

Machias Revitalization Committee  
January 17, 2020 @ 8:00 am  
At Sunrise County Economic Council Building

**Present:** Anne Ball via Zoom, Bill Burke, Melissa Denbow, Jarod Gillette, Jim Jackson, Bill MacDonald, Gail Peters, Jennifer Peters and Christina Therrien

Angela Fochesato was absent. Bill Burke conducted the meeting.

**Public Comment:** There were no public comments

**Minutes:** Motion- to accept the December minutes as presented. Second. Discussion: Three corrections to the December meeting minutes were noted. Christina Therrien did not attend that meeting. In the list of attendees Spencer was misspelled. We discussed the Downtown Plan not to be confused with the Comprehensive Plan. Motion made to accept the minutes as amended. Second. All approved.

**Announcement by Anne Ball:** The Maine Development Foundation has several upcoming Webinars. These may be of interest to either the MRC or the general public. There is no charge for the committee members to attend these video conferences. They are 45 minutes in length. They are as follows: Jan. 28<sup>th</sup> fundraising, January 31<sup>st</sup> facilitator training, Feb. 11 Pocket Gardens, (brief explanation of pocket gardens) and Feb. 14 Best Practices for committees. More information and registration form are available on the MDF website.

**Age Friendly Application:** As per the discussion at the last meeting, some additional population numbers are needed before it could be submitted. Christina will coordinate with Angela to be sure all necessary figures are included. Christina has received a copy of the signed letter from the highest elected official of Machias. Anne Ball reminded us the applications are submitted on a rolling basis.

Some additional information that could be added to the application includes the Thriving in Place program which is run by the Caring Community Collaborative. One particular program is the training available for grandparents raising their grandchildren. Anne will supply the language needed to explain these programs in our application.

**ADA Audit:** Christina asked to discuss the ADA Audit that was mentioned at the December meeting. She cited several studies that have already been done to assess the walkability and bike-ability of Machias. In particular in 2009 a Bicycle and Pedestrian assessment was done. She also mentioned the assessment done in 2016 which could have additional information. WCCOG also has assessments done in 2018 to 2019 by the Maine Department of Transportation. Christina noted that since 80% of the roads in Machias belong to the state, these two reports could help in noting any changes. Jim Jackson referenced a DART meeting he attended last year which had this very topic of discussion. The meeting also provided sources of revenue for local biking projects.

Anne explained that the ADA Audit previously discussed is an experiential event where a group of people assume handicapping conditions and walk the sidewalks and streets. Jennifer Peters commented on the [WalkScore.com](http://WalkScore.com) website which rates towns for this purpose. Machias' score has increased over time. However, it was noted the website is not very up to date.

*Bike Maine/ Bike Coalition of ME* offers audits and has grants which might be applicable to downtown.

Anne will co-ordinate this information to be included in our Age Friendly application. She requested we will review the application prior to submission. *Bicycle Repair* efforts are underway in the area. There is currently a Bike Bus which travels to different locations to offer bicycle repair services. Crystal Hitchings has a temporary assistant Dylan McBride who has been working with Machias High School with a focus on bike repair.

It was mentioned that biking in the US is a major *tourist industry* far exceeding our expectations. The Allegheny Trail in PA is a good example of the boost in small town economies along a bike trail. All the infrastructure associated with bike-ability and walkability add to the Thriving in Place goals promoted in the area.

**Downtown Plan:** Christina reviewed the downtown plan previous developed by Coplan Associates. She noted the several areas recommended for improvement and the accomplishments to date.

They include:

1. The Bad Little Falls additions of electricity, etc.,
2. Norman Nelson Park addition of trees, removal of old building, and abutting property green space
3. Audible Historic Walking Tour should be completed
4. Flood Protection and Riverwalk in progress,
5. Olli Park established, trees added,
6. Ford Garage a former Brown field site now being commercially developed
7. Canopy Grant completed with 70 trees planted in the area, improvements begun but not completed.

Christina will send out an electronic copy of this plan. More target areas for walking were noted including the corner of Broadway and Court Street, Steel Hill, etc.

It was also noted that the town has combined the flood plain issue with the need for a river walk. The funds have been received from FEMA to complete phase two of the project. Phase three will be the actual building of the berms and walkways.

*Meeting joined in progress by Bill MacDonald the new executive director of WCCOG.* Jarod Gillette will be attending the MRC meetings. He had a presentation regarding the WCCOG working with us. It will be first on the agenda at the next meeting. Jarod has been asked to take minutes at future meetings. He agreed.

**Financing:** Christina commented on the scarcity of money over the last few years. To move the projects forward it was decided that individual areas will be tackled and done to completion. These areas are ones which already show progress.

**Role of MRC:** Jarod questioned the ordinances and zoning guidelines that currently exist in Machias. Christina noted that downtown plans and the MRC can offer suggestions and guidelines to be considered. It has been difficult to enact zoning pertaining to mowing lawns or building maintenance. General standards for building permits do exist in the town. These can be reviewed.

Christina further noted that buildings in the flood plain area should be 4 feet higher to avoid flooding. The town has applied for a Ship Grant to make improvements to the boat landing. This grant is pending.