

EconomicVitalityMTG 04 06-2021

Economic Vitality Committee
Virtual Meeting, 4 PM
April 6, 2021

PRESENT: Cato Anderson, John Boynton, Marie Foley, Remon Karian, Jennifer McGonigle, Dawn Rennert, Debra Stark, Jan Turnquist, Steven Verrill, Beth Williams, Visitor and Tourism Services Manager

ABSENT: Mark Martines, Jennifer Schunemann,

ALSO PRESENT: Susan Bates, Select Board; Stephen Crane, Town Manager; Jeremy Romanul, Select Board Asst.; Marcia Rasmussen, Director of Planning Land Management; Erin Stevens, Public Information Officer; Kate Carr, Geoff Walton

CALL TO ORDER AND ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Co-Chair John Boynton called the meeting to order and announced that Marie Foley has been appointed by the Select Board to a term on the Economic Vitality Committee.

MINUTES

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

UNANIMOUSLY VOTED by roll call:

To Approve the Minutes of February 2 and 16 and March 23, 2021.

Cato Anderson	Aye
John Boynton	Aye
Marie Foley	Aye
Remon Karian	Aye
Jennifer McGonigle	Aye
Dawn Rennert	Aye
Debra Stark	Aye
Jan Turnquist	Aye
Steven Verrill	Aye
Beth Williams	Aye

UPDATE FROM THE TOWN

Town Manager Stephen Crane reminded the Committee that the Select Board has voted to resume parking meter enforcement beginning April 20, 2021. The Board also approved the purchase of additional barriers for approved outdoor dining and outdoor retail activities. He stated that the Planning Board is at work on preparing a zoning bylaw amendment to Annual Town Meeting that would make permanent the ability to continue the outdoor dining and take-out provisions enabled by COVID emergency orders. Through the efforts of Marcia and Beth, Concord and Lexington were awarded a MA Travel and Tourism grant regarding our common colonial past: "Two towns one story." This will strengthen a recent partnership between the two towns to encourage more visitors.

Remon Karian sought clarification regarding whether the barriers could be decorated to make them more aesthetic. Mr. Crane agreed to consult on the matter and would like to see a plan of what restaurateurs intend but stated that essentially the standard traffic warning color must face the public. Beth Williams stated that barriers that were moved every evening have been decorated with hanging plants to make things more festive for diners. Decorating would be a fun project for students or families. It could be an extension of

painting the picnic tables last summer. Permanently defacing the barriers would be prohibited. Steve Verrill reported that he has had great success in painting on Tyvek wrap.

Beth Williams reported that the tourism grant has the requirement that funds must be expended in this season. She and her Lexington counterpart had worked out a plan for action and advertisement before submitting the grant. The focus will be on New England visitors. 90% of the advertising will be digital resources but will also include *Boston Globe* and *Visit New England*. It includes funding for videography to create a tv spot for now and the future. We got about 50% of the request. The Visitor Center is now open and will be fully staffed by April 19. Visitors have made many tour reservations, purchases of memorabilia and the new Natural Resources Department ecology book. The Town has been busy with more and more visitors as people have begun to be vaccinated.

In response to a question regarding additional federal funding, Stephen Crane stated that Concord will receive \$5,500,000 and there are a number of approved uses including: economic recovery; water, sewer and broadband infrastructure; some essential employee-pay provisions; and to offset revenue losses. Unlike the CARES Act, the American Recovery Plan Act will expire in 2024 so there is not a rush to spend hastily. At this time, the Town is making some purchases such as the barriers, that it could fit within the budget if ARPA does not later consider that appropriate. The Town wants to create a small business assistance fund and would have conversations about what that means. There are cell tower connectivity issues in certain areas that could be addressed. Restoring lost revenue is a big one.

CONCORD TOGETHER UPDATE

Beth Williams stated the current goal is to get the *Spirit of Concord* message out. Private donors have allowed the purchase of materials for residents to decorate. They are available at the Visitor Center, Revolutionary Concord and Concord Flower Shop. The Final drawing of the Take Out Ten contest was chosen and the winner was a local resident who has entered several past contests.

Remon Karian reported that the Dessert Special competition will involve restaurants competing to offer the favorite dessert. It is hoped to involve community and encourage outreach to friends. A portion of any increased sales will be donated to Open Table. Kate Carr of Concord Business Partnership stated that planning for the Spring Festival in West Concord has begun. Provisional dates are May 19, 20, 21 and 22. There will be food, art presentations, and fencing demonstrations. Margot Kimball has become the de facto organizer of the West Concord Business District and working with the Umbrella on an Art Walk and the Library for a Story Walk. Four days will enable more people to participate in smaller numbers. Jennifer McGonigle stated that Saltbox will do a sidewalk BBQ, she will do a sidewalk sale, Green Thumbs will sell plants, and many are engaged in planning. John Boynton stated that the Sign Museum will try to move up the grand opening to fit that timeline. The first sign and video will be West Concord 5&10. There are approximately 25 signs. Susan Bates stated that Colonial Stores sign is still in place. John Boynton stated he will contact the owner and encourage others to make contributions of sign. Jan Turnquist offered the Alcott House. Cato Anderson has signs from Anderson Photo, McWalter's, and Healey's Package Store. He also has 500 aerial photos of the Town from his grandfather.

PROJECT BRAINSTORMING

The Committee began a preliminary review and discussion of the proposed aspects of a plan to reduce real and perceived barriers in order to support current and attract new

business. Cato Anderson was commended for taking the lead on this important issue. After review of the proposal, there were questions to clearly identify what we are hoping to achieve; the intended scope of the project; who would take leadership- -committee or staff; what the timing should be; budget for the project, if any; who are the targets to be interviewed: residents, current businesses, staff, landowners, in addition to current businesses; what is the measure of success and how will we know whether it is reached; can there be short, medium, and long-term recommendations; what, if any, fit is there with regional efforts and tourism; what body- - local, state or federal - - is empowered with the authority to make a change. The Town “quarterback” needs to be identified. Community vibrancy is more than simply filling every storefront. There are analysis tools available regarding demographics and what businesses can be supported. Communication, transparency, and education will be key.

Discussion segued to next steps. Shall interested individuals be invited to meetings or should there be off-line conversations with a range of set questions for each category of interview? All these discussion components will be folded into a draft plan for consideration at the next meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no comment offered.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon a Motion duly made and seconded, it was

UNANIMOUSLY VOTED by roll call:

To adjourn the meeting at 5:15 PM.

Cato Anderson	Aye
John Boynton	Aye
Marie Foley	Aye
Remon Karian	Aye
Jennifer McGonigle	Aye
Dawn Rennert	Aye
Debra Stark	Aye
Jan Turnquist	Aye
Steven Verrill	Aye
Beth Williams	Aye

Respectfully submitted

Cato Anderson, Clerk

Approved: May 18, 2021