



## **Board of Directors Meeting Minutes – 6/17/22**

**Location:** Zoom Meeting Online

**Directors Attending in Person:** None

**Directors Attending Remotely:** Tina Norton, Steve Clokey, Jeremy Elliot, Mark Vandenberg, John Mills, Erik Remmers, Stephanie Krukar, Dody Day, Conrad Harris

**Directors Excused:** Greg Tatro

**Also Attending:** LEDC Executive Director Pat Ripley, LCPC Executive Director Tasha Wallis

ED Pat Ripley called the meeting to order at 8:02 a.m. Friday June 17, 2022.

To start the meeting ED Pat Ripley introduced LEDC's recently appointed board members Dody Day and Conrad Harris. This marks their first official meeting with the group. Dody and Conrad introduced themselves and offered some information regarding their professional backgrounds. The board welcomed them to the group and thanked them for their willingness to join the team.

The board reviewed minutes from LEDC's May 20th and June 2<sup>nd</sup> meetings. There were no changes to the meeting minutes requested. Treasurer Tina Norton motioned to approve the May 20<sup>th</sup> and June 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting minutes. Steve Clokey seconded that motion. The motion was passed unanimously.

The board reviewed financial statements for the year to date and discussed our recent investment reports. There was some discussion regarding how often the board would like to receive reports from our Union Bank investment advisor Lura Jacques. It was agreed biannual reports at the meetings would suffice. Currently, LEDC's investments are not performing well but the board understands this is a long-term investment and plans to wait out the current economic downturn without making changes to the investment. ED Pat Ripley also pointed out that LEDC is currently running well under budget for FY 2022 and projects surplus funding to carry over into the FY23 budget. There was a question regarding the financial report's handling of our current investment losses, but it was resolved after some clarification regarding LEDC and our non-profit status that allows us to not pay taxes. Mark Vandenberg made a motion to approve the financial reports and John Mills seconded that motion. The motion passed unanimously.

ED Pat Ripley provided the board with an update on LEDC's FY23 membership drive, which began in February and is wrapping up in June. The membership drive has gone well with significant revenue growth. Membership has also doubled over the previous year's membership. When the membership drive is complete at the end of June a full report will be provided to the board. ED Pat Ripley reported that one of the main causes of our surplus in funding is due to increased membership revenues and additional revenues associated with that increased membership. Much of this increase can be attributed to LEDC's recent oversight of the Lamoille Chamber of Commerce.

ED Pat Ripley also updated the board on NVU Interim President John Mills' upcoming departure from the LEDC Board of Directors. John's interim position at NVU-Johnson is coming to an end as part of the state college consolidation and he will no longer be able to represent NVU-Johnson on the board. As the transition takes place, John has indicated he has identified a representative from



NVU that can take his place on the LEDC Board of Directors. John agreed to make that connection upon his departure and explained that this meeting will be his last.

ED Pat Ripley also outlined some of the recent challenges coming up regarding the economy, which appears to be on the brink of a possible recession. This, coupled with soaring fuel costs and record inflation rates, have many businesses on edge. Board members discussed this topic in depth and presented their thoughts on how LEDC may be able to assist businesses during this difficult time. Steve Clokey indicated the data he is seeing shows that reservations from travelers are expected to slow and that it does feel like tough times may be coming our way. Considering the recent hike in interest rates from the Fed, it was discussed how there may be more demand for LEDC's loan program. ED Pat Ripley mentioned that he is currently reviewing the LEDC Revolving Loan policy for possible changes to it (this was mentioned at a previous meeting and is still in the works). ED Pat Ripley plans to draft some changes to the policy and present them to Treasurer Tina Norton as time allows. These proposed changes, once drafted, will be presented to the board for discussion and consideration. Tina also indicated that banks are now looking at stiffening up their loan qualifications. It was discussed that it may make sense for LEDC to consider that as well, but to keep in mind that LEDC's loans are often used as bridge funding and are meant to fund businesses that may otherwise not be likely to get a loan. ED Pat Ripley also mentioned that LEDC could apply for additional loan funding for businesses through a grant, but he also indicated that we are far from oversubscribed for our current loan program and that this has been the case historically for the LEDC Revolving Loan program.

Stephanie Krukar explained to the board that Turtle Fur is currently offering a reimbursement program for employees for their commute to work to help with the rapid rise in fuel costs. This effort will begin in the first payroll of June/July. Jeremy Elliott also said he has been offering gas cads to employees at Smugglers Notch distillery to help with the matter. ED Pat Ripley expressed interest in pursuing a fuel cost saving program for LEDC members and the board agreed it would be a good thing to look into. Conrad Harris indicated that Bourne's Energy has been willing to work with MSI on fuel cost sharing and would likely be a good place to start.

Dody Day indicated that she is seeing data that the real estate market is slowing down nationally and that the recent hike in interest rates is not likely to help. That being said, she indicated that she has not seen that effect the Vermont market thus far. Dody also reported on the housing summit she recently attended, which was conducted by the Lamoille Housing Partnership at Jenna's Promise. ED Pat Ripley also served as a panelist at this event. Dody pointed to several takeaways that came from the day including increased public relations for the housing issue, a local landlord liaison, increased funding for water and sewer infrastructure, help with Act 250 and more. ED Pat Ripley indicated that his comments on the panel focused on a combination of increased housing funding and decreased regulatory hurdles for development.

ED Pat Ripley also discussed the idea of looking into the viability of assisting businesses through efforts focused on electric vehicle charging stations. Pat indicated that there is funding available for this sort of thing and that his initial research of the topic shows it as a sound investment that could help bolster the local economy to electric vehicle travelers. John Mills indicated that NVU has already investigated this and is installing charging stations on their campuses. He said the business model is sound and they are clear revenue drivers. There was a question about the cost of the stations and Conrad Harris indicated they run about \$1,500 to \$2,000 per charging station, but that



# LEDC

Lamoille Economic Development Corporation

*Your Partner in Growing the Future.*

the ones installed at MSI do not charge users for the battery time. It was also asked what type of program LEDC could provide for this sort of thing. ED Pat Ripley indicated that it could go a lot of different ways, including purchasing property for a vehicle charging station or for simply subsidizing their installation on existing business property. The group agreed that there is interest in this topic and that they would like to learn more.

LCPC Director Tasha Wallis provided an update to the board and indicated they too are following a lot of the trends the board had already discussed at the meeting prior to her update. She indicated she would be in touch with ED Pat Ripley regarding several of these topics and potential collaborative efforts. Tasha also highlighted several other areas her team is working on including wastewater funding for better housing development and other infrastructure investments, assisting towns with ARPA funding spend down and expanding neighborhood designations for communities. She also pointed to brownfield assessment funding LCPC is managing, as well as plans for the soon-to-be completed Lamoille Valley Rail Trail.

ED Pat Ripley then presented the board with its FY23 draft operating budget for approval. He did note that the surplus line item will be adjusted at the end of the fiscal year to reflect actual surplus funding that will be carried over from FY22. Treasurer Tina Norton motioned to approve the draft budget as presented and Mark Vandenberg seconded that motion. The motion passed unanimously.

There was also brief mention of the one remaining open slot on the LEDC board. Board members were encouraged to bring board nominations to our monthly meetings for consideration.

There were no questions or discussion regarding ED Pat Ripley or Elisa Clancy's report.

As part of the board members' announcement section of the meeting, Conrad Harris mentioned a soon-to-be owned MSI property known as the "Stewart Property" located behind the Dunkin Donuts in Morrisville that is expected to be for sale soon. It is zoned commercial/industrial, he said. ED Pat Ripley agreed to get Conrad in touch with Lamoille Housing Partnership Director Jim Lovinsky regarding this topic since it could be an ideal location for worker housing.

The meeting adjourned at 9:08 a.m.