

## **PROMOTING THE LOCAL ECONOMY IN LUNENBURG – October 2, 2017**

Coordinated by the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission through a District Local Technical Assistance Grant from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The Town of Lunenburg is interested in forming a partnership with its local businesses to enhance economic development. A flyer was sent to all of the businesses in Lunenburg advertising this event. This meeting was held at 9:30 a.m. on Monday, October 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Lunenburg Town Hall, 17 Main Street, Lunenburg, MA to hear from Lunenburg business owners and/or representatives of businesses that focused on Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges that Lunenburg's businesses face. The meeting also focused on how the town can work with its local businesses to identify municipal gaps in service.

Present to facilitate the meeting were Heather Lemieux, Town Manager; Adam Burney, Land Use Director; John Hume, Director of Planning & Development at MRPC; and Karen Chapman, Principal Planner at MRPC. In addition, two representatives from the North Central Chamber of Commerce were present: Roy Nascimento and Chris McDermott. Several business owners (see attached list) were present and the following strengths, weaknesses and opportunities were discussed:

### **STRENGTHS**

1. Residents stay in town to shop versus going elsewhere
2. It's a bedroom community.
3. Lunenburg is centrally located.
4. Many farms that have well attended events brings people in to town.
5. Businesses bring in people from other towns.
6. Activities sponsored by the town seem to be well received (i.e. Police Association Cruise Night)
7. Farmer's Market seems to be well attended.
8. Farming community with a large number of working farms.

### **WEAKNESSES**

1. Town rejects certain kinds of businesses.
2. Not enough good help, hard to find help.
3. Limited infrastructure – not widespread town water or wastewater treatment.
4. Town does not promote its businesses in any way. (i.e. Buy local or a central directory of all town businesses)
5. There is no easy way for businesses to know where there is office or other office space available to rent.
6. There is no signage in the Downtown Village area so passersby don't know what is there.
7. There is not enough centralized parking in the Downtown Village area, so people just keep going.
8. Not enough parking downtown. People use the spaces in front of Village area to attend meetings at Town Hall and not to patronize the businesses there.
9. The Town has no clear vision or growth plan for businesses. Fear of oversaturation.

10. Cost of running a business is high with cost of minimum wage potentially increasing and engineering costs and permitting fees if expansion is an option.
11. There's no big draw to get people to stop in Downtown.
12. The Rules of Lunenburg are restrictive to businesses.
13. We have a relatively small population so need to attract outsiders to our town.

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

1. Create a separate webpage for a business directory with links to businesses.
2. Use banners in the center of town to notify people of community events.
3. Town, using Assessors information on businesses in town, could have a page with business listings broken up into categories.
4. Should have a priority list of businesses available or needed to make sure the market is not saturated.
5. Town should promote incubator spaces.
6. Create a Community Kitchen.
7. There should be an opportunity for two small businesses to share a larger space.
8. Businesses should work together to promote each other and shopping locally.
9. Signage and parking could be improved in Downtown Village area. Install a parking sign on Mass Ave. to advertise municipal parking space on School Street. Crosswalk could be issue due to site line distance on Mass Ave.
10. Consider an annual fair or festival or some sort of event that would draw more and more people every year.
11. Send a survey to residents to see what businesses they want.
12. Form a Lunenburg Business Association.
13. Like businesses could form connections.
14. Create some sort of newsletter or announcement of events and what's going on in Town.
15. Use blast emails to notify town residents (E-notifications).
16. Partner with a sporting or school event like Homecoming to make an event that promotes local businesses and make it a whole weekend event.
17. Work with the Town and School to create a Jobs page to help local businesses recruit employees.
18. Join the North Central Chamber of Commerce who provides support, networking, a "shop local" campaign, loan programs and tourism promotion.
19. Instead of selling town land, the Town could create business space that could be rented or leased for business development.
20. Bus people in for farm tours.
21. Market what makes Lunenburg unique such as natural resources and farms.
22. Hold a town wide yard sale
23. Revisit having a carnival and/or bonfire to bring people together.
24. Create a map of businesses and/or install wayfinding signs in locations that are off the beaten path and visitors may not know they are there. Sign posts that identify food/gas.

25. Have once a week concerts at the gazebo or talent shows or festival with local bands (similar to what Littleton does)
26. Create an Economic Development Committee.
27. Find out what's successful in other towns in the region. Form a group that researches ways other communities promote economic development.
28. Farmers Market helps local businesses.
29. Businesses present agreed that eco-tourism and our farms help promote their business.
30. Focus more on tourism.

The next meeting to further the discussion with local businesses will be **November 13, 2017 at 9:30am** in Town Hall.