

NWCT EDC BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING – Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 26, 2022 – ZOOM – 28 in attendance

The meeting was called to order at 8:05 by Chair Donald Stein. Consultant, Betsy Paynter welcomed everyone and reviewed the Partnership Planning grant prospects. This is a 3-year grant with EDA that is expected to run from July 2022 through June 2025. It is necessary to hire a staff person/consultant to work on the support for the EDC initiatives. Don explained the role of the Council of Governments (COG) as this project includes the services and involvement of the regional governments.

Jocelyn Ayer explained that we need to update the CEDS initiatives which includes budget as well as staff. The task is to review the core initiatives and maintain the important strategies already in place with a 5 year plan. Grant funding can support that work and the new hire. As matching funds are required, the COG has been willing to confirm the shared status that will be the match. Henry Todd and Don agreed that the COG will be providing broad support and we are going in the right direction.

Evan Dobos provided a slide presentation with updates on the status of Discover Litchfield Hills. There has been significant growth in website usage with new followers and new submissions. The ecosystem of DLH shows growing links with community development in the region as well as organizations. Paid advertising performance is showing significant growth. The redesign update will be operative within weeks with updates, showcasing of new content, improved functionality and collaboration tools as well as structured data measurement. With new articles, monthly emails blasts and coordination with social media platforms, Evan sees solid and sustainable growth being attained.

Maddie Stenson, Program Director for the NWCT Arts Council explained accompanying slides showing significant growth with interactions on social media for the Arts Council and DLH. There are over 1500 followers on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. 2022 plans include increased posts shared with DLH such as events, stories, and marketing. One area expected to do well is tourism with a focus on wellness travel which features outdoor experiences such as hiking, yoga studios, spas and more. There is also a growing focus on shopping local.

Janet Carlson from the 1.11 Group reported that progress is being made on broadband goals. They are revamping the website and marketing efforts, have hired an outreach consultant, Arnon Fischer, and are meeting with local leadership on the strategic plan. Fischer is assisting with building community strategies.

Betsy and Jocelyn explained that the Food Hub has strategic planning underway with a 5 year plan in the works.

Betsy shared those small businesses are receiving attention and a plan is underway to identify the services which can be provided to local business.

Don reported that the COG is redefining their mission regionally. Betsy reported that currently we are spending down the current budget with strategies designed to help attain our goals. Worker videos are continuing to build an audience and the Entrepreneurial Center has planned 5 new seminars with another 8 scheduled for later in the year.

On a motion by Amy Wynn, seconded by Henry Todd, the board unanimously approved the 2022 Board of Directors membership. The list includes renewal of terms for many in addition to new members.

The next meeting of the full board of directors is scheduled for Wednesday, March 23 at 8 a.m. An executive board meeting will be held in February at a date to be announced.

On a motion by Amy Wynn, second by Henry Todd, the meeting was adjourned at 9:05.

Respectfully submitted, Sharon Waagner, Secy