ryan asked about a group discount if maybe we wanted to join as a region. It was suggested that it might be worth asking Courtney Hendrickson about what she thinks about involving MHA – Cynthia will reach out to Courtney. Ryan has shared our report with Kate. It was consensus to see if Kate would attend our next meeting.

Wendy Bury mentioned she would see how they can work with our region and sees some overlap and things to share. The Cultural Coalition has made a request that one percent of the American Rescue funds go to arts and culture and they are spearheading this effort and feels there is a lot of opportunity especially for smaller towns.

Eastern Regional Tourism District offered a grant but the timing appears to be too short to apply.

Next meeting date, time, agenda items, host community – Coventry will host the next meeting on June 23, 2021 from 2:00-3:00pm

Adjournment