

**Charlemont Economic Development Roundtable
Charlemont Planning Board
Meeting July 6, 2011, 7 pm Zoar Outdoors**

The meeting had been properly posted in town hall and on the public bulletin board in front of town hall for several weeks as well as on the town website.

Planning Board members present: Gisela Walker, Chair, Trevor Mackie, Clerk,
Jerry Pratt

Others: 12 additional members of the public per attached sign up sheet

G. Walker opened the meeting under heavy thunder and lightning at 7.10 pm and, after introductions, read the minutes from the last meeting on June 14.

First agenda item was a discussion about the technical workings of the calendar and the group email. Clarifications were required and readily provided by Cheryl Handsacker so that now everyone who wants to have access to editing the calendar knows how to or where to go.

- The group decided that there needs to be some control over who posts events by requiring members of the public who are interested in posting to come to Roundtable meetings and get access from Cheryl.

Then followed a discussion about the content and use of the calendar. Walker offered a differentiation between 1) local town use that furthers communication among residents, businesses and town events and 2) more outside, tourist attraction-focused uses.

Re 1) There is at present no such communication in town other than through the newspapers and they rarely have much to say about Charlemont. Such 'town calendar' could have not only a community building impact but also promote local businesses to town residents and each other. It can be available on the web as well as printed out by local businesses and handed out to their customers. People also agreed that the 'town calendar' may well make tourists who come to one of the 'Big Events' aware that there are other things going on in town they find interesting.

Re 2) The 'Big Events' category such as events organized by Berkshire East, Zoar, Crabapple, Warfield House. the Reggae Fest or the Charlemont Forum - those all have their own promotions set up and while they need to network, coordinate... also by use of this Roundtable, they do not need this group to create promotion for them.

Discussion then moved to the question of how to support local businesses so they either do not have to go under or support them in searching for an appropriate vendor and use of their property. How can we target and try to attract certain types of business that would complement what is here? Can we sponsor help from the Franklin Cty. CDC?

- GWalker offered to call them.

One way to support each other is to move these meetings around to different business locations, so the next meeting will be held at the Carcio's Great Outdoors store. Another suggestion was to feature one business of the month regularly.

The Planning Board was encouraged to make special permit applicants aware of the existence of the Roundtable and encourage them to get in touch.

- Ch.Loftis informed the group that he is working on a comprehensive business listing for Charlemont which he will be happy to share at the next meeting.

The discussion about how to jointly promote Charlemont events and businesses led to the idea of the group pitching to acquire rack boxes that have some sort of Charlemont logo on them and to fill them with rack cards from existing businesses and offer them to businesses for display.

- Bruce Lessels agreed to go after the boxes and Hellen Carcio agreed to approach businesses for rack cards to put into the boxes.

The final agenda item was the COG update of the Economic Development chapter. COG staff had asked for feedback by the end of June and none had been offered so far. However, a few people had actually read the file on the website and Rachel Porter offered comments. The gist of them was that the group wanted a more positive, less modest approach to economic development visions. Charlemont has grounds to see itself as “THE OUTDOOR RECREATION CAPITAL OF FRANKLIN COUNTY” .

The next meeting will be on August 8, 2011 at The Great Outdoors. Everyone spread the word!

Respectfully submitted by Gisela Walker

