

Notes from Economic Council Project Planning Committee

June 11, 2019

First Settler's Lodge

Discussion ensued regarding hiring a project manager. Sarah Strickland is interested in the position and we are interested in hiring her. We will put together a job description and meet with her on June 18, 2019, at the Weston Town Office. Also discussed informing Jay Kamm of NMRDC of our planning efforts and an update from meeting with Diano Circo of MDIF&W about public access to public waters within the region. (\$\$\$\$ are available for public boat & canoe-kayak access)

A SWOT analysis was started with the following results: (**DRAFT FOR REVIEW, COMMENT, and ADDITIONS & CORRECTIONS.**)

Strengths of Our Area:

Natural Resources:

A region of nearly 300,000 Acres

Sparsely populated (Approx. 150 acres of surface area per person- 2010 census)

Peace; tranquility

3 Counties:

Aroostook, Penobscot, Washington

2 Countries:

United States, Canada

Forests; Timberlands; Farmlands

97% Forested

3000 +/- acres open fields (1%)

2/3 of forests are private family entity owned

0 acres of forests are industrially owned

Much private land is open to permissive public access

Approximately 3% of lands are publically owned

16% of land area is under conservation easement

Lakes: 15 Lakes & Ponds - 30,000 acres

East Grand Lake (17,000 acres) is 5th largest in State and a branding of our area.

We have many lake neighborhoods with nearly 1200 cottages & homes

Clean drinking water

Unique Geological & Ecological Landscape

Abundant wildlife; fishing

Human Resources:

Ageing population - time and finances often available

Many professionals

In-migration of retirees – some becoming year-round residents critical to communities

(Primarily a lake related conversion of seasonal to year-round dwellings)

Cultural & Heritage:

Logging, Woods & Outdoor heritage

Formerly heavily wood using mills, woods workers & family farms

Diverse ethnic crossroads

Railroad was key part of area development

Rivers once were main arteries for early settlers & Native Americans

School:

Small family atmosphere

Project- based learning

Many students attend college or tech schools after graduation

Garden Center

Instilling a sense of appreciation to place (Helps to ensure long term interest in the region)

Businesses:

Clinic; Emergency Services

Bank

Town Offices

Day Care

Lodging

Restaurants

Residential Center

Railroad

Farms

Cottage Industries

Miscellaneous:

Danforth Town Hall

Snowmobile Trails

ATV Trails

Hiking Trails
Snowshoe/Cross Country Ski Trail
Fire Tower
Sewage Plant
Transfer Stations
Boat Landings
Cemeteries
Grange Hall
Wi-Fi
Churches
U S Route 1
Scenic Byway
TCF Project Plan for Weston

Clubs and Organizations:

American Legion
Masons
Dorcas Sewing Sisters
Crafts Groups
AARP Group
School Sports
School Clubs
CORE
Woodie Wheaton Land Trust
Churches

Weaknesses of the Area:

Drugs

Lack of Skilled Workers

Blight

Communication – a work in progress

Socially Dependent

Ageing Population

Lack of Farming (much due to terrain, small size and run out fields)

Lack of Manufacturing

Location (geographically isolated)

Lack of housing and lodging

Lack of non-consumptive recreational choices (nature and eco based experiences)

ATV/Snowmobile trails in generally poor condition and uncoordinated

Lack of strategic planning for trails of all types

No retail stores

Infrastructure Lacking

Limited Law Enforcement

Truck Traffic

Lack of recognizable 501-C3

No Swimming/Picnic Areas

No Local Mills

No Garage

Lack of Public Access to certain areas

Lack of equipment rental for activities

Declining Cold Water Fisheries

High Taxes to meet bare minimums

Opportunities in Our Area:

Workshops

Greenhouse Gardens

Local Signage for rivers, brooks, streams, areas

RV Camping

Small general stores in outlying communities—gas, essentials

Place Based Learning

Strategic Plan for Motorized Trails

Ecotourism – development of marketable nature based experiences

Utilize Town Hall for plays, art, chorus, etc.

Winter Activities such as: ice sculpting; igloo building, skating

Networking/Collaboration

Wood using cottage industries

Heritage Centers in each community

Local Ag – Community Supported Agriculture

Farmers' Markets

Garage & vehicle maintenance shop

Threats to Our Area:

Status of Forest City Dam

Workforce at Residential Center & in general

Committee needs to demonstrate positive successes to the public as we move along

3 County Lines

2 Countries

Losing Local Identity

Loss of Statutory Landowner Liability Law (public use of private lands)

Loss of basic quality of life issues

School

Clinic

Bank

Change in State Administration

Unfunded mandates – for school and town governments

Continued unimpeded rural decline

Negative affirmation from surrounding areas & population centers

Lack of a collective regional approach to economic well being

Potential of extreme home rule (independent nature of small rural towns) – lack of cooperation for the greater good