

Mad River Valley Chamber of Commerce  
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes  
January 18,2023

In attendance: In Person - Steve White, Mary Tuthill, Sean Kramer, Roger Nishi, Brian Kitchens (prospective member)

Zoom Attendance: Mimi Buttenheim, Kim Donahue

Chamber Staff: Eric Friedman

Regrets: TJ Greenwood, Suzie Edwards, Ana Nasset, Mat Lilliard

Meeting at Visitor Center, Smokehouse building, junction of 100 and 17.

Meeting started at 3:09pm, by Eric F.

Meeting is started with attendance and Eric introducing Brian Kitchens as a possible new board member representing the real estate sector.

Opening remarks from president Sean Kramer - Sean would like the Chamber to focus on filling the void of stick & mud season. Bringing different recreation groups to fill the gaps - best example bird watching clubs. Eric suggested revisiting the strategic plan in the spring to assist with that line of thought.

November meeting minutes are approved

## **Board Reports**

### **Executive Director Management Report - Eric provided an update on the following:**

- Eric gave in depth information around the transformation of the Visitor's Center. Talked board members through the furniture that was going away, furniture coming in. New monitors being added, touchscreen itinerary building station coming in. Exterior and interior Wi-Fi will be available for visitors. Hoping to have the new furniture and technology added and completed by Memorial Day weekend. Exterior of building to be painted and parking to be outlined. Parking lot below to also be finished with a gazebo added.
  - Other additions to the building - restaurant going in next door
  - Mimi B asked about bathrooms - will be shared between Visitor's Center and restaurant
  - Sean K asked about the 4 tenants - they will be staying
  - Roger N asked about any ADA renovations that need to be done. No one has approached Eric - ultimately it would be the building owner to handle

- Roger N asked about Visitor Center volunteers. Volunteers are being kept in the loop on improvements and schedule. Eric covering the center at the moment with communication out to volunteers to start up again in summer
- VOREC Grant - moving forward. The grant pays for the new building signage. Bridge will be installed spring of 2023. New buffer being planted in spring of 2024. Portalets will also be available outside. Site will eventually become a Steward MRV site.
- MRV Chamber event calendar has been connected with the Valley Reporter event calendar. This is now the most robust calendar system in the Chamber's history. Sugarbush, MRG & Lawson's will all have their event calendars automatically syncing with the new Chamber/VR calendar. This is also the calendar that will be printed weekly in the Valley Reporter. \$5,000 grant from Open Hearths to fund the project.
- Best of RT 100 still being successful. Videos from the Bipoc session are coming out soon. Versions for social use as well as video and screen grab assets will be available for businesses to use. Also in the process of applying for \$30,000 grant to film videos focusing on accessibility in the MRV. Partnering on Vermont Adaptive for that
- Planning District meeting on 1/12 was very well attended. Eric to send out a newsletter to recap meeting. Chamber is putting effort into the housing concern with the Planning District.

**Membership Report:** Recap of members lost due to closing their businesses - Alpino Vino. Valley Meade was added at the Black Diamon level - Green Circle membership given to the Valley Meade's owner's property management company. Eric spoke about bundling memberships within applicable multi-faceted businesses.

- Eric spoke about the updated membership benefits package sent out in the board meeting email. The current membership benefits are outdated and the packages needed to be reworked. Looking to make the membership attractive to new members and getting them to sign up at higher levels. Also looking to get current members to increase their membership level because of the benefits. There was general discussion around the new benefits and tiers. No vote needed to put into action. Eric would like all thoughts and comments to continue to improve the packages.

- Brian K asked about a list of non-members that current chamber members can chat with to encourage membership. Eric explained the CRM software and about the work the chamber does to mention non members in promotions etc as a way to show value to being part of the chamber. General discussion around social media and highlighting members and non-members.
- Steve W suggested using the next few meetings to address membership specifically and how to increase. He also asked about individual memberships. Eric is going to discuss with Ana Nassett.
- Roger N asked about a board member that represents the second homer owner group and an opportunity to have a second home owner membership level.

**Open Board Seats:** 11 out of 12 seats filled. Ana Nassett suggested Brian Kitchens for the realtor sector. An email will be sent out to vote for Brian. Eric wants to give everyone a chance to nominate if they feel they have a candidate.

**Financial Reports:** \$5,000 loss at the moment - mostly a cash flow situation. Most money comes in September. \$4,000 of the loss is from StewardMRV. Money transferred back to Chamber from StewardMRV (note from Mimi B.). Mimi B. notes that StewardMRV needs to be a separate company. Eric confirmed that StewardMRV, the Star Initiative and the Memory Tree are all going to have separate accounts going forward.

Date of next meeting: March 15, 2023 at 3pm

Meeting adjourned at 4:54 pm  
Minutes taken by Mary Tuthill