

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT and TOURISM COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2014**

PRESENT: Bill Ackerman
Bernie Krasnoff
Rob Megnin
Bill Mercier
Gerrie Russell

ALSO PRESENT: Seth Webb, Town Manager
Amy Morrison, Events Coordinator

PUBLIC PRESENT: Tracy Taylor, Chris Coughlin, Jeanne Karlhuber, Mike Solimano,
Howard Smith

AGENDA:

1. Call to order
2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from 8/1
3. Citizen Input
4. Chamber Report
5. Resort Report
6. Town Report
7. Options Tax Reform
8. Commissioner's Concerns
9. Date for Next Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 3:35 PM.

A motion to approve the minutes of 8/11/14 was made by Rob Megnin and seconded by Bernie Krasnoff.

CHAMBER UPDATE: (Bill Mercier)

The Welcome Center hours will be expanded the end of September. The new hours are 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM Monday through Friday and 9:00 Am through 1:00 PM on Saturdays. The new hours are based on traffic patterns recorded over the last year. The Chamber's annual meeting is scheduled for October 8th from 5:00 to 7:00 PM. The agenda will include the election of officers and Board of Directors, a review of Chamber operations and an update from the resort. The business meeting will be followed by a reception. We expect to have two new board members pending approval. Work has begun on the Vermont Holiday Festival which has been moved up from the middle of December to the weekend of December 5th and 6th. The one year mark has been reached at the Chamber/Welcome Center's new location. Community support is much appreciated and we are looking forward to our future in this location for many years to come. The Merchants Pass program has been expanded for the 2014-2015 season. Previously only businesses located in Killington, Mendon, Bridgewater, Plymouth and Pittsfield were eligible and they had to do 8 hours of volunteer work. Now there are two types of passes. The first is the traditional Killington Pass, formerly open to the hospitality/service industry, now open to any business in the designated towns for \$399. The second pass is a regional merchant pass program that now allows any chamber member, no matter their location, to purchase a merchant pass. Additionally, those not able to volunteer may purchase the pass for \$569.

RESORT UPDATE: (Mike Solimano) (Tracy Taylor) (Amy Morrison)

The Resort update was presented in three different reports. Mike Solimano started with the question of “Why reform the options tax?”. The resort is requesting the town consider this in order to move summer asset development more quickly. Winter capital needs are dramatic taking precedence over summer development. If passed, the added funds would allow them to execute their summer asset plan much quicker than without. A positive vote will also jump start the efforts of the town, the resort and the chamber to create KPAA. (Killington Pico Area Association) The plans are to move in a new direction with a diverse executive board. This entity would also move any future tourism financing and growth to a private sector non-profit. If reform is achieved tax payers will receive little or no increase in their property taxes. Business owners will see \$500-\$1000 per year savings from repeal of the tax and the resort will pay approximately \$14,000 more in property taxes.

Tracy Taylor reviewed the status of summer expansion. Mountain biking has successfully moved to Snowshed. Gravity Logic Consultants will begin next week on phase I of a 5 year strategic growth plan. ESL race events brought over 500 racers to Killington. Mountain biking business is up 64% while overall summer business is up 35%. Gondola rides should exceed highest level of ticket sales since 2008 while the new Peak Lodge has hosted over 15 events. Fishing, paddle boards and kayaks are being offered at Snowshed Pond. In partnership with KMS, summer action camps started in July. Challenges remain in developing ATV/UTV trails. The Soaring Eagle zip line was delayed by permitting requirements but will hopefully be installed in late fall or early spring. This portion of the resort update ended with the fact that Vermont receives more summer visitors than winter and we need to tap into that potential revenue.

Amy Morrison concluded the resort update by giving an overview of the KPAA concept. The Killington Chamber of Commerce, Killington Resort and Killington Town will work together to form an independent organization, the KPAA, to manage and grow the marketing and events the town has started. The KPAA will be governed by a membership based Board of Directors with a minimum of 15 members which will be directed by an Executive Board of five comprised of two from the resort, two from the business community and one member appointed by the Selectboard. The KPAA will provide marketing and visitor information, special events, networking and small business development, advocacy to local government and the merchant pass program. Revenues will come from membership, resort contributions and non-dues revenue. Non dues revenue will come from sponsorships, concessions, advertising and rental revenue from the Welcome Center building.

Open discussion followed including a question from Bernie Krasnoff regarding a timeline and whether or not the formation of KPAA could start before the option tax vote. Finding administrative resources is keeping progress slow. The groundwork is being done and a March 2015 goal is being discussed. Chamber President Howard Smith expressed his enthusiasm for KPAA and Jeanne Karlhuber asked how much in funds from the town could be directed to the new entity. The resort will consider front loading funds if necessary so that KPAA could start functioning.

A motion was made by Bernie recommending the Select Board support the repeal of the sales and use portion of the options tax. This was later amended to ask that the vote be held in March and the repeal of the tax become effective in July of 2015. The motion passed with all five members voting yes. It was suggested that a positive marketing plan be presented with more town meetings whether in large or small groups and that we present a united campaign. Fear of taxes rising will probably be the question most town residents will be concerned with.

Gerrie Russell mentioned the parking lots at the Pickle Barrel, Pepinos, Liquid Arts and On The Rocks

plus a new sign going up at the Lookout and mums in front of the Wobbley Barn are all contributing to a new look on Killington Road. The new paving and the completion of the Park and Ride will also add to the ambiance.

The next meeting is Monday, October 20, 2014 at 3:30 PM.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted
Gerrie Russell