

BACC Annual Meeting Minutes 11.18.24

In person: Jen Palmieri, John Kascenska, Michelle Cleveland, Karen Kennedy, Dave Kennedy, Laura Malieswski, Burton Hinton, Kellie Greer, Elaine Hind-Wentzell, Jay Davis, Glenn Castro, Terri Williams, Loralee Tester, Lindsay Kurrle, Kathy Daley, Dan Daley, Christine Emmons, Jill Mathers, Abby Long and Scott Wentzell

John called the meeting to order at 6:27pm

Board Introductions:

John Kascenska, President; Jen Palmieri; Chris Andrews, VP; Michelle Cleveland, Secretary, Karen Kennedy, Treasurer, Elaine Lind and Burton Hinton.

It was mentioned that all members can come to our board meetings every other month.

Voting on renewing Jen Palmieri and Michelle Cleveland for another 3-year term onto the 2025 board. Elaine & Burton made a motion to approve both the nominations for a 3-year term and Kellie seconded for both, all members voted yes, and motion carried.

Feedback from Chamber members:

John Kascenska began the meeting with updates from Burke Mountain including the plan to begin snowmaking as soon as it is cold enough to do so with the goal of opening for the season in early December. Kascenska noted that the mountain was still in receivership and looking for a buyer. There was talk of a potential buyer in recent months, but that is no longer in the cards. Kascenska also introduced attendees to Christine Emmons who is the new (and first ever) Executive Director of the Burke Mountain Club.

Emmons provided updates about upcoming events happening at the Burke Mountain Club including a Centerpiece Making Workshop on December 7th and Tree Lighting on the 15th. BMC is also home to the East Burke Community Library and Emmons was pleased to let folks know that a Children's Reading section will soon return to the library.

Loralee Tester introduced herself as the new Executive Director of the Northeast Kingdom Chamber of Commerce, noting that the Chamber serves the entire region and is happy to "complement and supplement the good work of Burke and other local Chambers." She welcomed people to reach out to her about how the NEK Chamber can best serve the needs of the business community. To help facilitate these conversations, Tester has started 'Coffee and Connections' on the first Wednesday of each month at 7:30am at the NEK Chamber office on the Lyndon Institute campus. Wednesday, December 4th will include a visit from Jen Palmieri of the VT Department of Labor and Rob Olson from HireAbility. Legislative Breakfasts will also be back and hosted by the NEK Chamber at a St. Johnsbury location.

Abby Long, Executive Director of Kingdom Trails, reminded folks that Kingdom Trails was closed this month for hunting season, but would re-open for Nordic activities once there is enough snow. Fat-biking trails may be open sooner depending on weather conditions. Long was excited to share that Kingdom Trails has expanded their Nordic Trail network and, together with Northwoods Stewardship Center, will now be grooming and maintaining the Dashney Nordic Center trails at Burke Mountain.

Guest Speaker: John introduced Lindsay Kurrie, Secretary, VT Agency of Commerce and Community Development, as our guest speaker.

Secretary Kurrle, began her remarks with a message from Governor Phil Scott who could not be in attendance saying that the Governor "appreciates the work of the Chamber and the local business community to boost economic activity in this part of the Northeast Kingdom." Secretary Kurrle spoke of the work the VT Agency of Commerce and

Community Development does to support the region including in the aftermath of recent flooding. After this summer's flooding, the Agency worked with lawmakers to get a \$7 million dollar infusion into the Business Emergency Assistance Gap Program which provides financial assistance to help businesses rebuild and reopen. That is on top of \$20 million already set aside for 2023 flooding.

Secretary Kurrle also spoke about affordable housing needs in Vermont. "We know housing is a big issue across Vermont. It is the TOP issue on the Governor's Affordability Agenda. Mobile homes are an important part of the affordable housing mix." The Rapid Response Mobile Home Infill Program is a cross-agency effort to add 150 new mobile homes to Vermont. Said Secretary Kurrle, "It's a special program we are just getting off the ground that will help hundreds of Vermonters achieve their dream of homeownership. We hope to have the first 30 in their new homes by January 1, 2025."

Secretary Kurrle encouraged those in attendance to "reach out to your legislators. Share your needs and suggestions. You are job creators. Vermont cannot bend the affordability curve without your help and involvement." In closing, she said, "I want to thank all of you for all you do as community members, business owners and employers – and your hard work to help this region bounce back from the wrath of Mother Nature. Your leadership and devotion to Vermont help make this a great place to live, work and play."

Business of the year presentation went to Kellie Greer and Burton Hinton, owners of East Burke Market. Secretary Kurrle congratulated them and passed the mic to Abby Long who nominated them for the award. Abby described East Burke Market as 'the heartbeat of our community' saying that "Kellie and Burt welcome ALL with open arms, making each visit feel like stepping into a family gathering. They not only nourish and energize our community with healthy, filling food and caffeine, they also provide us with friendship, support and encouragement to take on the day. Their passion and dedication to our community shines through as they support local events such as trick or treating, KT's landowner event, Winterbike, The Fall Festival and so many others. They also provide much needed hugs and a safe space to just talk, (even cry in the back room), when you walk in the door. Kellie and Burt choose to devote their time and energy to the community, go above and beyond, uplifting everything and everyone."

Upon accepting the award, Greer and Hinton thanked Long and the Chamber for the recognition. Said Hinton, "We are what we are because of the community around us. We consider what we do as a partnership with the community and local businesses. We wouldn't be here without that support and places like Kingdom Trails and Burke Mountain bringing people here. And, of course, we thank our wonderful employees! We couldn't do it without them."

Hinton called co-owner, Greer, "the backbone of the business" and said he is proud to own the store with her and help her realize her dream of business ownership. Greer let Hinton do most of the talking, but held the award up, saying, "Thank you so much for this award. It means so much to us and we are proud to be part of such a great community."

Review of 2024 – See attached

Meeting adjourned at 7:05pm