

## **Minutes of Economic Development Committee Meeting Held on April 20, 2023**

### **Notes from the Chamber of Commerce Workshop @ 5:30PM**

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*Borough Representatives: Kate Thomas, Matt Henson, Bob Dalrymple, Brian Ashton, John DeRuyter, Anne Morrison,*

*Chamber Representatives: Brittani Robbins, Luana Wellons, Bill Burr, Amber Armstrong, Kristi Herman.*

- Chamber Executive Director Brittani Robbins and Board President Bill Burr provided a summary of the current fiscal situation and implications going forward, highlighting a loss in revenues due to low pull tab sales and a poor return on royalty race revenues in 2022. Regulations from the state on gaming, as well as the chamber tax designation create limitations beyond chamber control. Chamber President, Bill Burr stated that the chamber is at risk of being insolvent if they don't build new revenue sources. The subsidy from the city would allow them to continue moving forward with plans for the fourth of July. New revenue sources are being explored for events such as charging for parade entry, food booths and seeking sponsorships for events.
- Brian Ashton suggests priority events be listed in order. Believes quarterly meetings with EDC and Chamber would create synergies and provide benefits for community. John DeRuyter asks if the Chamber's request/EDC recommendation can be added to agenda for the next assembly meeting due to urgency. Kate mentions the possibility is very unlikely and will likely be scheduled for May 23rd. Both members stressed the value of the Chamber to the community, the importance of the Fourth of July to the economy and town tradition.
- Brittani Robbins mentions that it would be better if approval came quicker due to upcoming payroll additions and expenditures. Dalrymple states chamber needs to provide a list of what would be funded with city subsidy. Also suggests that the Borough may consider providing utilities in kind, subsidizing insurance costs. Mentions that Borough has to look at the subsidy through the lens of using public funds. Dalrymple also suggested seeking larger sponsorships from national corporations such as Budweiser, Stihl, Mercury, and Honda motors. Sighting that these entities are used to larger sponsorships and would be pulling money from outside instead of drawing more heavily on local resources.

### **Kate posed the following questions to the Chamber Board and Executive Director**

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- What is the proposed budget for this year's Fourth of July?
- What expenses are being cut this year to preserve financial reserves?
  - Chamber staff proposed a reduction in firework expenses and are also saving funds by reducing staff hours. Brittani implied that her hours were being drastically reduced. Luana is tackling much of the in-office work through the learning phase.
  - Kate inquired about the cost of merchandise and cash awards. Brittani stated that the cash award amounts we're reduced last year but remain the same for 2023. 1<sup>st</sup> Place - \$2,500, 2<sup>nd</sup> place- \$1,500, 3<sup>rd</sup> place \$1,000. When Kate asked about reducing the amounts, Board Member Amber Armstrong stated that the tickets were already

printed (\$4,000) and they were too expensive to change. Tickets must be printed by an official supplier to be legal as per state gaming laws. Regarding the merchandise, Chamber staff reported the popularity of the t-shirts locally and nationwide. Further stating that they opted not to move to on-demand/ on-line style of ordering due to the elderly's difficulty purchase things online.

- Aside from the main cash award staff have transitioned to ribbons and metals for small and youth events such as big wheel races and egg toss.
- Staff are looking to the future for more considerable changes like restructuring the royalty race.
- What efforts are being deployed to raise revenue to support the event?
  - Charging for food booths
  - Small parade entry fee
  - Sponsorship for events
- What is the projected cost for the fireworks, insurance and pavilion utilities?
  - Last year the fireworks cost \$11,000.
  - This year staff budgeted \$5,000 to save on expenses.
  - Brittani stated that the Fire Department volunteers are planning to conduct fundraising activities to offset the difference.
  - Insurance costs are not firm but could be upwards of \$4,000.
  - The chamber pays utilities from the month of June through the 4<sup>th</sup> at Wells Fargo and Elks since pavilion power is connected to both establishments.
  - Kate suggested that the Assembly is very unlikely to fund things such as t-shirts, cash prizes and employee wages. But rather may be more open to subsidizing things that are accessible and enjoyed by all such as fireworks, insurance and utility expenses.
- How is the Chamber engaging its members during this time to solicit input and feedback on services and solutions to the fiscal state of the organization?
  - Brittani stated that a survey went out to members in 2022. As far as the decline in membership renewals is concerned, the only explanation given is that members are not in a financial capacity to renew.
  - EDC members suggested surveying the community regarding fourth of July priorities to gauge what's most important to the community.
- Regarding the requested \$25,000, what will that be used for? The list below was provided by Chamber staff.
  - Fireworks & shipping
  - Coronation
  - Royalty wages
  - Street dance/solstice festival
  - Royalty booth costs
  - Raffle winners
  - 4<sup>th</sup> Shirts
  - PT office help
- And prepare to further explain why you might anticipate the \$75,000 retainer as a necessity for "emergencies". It will be helpful to know what constitutes an emergency.
  - This would account for expenses that can't be covered with revenues generated by the royalty race.

**1. CALL TO ORDER: @ 6:06 PM**

**2. ROLL CALL**

**PRESENT:** Bob Dalrymple, Brian Ashton, John DeRuyter, Anne Morrison

**ABSENT:** Caitlin Cardinell

**STAFF PRESENT:** Kate Thomas, Matt Henson

**3. CONFLICT OF INTEREST: - NONE**

**4. AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA**

**M/S DeRuyter/Morrison: Unanimously approved to move reports to after items of business.**

**5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Approval of the Economic Development Committee meeting minutes from March 21, 2023.

**M/S Morrison/DeRuyter. All in favor. Approved.**

**5. PERSONS TO BE HEARD / CORRESPONDENCE**

- Saint Frances Correspondence. Additional information on the Saint Frances Animal Shelter proposal can be found on pages 6-28 in the Planning and Zoning Meeting Packet from April 13th, 2023. See link: PZ Meeting 4-13-23 | Wrangell Alaska. Asking for letter of support from committee. Committee to approve letter of support. The committee will state approval in the Agenda Statement going before the Assembly with the Lease Agreement.
- JAMES EDENS: Presented complaints from previous years. Encouraged the body to discuss past issues with transparency. Suggestions: Publish meeting minutes, better engagement with community, provide a minimum required action for agenda items. Request that EDC recommendations to the assembly be read at the meeting as a minimum action. Suggested MindMap software to engage the public. Provided brief explanation of how the software works, highlighting the effectiveness of getting input outside of a formal meeting.
- RYAN NAYLOR: Discusses impacts of tourism in SE Alaska (Livelihoods of Tourism). Does Wrangell have an ability to determine its own future and how tourism plays a role? Looking into how cultural factors, environmental factors and cruise ships affect sustainability. Lived in Wrangell to conduct study. Has created advisory boards, conducted surveys in community. How can a community balance cultural benefits and tourism? How does community perception affect tourism. Ryan will join the committee at the May meeting for a workshop about his studies.

Anne Morrison left at 6:30 PM

**7. ITEM(S) OF BUSINESS**

a. Wrangell Chamber of Commerce Proposal requesting financial support to subsidize the Fourth of July celebration.

Continued discussion from workshop.

**M/S: DeRuyter/Ashton: to approve the following recommendation to the assembly: support the request for \$25,000 in financial support to subsidize the Fourth of July celebration.**

Brian Ashton: Asks if directors report to assembly can reflect the discussion that has been had in EDC. John emphasized the importance of detailing the subject matter of the workshop in the recommendation to the Assembly.

Brittani Robbins: asks what the tax increase on property tax brings in over the months of Apr-Jun. This would be good information to quantify to further support the value of the chamber and the fourth of July event.

**Motion passes with poll vote. Yes- Ashton, Dalrymple, DeRuyter. All in favor.**

**b. Review and discussion on the Six-Mile-Deep Water Port public engagement plan and survey**

- Kate provided a list of potential outputs for distribution as well as eight questions to consider. Asked for support to distribute findings of survey to community through individual channels. Asks what's viable and sustainable and what's palatable for the community. For example, is expansion of marine services viable with development plans in the works in other parts of the region.
- Dalrymple asks why and how the survey was created. Was there an order of importance or reasoning for order of questions. Kate stated the order helps paint a picture of a Wrangell resident and their demographic. Ashton concurs that order of questions gives good visual on each resident. Would like to see a question informing residents of the industry representation and value (anchor tenant for industry stability). Dalrymple states that a new word for "fabrication" should be used to broaden language.
- Kate stated that question 5 could be re-ordered to reflect the committee's preference of site use. Use of ranked choice voting idea. Dalrymple asked if EDC is getting ahead of itself with thought of what single industry could take shape. A multi-industry plan would be better for the local economy. DeRuyter stated that this would be solved through the ranked choice voting on the survey. Kate stated that it would be nice not to have an expansion of existing industry in Wrangell. Wrangell is looking for another economical leg for the area. Dalrymple stated that an upfront disclosure about hopeful use for the site would be good to deter focus on industry expansion. Kate and DeRuyter concur. Kate stated the survey is meant to expand on the previous town hall and gain more public input through other means.
- DeRuyter asked for a one-page prospective paper to create, to attract larger companies and new industries to the area. Committee concurs. Ashton mentions we should ask what is missing in our community right now. Bob believes that there is a lack of industry that brings year-round income into the community. Looking for a new industry that brings revenue and complements existing infrastructure. Respondents may fill out survey differently if they view it from this angle.
- Kate would like to deploy the survey in the next two weeks to begin compiling data. DeRuyter asks if there is a benefit in asking for contact information. Kate says that will be done. Ashton mentions his son could give a presentation on a project he has completed that parallels this survey. The committee is interested in hearing from Will. Will Ashton may be available to attend the May workshop if held on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May.

## 6. REPORTS

### a. Economic Development Director Report

- Economic Development director provides department report. Kate highlights the Parks and Recreation Community Collaborations event on May 11th and May 12th. Mentions ARPA conference scheduled for September and further inner-borough partnerships.

### b. Director and Coordinator Job Descriptions

### c. Borough Property List

### d. Parliamentary Procedures and Open Meetings Act resources

### e. Committee report provided by Dalrymple:

- SASS has provided \$27 million dollars for proposals. SASS FL is for Forest Management. States there are multiple levels of projects. SASS FL is mid-level plan. This plan is for the public to tell forest service what they would like to see in forests. Potential logging hosts. Suggests that recreation should be included in project funding. Public meeting for more information on Friday, May 5th at 5 PM. Asks that information about the meeting be provided to the committee. Dalrymple believes Borough needs to be engaged with events in some capacity.
- The Resource Advisory Committee has different funding available separate from existing fund. Looking for South Tongass Committee members. Mentions that there might be a backlog of federal funds available for use through the Forest service due to disbandment of former committee. Funds can be used on USFS land or to benefit the forests. Recreation and Restoration is the main purpose of funding. Citizen driven.
- Dalrymple asks if HUD map can be made available to community via Borough website or other avenue (i.e., print media, online outlets).

## 8. ADJOURN

Next meeting was proposed for May 18<sup>th</sup>. Brian Ashton stated that it was the night before graduation and requested the meeting be considered for May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Kate suggested establishing a routine meeting time of every 3rd Thursday. Board members agreed with a standard meeting time for ease of planning. The meeting date will be confirmed and published for committee members following a discussion with Ryan Naylor who is scheduled to be at the workshop in May.

Adjourned @ 7:57 PM

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Chair

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary