



Dexter Regional Development Corporation

Minutes: November 11, 2009

Dexter Community Farmers Project

Meeting opened: 7:00 p.m.

Judy Craig opened the meeting by introducing the newly elected positions, Roger Brawn as President, Lauraine Piquette as secretary, Joan Peters Treasurer, Dave Pearson Vice President. DRDC recently appointed Judy Wilbur Craig as the new DRDC Executive Director,

Judy referenced the last meeting and gave a general overview of what the group is working on with our newly awarded grant, for the general store in the old Fossa building. Judy stated that "new members attending tonight will leave knowing that this project is a good community project for all of us." Judy went on to explain how the project started. She told the story of a farmer talking about the loss of his contract. Together as a group DRDC brain stormed and elected to use the donated Fossa building to become a store, to stimulate the community, and help support our local farmers.

Fred Sherburne spoke about the farming situation and explained the dreams for the future, for milk to be processed locally. Currently the milk is sent out of state to be processed, and is three days old by the time it returns to Maine. Judy added that we will be the model for other towns to follow. The concept and end goal is to develop a processing plant here locally.

The question was asked of how much that would cost? An approximate cost of \$500,000 was the answer. Our grant writer, Jason Bird, explained that this CDBG grant would be used for the general store, and that we are looking at many other different grants to assist our town. Judy explained that the \$230,000 grant that we have obtained will not cover equipment and start up cost. She mentioned that we should all be on the lookout for any used equipment that would be useful in the store. "We can make this happen, if we all get involved as a community." Judy said.

Judy explained that our vision is to open the general store in August or September 2010. The store will include farm products and also local produce. It will also be carry locally baked breads and homemade soaps. Dry beans, meats that are frozen and cheese. A selection of vegetables, the list continued on. Another part of the future plan is to open the cafe next to the general store.

A question was brought up about what would be done with produce that was old and if the farmer would take that loss? The answer was that DRDC would support the farmer and donate the produce or cook it. That was part of where the idea of the cafe came from.

Judy also mentioned that students with special needs would be taught life skills and that the school would be very involved. Involving the school opens up new possibilities for additional grants, Jason mentioned. Jason also spoke about the future plan of a shared green house. He talked about the fact that, since it was a federal grant, there would be guide lines, with the contractors that we would be able to hire to build the project.

The room was filled with many farmers that came to find out how they might get involved. We went around the room and everyone introduced themselves and explained what they had to offer, what type of business they were in, or why they were attending.

Judy said "We need people to come forward and offer what they have to bring to the market." The need is there now we just have to fill it. Part of our goal is to develop new markets for our community. It was stated that we could not compete with Wal-Mart or local stores. The statement was answered by explaining that the quality was the goal we are striving for. The old style general store; As green as we can be, using alternative heating concepts that are just being developed.

Fred brought up the idea of the featured farmer of the week. So that we could spot light different farmers and producers in our new store. Judy asked what we can do to make the store farmer friendly? She also spoke of having young children get involved, with class trips to teach the importance of healthy eating. Community involvement is a big part of the plan.

Questions came up about what kind of certification the farmer/producer might need? What type of insurance was needed? What temperature for the different products would be needed? People shared what they knew from their own experiences and what might be needed in the way of educating ourselves. The USDA Farm Agency representative spoke of grants and other ways that the agency could help. She suggested to get in touch with your local office and to utilize what they have to offer.

Meeting adjourned: 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Lauraine Piquette, Secretary