

# MEMO

Date: July 13, 2019  
To: Regional Planning File  
By: Elbridge  
Re: Meeting in Reed Plantation

Present: Diane Hines, town manager, Michelle Austin, clerk, Assessors: MaryAnn Hanscom, Ellen Hanington, Mitch Lansky. Fred Moody, fire chief, Sue Szwed, citizen

I was placed on the agenda of a selectpersons meeting at the Reed town office in Wytopitlock on July 11<sup>th</sup> at the invitation of Mitch Lansky. The purpose of the meeting was to make a brief presentation about our fledgling economic planning effort for the region. My presentation was extemporaneous with the only prop a draft map depiction of the Greater East Grand Region. The talk included an overview, a brief mention of funding for a project director and a time line of approximately 6 months. Most people in attendance had some knowledge of me, especially thru Judy as former educator at East Grand, so the conversation was relaxed, with give and take.

## Observations:

- The town office is located in the building that housed the former Wytopitlock grammar school. It lies adjacent to the gymnasium, converted at one time as a community center. The school closed in 2008 having gone from dozens of children to nine over a period of forty-one (41) years. The building was built in 1967, is well maintained and is used as the site for the local food pantry. I was struck by the excess capacity of the building and couldn't help but wonder about some town-owned/sponsored cottage industry taking advantage of the thousands of acres of Apple-Conservation Fund conserved Reed Forest.
- While there seemed to be some hesitation about the concept of a regional economic plan there was unquestionable consensus about the declining local economy, continued downward spiral of the population and the discouraging effect it has on local minds.
- Discussion ensued as to what such a planning effort might produce. Mention was made about there being no silver bullet, most, if not all possibilities are small and successes would take as a minimum dedication.
- Conversation quickly turned to suggestions such as trails – winter and summer, local places of interest (a waterfalls - needing trail access), roads with little or no traffic, the scenic river road, biking trails along the Mattawamkeag, and the view from atop Sherwood Mountain. The lack of high speed internet is a major concern.
- At the same time there was a good dose reality...no lakes, lots of woods and mosquitoes, not many people, and to some extent a sense of isolationism.
- Nonetheless, I heard a real desire to explore the proposal if it might bring some positive economic news to the town including the concept of identifying local assets as part of an asset based regional approach to economic development.
- We need to follow-up ASAP with the implementation of a local committee structure for the Reed Plantation portion of the asset mapping process. In hind-sight I may have failed to mention the importance of local involvement. It's certain there will be opportunity for further discussions as we proceed with community asset identification, gap analysis and potential projects to address those gaps.