



## Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

April 22, 2019

Present: Scott Hearburg, Peter Reale, Lance Clark, Pam, Nolan, and Nancy Archer

Absent: Bob Porter, Chris Mallon, Pat Ida, and Sandy Morhouse

Staff: Donna Wotton

**I. Financial Report.** Pat Ida was not available to attend the meeting, however his report and current financial documents are attached. Also, please note Pat's information below regarding changing the status of the Executive Director from contractor to employee.

### II. Board Business

A. Executive Director Status: Until the board makes a decision regarding changing the position of Executive Director from contract to employee, we have renewed and updated Donna's contract to extend to June 30, 2019.

B. Website Update: Donna has been working with Chris Quinn on a new website for Ti-Alliance. Chris lives a "long season" in Hague and retired a few years ago when she sold her web design firm in Maryland. She will be paid a small fee (\$1,000-\$1,500) for the complete redesign. Chris and Donna researched some of the most highly rated non-profit websites for design ideas, the easiest site navigation schemes, techniques for best user engagement, and effective headlines and visuals. The form and format of the site was shared with the board members present at the meeting. Donna and Chris will finish "populating" the site with information and visuals, then send a link to the site to all board members for feedback and proofreading. The goal is to go live by the middle of May if possible so that we announce it to the public a few weeks ahead of our mid-year newsletter (in June) and sustaining member drive this summer.

**ACTION:** All Board Members should look for an email from Donna in about two weeks that will direct them to the website for review. Please review the text carefully for accuracy, voice, message, and testing of links.

**ACTION:** Scott and Peter will contact Maura Jebb and Brandon Russell regarding possible use of several of their photos of Ticonderoga for the new website that they compiled for their Ti High School Senior Projects,.

C. Support of the Ticonderoga School Budget. The school district budget is significantly short of funds for the 2019-2020 year due to a number of rising costs over the past years, without comparable budget increases. The 2% tax cap on the school taxes has forced the school to utilize some reserves and make yearly cuts for many years. With a 40%+ increase in health insurance costs over the past few years and many other large line items (like BOCES/CV-TEC tuitions and transportation) increasing at rates higher than 2%/year, the budget has reached a crisis requiring the cutting of essential programs like athletics, AP classes, some staff positions, and extra curricular activities. Donna is working with John

*Ticonderoga Revitalization Alliance is a not-for-profit, local development corporation whose mission is to restore economic prosperity in the Ticonderoga region by serving as a catalyst for innovative ideas and resources, and for public-private partnerships and investment opportunities.*

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McDonald to consider ways in which outside sources might support the high school budget.

We have reviewed the budget line by line and identified a number of line items that could be fundable via grants and community funding. One of these line items is about \$300,000 for vocational training for junior and senior students through BOCES in Mineville. See information under Development section regarding the grant that Ti-Alliance has written for \$95,000 for BOCES tuitions for the 2019-2020 school year.

**Agreed:** The board took note of this work and agree that it is a good use of Donna's time and is consistent with Ti-Alliance's support for trade education specifically, and our school system in general as a cornerstone of economic development. We will continue to work with the school and support with additional grant-writing services.

D. Field Trips: Donna has been on two field trips. One to Chazy, NY and the other to Brattleboro, VT. These are used to gather information on revitalization and obtain inspiration and lessons learned from other towns. One observation from her trips is that towns successful in revitalization have community buy-in. This has proven a challenge for Ticonderoga. Donna will do more detailed trip reports on Brattleboro and Chazy in separate documents. Board members are welcome to join in on field trips. Donna will communicate where and when she is going next.

### III. Committee reports

#### A. Finance Committee

1. Entrepreneur's Fund: An Entrepreneur's Fund is going to be essential to beginning to build some new businesses and employment opportunities in our area. Nancy Archer began the process of establishing the fund a few years ago, but we need to thoroughly define our goals for the fund (grants, revolving loan fund (RLF), other activities), explore the right financial vehicles and the advantages and limitations of them, and prepare guidelines for application, decision-making, and review. In the first round of organization that we did on this project, the idea was that we would loan money in exchange for 5% equity. Companies could then purchase back their equity, or provide a dividend to Ti-Alliance. Need to have a sustainable element to the fund. Explore FLEDGE to check out that model, as well as AEDC (Adirondack Economic Development Corp), IDA, Windham Grows (Strolling of the Heifers in Brattleboro) and other entrepreneurial funds. Donors will want to know the "model" is well thought through. Need process, expectations, rules, etc.

**ACTION:** Nancy will convene a meeting of the members of the Finance Committee (Pam, Pat, and Scott) plus herself and Sandy to review the current draft of the Fund and determine next steps to launch the fund.

**ACTION:** Donna will connect Nancy with the Exec Directors of Brattleboro Strolling of the Heifers and Windham Grows for discussions on their experience with funds to support start ups.

B. Governance Committee. All filing are up to date including DUNS, SAM (federal qualification), and Grants Gateway (NY State).

#### C. Development Committee.

1. Large Donor Cultivation. It is getting to be critical that we begin cultivating potential larger donors for Ti-Alliance. Donna has resent the Donor List to all board members and asked that they identify donors that could give larger donations to Ti-Alliance.

**ACTION: All Board Members** – Take responsibility for at least one larger donor. Donna will create some basic tools for contact and discussion and work with board members to create individual strategies for each large donor prospect. This activity is less about asking for donations than it is about building a relationship between our organization and the donor, helping them to understand our work, and listening to them to determine their interests that might align with our initiatives. Board participation in this process is essential to our success and all members are expected to participate.

2. Paperwork was received from the Town of Ti for processing of their \$5,000 contribution and should be forthcoming soon.

3. Mid-Year Sustaining Membership Drive will coincide with our mid-year newsletter, website launch, and outreach via Robly and social media. Our summer interns will help us reach out to a younger demographic as well as our current followers with new social media tools.

4. Grant Progress and Prospects.

a. Adirondack Foundation. We did not get the \$1500 grant for printing of the Trades Education Brochure. Donna did receive feedback on the proposal from the foundation and will continue to maintain contact with them.

b. International Paper. A proposal has been submitted for a \$2,000 grant on trade education. Results are pending, but they did reach out for us for information relative to cutting a check. Pat and Donna will monitor.

c. Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG) from USDA. A proposal for just under \$100,000 was submitted. A relationship has been built with the RBDG office and good advice for the application was received prior to submission. In addition, Donna was contacted by the RBDG office three weeks after submission asking her to make some adjustments and resubmit the applications so that everything falls within the granting guidelines. We're hopeful that asking us to rework the proposal bodes well for our application. The proposal includes just over \$95,000 for BOCES tuition for Ticonderoga students, and approximately \$4,000 in administrative support money for Ti-Alliance for our work on the Trade Education Access program. We will know by the end of May if we are going to get this grant.

d. Attorney General's office/LISC for Zombie and Abandoned Properties. Ti was invited to make a submission for up to \$50,000. Word on this grant should be received this week. LISC has made it known that their priorities are on larger communities/programs this year, reducing the number of grant to just 40 for the next round. But we are hopeful that our success in the past might be rewarded with a new round of funding. In the event that this program does not get funded by LISC, we will look for other ways to continue this good work with the CEO.

e. Empire State Development (ESD). Empire State Development, the arm of the state that funds Economic Development, is working on a program to attract small hotel developers to the Adirondack Park. They have hired Fish Associates, a consulting firm in NYC, to explore 6 towns, including Ticonderoga, and the feasibility of attracting a hotel developer for a new hotel.

Howard Fish and his team visited Ticonderoga the week of March 17 to talk with various players and properties. Peter Reale helped to tour the team in downtown including the Cobbler's Bench Building. He also met with Matt Courtright, Maria Tedford, and Beth Hill.

Feedback from Howard Fish included inquiries regarding why we have had so many development plans, including the town Comprehensive Plan, the Main Street America Plan done for TMSP, and two others, yet very few of the major recommendations or plans have been carried out or have significant activities underway. Beth Hill said that her meeting with them was relatively positive. She talked with them about the potential benefit of having a downtown hotel in addition to any that they might build out at the Fort as many people will want a different experience and be looking for other things to do in the Ti

Area besides the fort. Their research shows that when people leave the Fort, they want other things to entertain their family.

f. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA has a new program to foster outdoor recreation as a means to economic development in rural areas. As part of that program they have an initiative this summer whereby they will send a team of facilitators to your town to help with community meetings aimed at getting broad consensus on the types of outdoor recreation businesses that could be created in your area to drive tourism. The discussions that we have been having in the past months on this very topic would make us a great candidate to apply for this assistance. Donna is waiting for word from Joe as to whether he wants to submit an application. If he gives it a go, she will draft it for him.

g. Consolidated Funding Application (NY State CFA). The Call for Proposals for the annual CFA cycle should be out soon. NYREDC announced their CFA workshop dates this week and Donna will attend the one in Lake Placid on June 26. In addition, she will be attending a full day seminar on grant writing for NY State funding on June 9 in Lake George. The seminar is sponsored by Empire State Development. Donna is hoping to get Joe to consider a submission to begin a process of community meetings that would lead to a significant submission for downtown development grant in a couple of years. In addition, we will talk with the Cobbler's Bench owners about whether they need additional funding for a thorough economic feasibility study for the hotel plan from InSite. The group has submitted papers for designation of the building on the Historic Register.

**ACTION:** Peter to discuss with the Cobbler's Bench ownership group as to the possible role of TRA in proposals development for development of the Cobbler's Bench. Donna will share with the ownership group the CFA timeline.

**ACTION:** Peter will see if anyone in their group knows Steve Racinelli (Arcady resident with interest in investing in downtown Ti re: Burleigh House) and see if people are open to discussion with him

h. TD Charitable Foundation. Donna will be attending the Radically Rural conference in Keene, NH in September. TD Charitable Foundation funds non-profit executives to conferences and professional development events but the requests for funding must be written within 60 days of the event. She will apply for tuition and travel funding in July. Registration for this event is \$145.

**MOTION:** It was moved and unanimously agreed to apply for funds to the TD Charitable Foundation for \$145 plus travel costs, and to allow Donna to register now for an early bird discount at Ti-Alliance expense.

#### IV. Program Updates

##### A. Trade Education

1. Ti High Career Fair and New Brochure. Ti-Alliance has partnered with John McDonald, John Donohue (Principal) and the Ti High School counselors to improve access to trade education for Ti students. Donna produced a brochure, circulated to the board last week, for use by counselors, students, and parents that provides an easy guide to trade education offerings in the surrounding region and possible sources of tuition assistance. This was available at the trade fair and will be distributed to all Sophomore and Junior students as they explore potential BOCES programs, and to Senior students not headed for college. Donna also participated in the fair. Joe has shared the brochure with the Essex Board of Supervisors, and Donna has shared it with OneWorkforce Director Sylvie Nelson. Surrounding towns and OneWorkforce may adapt the brochure for their own use. Printed at their expense.

2. Scholarship Funds for Trade Education: This is pending until further discussion and development of the next phase of the Trade Education Access Project. These scholarship funds would be a fund that Ti-Alliance sets up and administers to assist students who need additional funding to offset expenses that might pose a barrier to education that Pell, TAP, and Excelsior grants don't cover. These might be things like non-student housing (for an adult learner), or childcare, transportation, etc. We will concentrate on the current programs in process with the school and potentially parlay that success to entice donors to the fund in the future. For now this is on hold.

3. Fall "Contractors in the Classroom": As part of the Trade Education Access Project, Donna is working with the school administration and counselors on a program for the fall for a Community Project. This project would be designed and created through Mike Uchal's Technology class (like "Shop" class), and include the participation of other civic groups, contractors, and the general public. We would recruit local contractors in various fields to work with students in the classroom each Friday afternoon with the goal of creating connections between students, employers, and the trade professions. In addition, there would be community work days where adults would work side by side with the students on the project.

4. Alliance Summer Interns:

Hope Farrar will return to intern for four weeks with Ti-Alliance. She will continue her research from last summer identifying grant opportunities for our current projects, the Entrepreneur's Fund, the school district, and other economic development opportunities with more specificity. She will also work with Donna on several grant proposals including Walmart, Stewarts, and additional vocational training dollars.

Kayla Barbour will be graduating from Berea College in May with a degree and interest in community and economic development and sustainability. She comes to us on the recommendation of the RPI Entrepreneur's Program where she is being encouraged to apply for graduate work. She will conduct an analysis of the tourism market in our area, assess potential for additional businesses, explore existing promotional strategies, and recommend ways to increase visitation. The budget required is \$4,000 (\$400/week x 10 weeks). We have already agreed to allocate \$2,000. If the RDBG grant is received, management funds could be used from the grant for Kayla to supervise the internship program in addition to her tourism analysis.

**ACTION:** Donna will review the budget in consultation with the Finance Committee, and make a recommendation to the board for a vote to consider if there is an additional \$2,000 available for Kayla (I recommend that we start by dedicating the recent \$1,000 donation from the Beekley's for this purpose).

**ACTION:** Donna to contact Judy Walker of the Ti Festival Guild regarding the Pavilion as a possible project for this initiative and explore this idea with Joe and the Town Board.

B. Derelict Buildings. As noted above a proposal for a second round of funding was submitted in early March for \$50,000 for funding from the Attorney General's Office through LISC. Submission was by invitation only. A criteria for submission was for towns with populations of 50,000 or fewer to have a minimum of 100 abandoned properties. This seemed to be designed in favor of cities at the exclusion of small rural towns. Ti was quite successful in the first round of funding in reducing the number of derelict properties so we were concerned that we might be negatively impacted for doing so well. A windshield survey showed that there were additional properties that had not been identified. This was mainly because we used a criteria previously of properties with code violations. We now have an additional "Watch List" of properties that are vacant but do not yet have code violations. These will be watched to prevent them from becoming derelict. There were also additional properties of serious concern that had not previously been included on the comprehensive list. We won't know until next month if we will get any additional funding for this project.

**ACTION: Lance** to let us know as soon as he hears the result of this submission. If funding is not forthcoming, the board will explore other ways to partner with the town to continue the project with less funding and where that money might come from (town was willing to put up \$10,000 in matching funds in this proposal).

**Miscellaneous Notes:**

- The Co-Op is struggling. How can we help them? Co-Promotions on our Facebook page or new website? Other support?

**ACTION: Board** members will reach out to them to see if there is anything that we can do to help to increase membership or activity at the store.

- Robert “RJ”Crammond (local cattle farmer) is interested in the meat processing plant.

**ACTION: Scott** will reach out to Robert to see the status and if there is any way that Ti-Alliance can assist.

**ACTION: Donna** to put on June New Business agenda...Nancy recommended that we discuss a potential supply chain analysis of local businesses that could help local businesses coordinate and realize economies, as well as build inter-community support.

**Next Board Meeting**

**Tuesday, June 11, 3:00 PM**

**Sandy Morhouse’s Porch (or dining room – weather dependent).**