Downtown Boone Development Association
Regular Board Meeting – March 3, 2020
8:30 am – Jones House Cultural and Community Center

Board Members present: Denise Lovin, Brandon Bettis, Jim Marsh, Wayne Miller, Monica Caruso, Sarah Long, Kendra Sink, Michelle Novacek and Katherine Robinson.

Ex-Officio's present: Lindsay Miller, Sam Furguiele and Dustin Hicks.

MSD members/guests present: Tara Stollenmaier.

Staff present: Lane Moody, Mark Freed, Brad Farthing, Mary Miller, Trish Miller and Ferrin Page.

Call to Order

Kendra called the meeting to order at 8:35am.

Request for Approval of March Agenda

Kendra asked if there were any items that needed to be added. Lane stated that she didn't have anything. Michelle then made a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Sarah and had a unanimous vote.

Request for Approval of February Minutes

Kendra asked if there were any questions from the February meeting. After a few minutes, Dustin spoke up and requested that his comment regarding food trucks be changed to reference "young people" and not "college students". Sarah made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Denise seconded the motion and it had a unanimous vote.

Approval of Financial Statement

Kendra commented that the reason she moves through these so quickly is because the packets are sent out well in advance of the meetings which gives plenty of time for review. Michelle then made a motion to approve the financial statements. The motion was seconded by Jim and had a unanimous vote.

<u>Organization</u>

Town of Boone Contract Review

Lane opened by stating that the contract with the Town of Boone is included in their packets for review. Sam inquired if it had been updated. Lane stated that it had not. Sam expressed concern that when the contract was up for review the previous year, that the Town Attorney had some concerns. Lane corrected herself and stated that those changes were made by the Town Attorney last year. Kendra confirmed that there had been minor changes made to the contract at the suggestion of the Town Attorney. With no further discussion, Michelle made a motion to approve the contract. The motion was seconded by Denise and had a unanimous vote.

White Blaze Strategy Review

Lane opened by stating that she was hoping to have had more information surrounding the social media strategy and implementation but her meeting with Craig had been cancelled due to illness. She stated that the meeting had been moved to the end of this week. Sarah asked for clarification regarding the hashtag that was used on the front page of the strategy. Lane clarified that the "this place matters" typically has been used during the month of May during Historic Preservation month. Kendra commented that the hashtag "live it up" needed to be included. Denise inquired about who would be posting the content. Lane stated that White Blaze would be updating our content. Lane stated that she also had Maryiah an ASU student who has expressed interest in helping the DBDA with its social media strategy. Denise inquired again about who would be updating the content. Lane stated that she thought that when Megan Sheppard is photographing the businesses downtown this would be a good opportunity get additional content. Kendra emphasized the importance of business's sending in their information and the possibility of a questionnaire to gather more information. After continued discussion about who would be updating the content, Lane stated that she would report back to the Board after her meeting with Craig on Thursday.

Denise brought up that the banners had been installed. Lane stated that there had been a hiccup with the length but that she would follow up with Phil at Mosca Design regarding the banners. There was some discussion about correcting the banners, Denise and Tara both expressed the desire to have them be printed again for free. Lane and Kendra, both commented that they would touch base with Phil and the Main Street Conference and report back.

Committee Scheduling (pre-planned vs. as needed)

Lane stated that she was still having trouble getting volunteers for committees and wanted to check and see if another way of scheduling would be more convenient. She inquired if pre-set monthly meetings would be more convenient than "as needed" scheduling. Michelle inquired what committees needed volunteers. Lane stated that all of them could use more volunteers. Lane continued that the new parking committee has had no volunteers. Lane clarified that the parking committee was separate from the parking appeals meetings, which has volunteers and meets regularly. After some discussion, Sarah, Ferrin and Lindsay volunteered for the parking committee.

During discussion, the marquis lights of the Appalachian Theater were discussed and Board members were expressing their desire to have the lights on more often. Denise inquired if the DBDA could pay to keep the marquis lights on. Lane said she would need to inquire about that. Kendra asked for more information about what the requests is for the lights and would follow up. Mark chimed in that this had been discussed at the last Board meeting of the Appalachian Theater and confirmed that they did not have a timer but that one was possibly in the works.

Kendra also announced that Mast would be staying open until 9pm during the summer. The Board talked briefly about encouraging downtown businesses to stay open later hours to encourage more people to come downtown afterhours.

The Board then came back around to discuss a committee meeting schedule. The Board thought that it would be best for the design, parking and economic vitality committee's to meet once a month. They also felt that due to the amount of events going on the promotions committee should meet twice a month.

Food Truck Input Review

Lane opened the discussion by referring to the input that had been received from the survey sent to MSD members, as well as food trucks. The Board discussed for a few minutes the input that had been received. Lane stated that her perspective from the input received was that the business seemed supportive of having food trucks in downtown for special events but not on a regular basis. Sam disagreed and said that he felt that from the input the businesses were not supportive of food trucks in downtown at any time. Lane stated that currently food trucks are not allowed in Town owned parking spaces, however they are permitted on private property. Tara inquired if anyone had followed up with the food truck owner whose feedback had suggestions for food truck organization downtown. Tara also inquired as to what the questions were that were sent to the downtown merchants. Lane commented that she had some difficulty developing questions that were not leading, but also short and easy to answer. Lane then reviewed the questions that were sent and reported that of the 68 respondents 55% were supportive of food trucks downtown on a regular basis and that 89% of downtown businesses were supportive of food trucks being invited downtown for special events. Discussion continued about the past events where additional food options were needed and past attempts to accommodate downtown businesses having additional opportunities in downtown. Jim suggested that it would be a good idea to offer similar (outdoor and quick) opportunities for downtown businesses. There was some discussion back and forth discussing the expenses that are required to run a brick and mortar restaurant downtown, including system development fees, MSD taxes, utilities, rent, etc. Many on the Board expressed concern that it was unfair for a food truck to be able to come in and compete with brick and mortar without having the same overhead expenses. Dustin thought that it might be wise to continue to seek additional input before making a recommendation. After continued discussion, Michelle inquired about doing a straw poll and ask who was in favor of keeping the current parking ordinance, which prohibits food trucks in parking spaces, in place. The Board voted unanimously to keep the parking regulation as is. Wayne stated that he thought that food trucks were necessary for certain events, however he stated that they need to be thoughtfully placed. Sam reiterated his support for Jim's comments about leaving open the opportunity for downtown restaurants to have some additional opportunities during special events. Kendra noted that during the events the Board works to make sure that activities are spread evenly throughout downtown.

After continued discussion, Michelle asked if this would be something to send to the promotions committee to develop a plan to bring back before the board. Wayne politely disagreed and stated that he felt that the Board seemed to be on the same page and thought it would be best to make a recommendation. Denise concurred and moved to recommend to Town Council that the DBDA was not supportive of food trucks in Downtown on a regular basis *but* is supportive of food trucks being invited for special events. Denise also recommended to keep opportunities open for downtown restaurants during events, and limit spaces where food trucks are allowed. There was a brief pause and Mark took a moment to update the Board about the plans for food trucks during the St. Patrick's Day festivities on Saturday, March 14. There was brief discussion of the taxes associated with the MSD, slim business margins during winter months, and the need to be courteous for food truck placement downtown. Michelle then seconded the motion and it had a unanimous vote.

March Town Council Update

Lane stated that as a part of the Town of Boone Contract the Board needed to provide and update to Town Council and she thought the March Town Council meeting would be a good opportunity. Sam informed the Board that he anticipated in May that Planning and Inspections would be holding educational opportunities for downtown merchants and property owners, regarding the new historic preservation and community appearance standards for downtown. He continued that he thought that it would be good to have HPC as well as CAC members there to help explain why the standards were being developed. Lane stated that she would work with Jane to develop an opportunity that would be convenient for DBDA members. Kendra thought that the meetings were a great idea and we could also use them as opportunities to inform the downtown merchants and property owners about all we have going on. Lane agreed and commented that the historic preservation educational opportunities were very much in line with the DBDA's Main Street Work Plan and goals. Lane stated that she would like to go as requested appearance and Kendra encouraged Board members to attend the meeting.

<u>Financial</u>

Discussion of Video Camera needs

Lane opened by stating that while talking with Craig from White Blaze, they discussed the potential for interviewing business owners. Lane wanted to touch base with the Board and see what their opinion is about possibly purchasing a video/camera. The Board briefly talked about possibly using ASU students. Michelle inquired about the cost and Lane stated that she and Craig estimated between $1,000 and $2,000. Denise felt that she was afraid that something like that wouldn't get used. Sam mentioned that the ASU TV station might be a useful opportunity. After some discussion, the Board felt that it would be better to research different add-ons for a cell phone, specifically some kind of external hard drive and/or larger microphone, instead of purchasing a new camera.

<u>Promotion</u>

St. Patrick's Parade Update

Lane opened and asked Mark if he would like to update the Board about the upcoming events. Mark stated that things were coming along nicely and announced that Kyle Petty would be the Grand Marshall for the parade. He spoke highly of Mr. Petty's enthuasism for Boone. Mark stated that Mr. Petty would be staying at the Horton Hotel and having a meet and greet over the weekend. Mark talked about the food trucks that will be in the back of the Jones House and reviewed the activities for the Kid Zone. He continued by confirming the judges and judging station operations. Mark also reviewed the different bands that would be in the parade and confirmed that there are 45 registrants. Lane stated that after the last meeting, she had been tasked with getting signage for the parade. Lane continued that since there weren't many people who could walk in the parade she went with a stand-alone roll-up banner, that was more versatile than a parade banner. She continued that there had also been a request for some clothing options which had been discussed at the last promotions committee. Lane continued that she was able to find some well-priced, fleece vests for volunteers as well as name tags for the event. Kendra asked for volunteers. Monica stated that she and her son would be willing to walk in the parade. Michelle stated that she would walk as well. Lane stated that she would be working the "Kid-Zone" on the Jones House lawn.

Eggstravaganza

Lane stated that she was able to find a sorority that would help stuff eggs for the event. She also stated that she is still in need of volunteers. Lane stated that she felt that it was important to develop a good rain plan as well as a regular day plan. The Board talked about some of the difficulties that come with the Eggstravaganza event. Lane briefly reviewed the rain plan. Lane finished up by stating that the Earth First Friday would be the evening before.

First Friday Planning

Lane stated that the next themed First Friday would be the Earth First Friday in April. Lane asked the Board if they would be supportive of sponsoring activities for the Earth First Friday event. Kendra then made a motion to approve the promotions committee spending up to $800 in support of the Earth First Friday events. Michelle seconded the motion and it had a unanimous vote.

<u>Economic Vitality</u>

WCCI Training

Lane stated that she had fliers for the Board members for the upcoming Watauga Compassionate Community Initiative. Lane stated that she met with Denise Presnell at Social Worker at Hardin Park School and Mrs. Presnell explained that the program had a business focus this year. Lane continued that the initiative was seeking to train community members and not looking for funding. Lane encouraged the Board members as well as their co-workers and staff to attend the training.

Grow with Google Event

Lane reminded the Board that the Grow with Google event would be held at the Watauga County Public Library. She continued that the folks at the Chamber of Commerce business development had recently been a part of a Grow with Google training and found it helpful. Monica clarified that it would be a livestream of the training and that they were looking forward to it. After brief discussion, Lane stated that if this event had a good turnout, the DBDA could look into paying for a Google presenter to come to Downtown later in the year.

Kendra commented that it seemed that no one was reading the newsletter that was being sent out. Kendra thought it would be fun to include some kind of gift opportunity to encourage people to read the newsletter. Lane stated that she would work on gathering some gift items. Kendra thought it would be a good idea to see if businesses would be willing to donate a few items to giveaway.

Additional Trainings

Lane stated that she would meet with Jane to develop the training/education opportunity for the new Historic Preservation and Community Appearance standards. Lane also commented that in 2019 the trainings that were offered in the summer weren't heavily attended so she would plan for the other trainings during the fall, including the shred truck event. Monica chimed in that the Watauga County Library would have a shred truck in their back parking lot on Friday, April 24th from 10am until 1pm.

Call for Adjournment

At 10:40 Wayne Miller made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Denise and had a unanimous vote.