Downtown Boone Development Association
Regular Board Meeting – March 30, 2021
8:30 am – Webex Virtual Meeting

Board Members present: Kendra Sink, Denise Lovin, Wayne Randall, Monica Caruso, Sarah Long, Megan Biddix, Austin Northern and Jim Marsh.

Ex-Officio's present: Lindsay Miller.

MSD members/guests present: Laura Kratt.

Staff present: John Ward, Mark Freed, Brad Farthing, Ferrin Page, Kat Eller and Lane Moody.

Call to Order

Kendra called the meeting to order at 8:36

Request for Approval of March Agenda

Monica made a motion to approve the March agenda. The motion was seconded by Kendra and had a unanimous vote.

Request for Approval of February Minutes

Lane stated that she realized that she had mistakenly sent out only the one page agenda and not the full packet. Lane stated that since the Board had not had time to review the minutes she would bring them back during the April meeting.

Approval of Financial Statements

Kendra stated that in the absence of the agenda packet that the board should not vote on the financial statements. However, Lane said that there had only been minor changes to the financial statements.

Organizational

Town Council Presentation Follow Up

Lane stated that she added this item to the agenda in case there were any comments from Town Council during the DBDA presentation to Town Council. She continued that the presentation went smoothly and there had been no discussion from Town Council. John added that at the April Town Council meeting he anticipated a discussion about event programming and would keep the DBDA in the loop concerning that progress.

Design

Queen Street Stairs Update

Lane opened and stated that this would be a quick update as well. Lane stated that Bill Dixon was wrapping up the draft plans and planned to seek input from Town Staff. Once he got input from Town staff Lane suggested starting with the design committee to dial things in before coming before the Board in April.

Public Art Update

Lane opened by stating that during the last design committee there was discussion about the current procedures when calling for public art submissions. She continued that she spoke with Amber Bateman and they discussed being more thoughtful about the process as well as possibly pausing the current call for submissions in order to seek for more purposeful art to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Boone (which will happen in 2022). Lane then stated that pausing the call for submission would enable the design committee to come up with language specific to the sesquicentennial as well as developing a time line. Kendra added that there was discussion about being more purposeful when choosing art in the future. Lane stated that she thought that once sesquicentennial art had been set up then gears could be shifted to develop better language in the call for submissions. Kendra also suggested potentially investing in permanent art pieces in downtown. Jim added that 2022 is the 150th birthday of the First Baptist Church as well. Lane wrapped up by stating that the call for public art would be paused to develop a plan for celebratory art for the sesquicentennial. Once the call is open for 2022 art, the design committee will switch gears to evaluate the process when calling for art and making it more purposeful and representative of the community.

Howard Street Update

John opened that he was pleased to announce that at the last Town Council meeting, Town Council had approved all loan conditions for the Howard Street project. He stated that it would be funded by the USDA as well an Appalachian Regional Commission grant. He stated that there had been some delay due to changes at the federal level. However, once the appropriate signatures were submitted to USDA the loan had been funded by the following week. John continued that meetings have already begun with engineers as well as New River Light and Power. John stated that there would be opportunities within the project for additional art in downtown. John continued that he hoped to go out to bid within 45 days and that he would need help from the DBDA when communicating timelines about the project. He acknowledged that it would be a large project that includes upgrades to water and sewer lines as well as power upgrades. John stated that once a construction company was selected he would then be able to develop a better time line. Finally, John stated that the Town had been saving money for the project but that he anticipated those funds being put into a contingency fund that if unused by the Howard Street project, could be utilized to accelerate the downtown streetscape master plan.

Denise commented that she was very excited about the project and thanked all the staff that had been involved. John then took a moment to answer a few questions regarding student housing and how it relates to downtown.

<u>Promotion</u>

Discussion of First Fridays

Lane stated that she wanted to let the Board know that the promotions committee had begun discussion regarding First Fridays. Continuing that while nothing specific had been planned, the committee would be watching as COVID restriction ease to start planning appropriate programming.

Discussion of Possible Social Media Giveaway Promotions

Lane opened by stating that she has been talking with Nina at White Blaze Marketing about a potential social media giveaway to promote our social media. Lane continued that if the Board was supportive of the idea she needed some input from them. Kendra stated that she liked the idea. Lane then asked the Board which would be more appropriate; purchasing individual gift cards to downtown businesses or a generic prepaid gift card that could be used at multiple places. She continued that buying individual gifts cards could be problematic if a card wasn't purchased from each business and also thought that the prepaid cards could be used outside of downtown which would have defeated the goal of encouraging patronage of downtown businesses. Denise suggested looking at "glamping unplugged" because they frequently did social media giveaways and we could possibly mimic their practices. Kendra stated that she thought that it would be good to reach out to all downtown businesses and see what they would be willing to contribute to a prize package that could be given away. She continued that the prize package could fix some of the issues that came with gift cards. After short discussion, the Board agreed that putting together a diverse prize package that incorporated multiple businesses would be best.

Financial

Discussion of Total Fund Balance

Lane opened by reviewing information regarding the potential replacement of trashcans downtown for a cost of approximately $29,000. She continued that this would also replace ash trays downtown and those replacement costs were included in the quote. She stated that she anticipated that the 4 new ash trays would likely be placed as close as possible to where ash trays are currently located. John advised that the placement of those ash trays would need to be in compliance with newly adopted smoking regulations.

Lane then stated that she and Facilities Maintenance Superintendent Justin Stines walked and measured a few areas that still needed sidewalk replacement. She reminded the Board that John requested to complete sidewalks on King Street first with the sidewalks in front of Town Buildings last on the list and continued that the area in front of the Greene-Wilcox building still had potential to be a construction zone and the corner of King and Depot (in front of The Shoppes at Farmers) would need coordination with the property owner. Continuing that the spaces in front of Casey and Casey Law offices, the Courthouse, Melanie's could potentially be starting points for sidewalk work. Megan inquired if North Depot was on the list. John stated that if the Board had concerns about North Depot that possibly the courthouse could be treated as Town Offices and wait to complete that area, in favor of more high foot traffic areas. Kendra chimed in that she thought that North Depot was in great need of attention. Lane added that it was her understanding that North Depot was in need of paving and it would be advisable to coordinate with Public Works. Jim inquired about the specific cost of the trash cans and suggested reaching out to Triplett and Coffey to see if they could quote making the trashcans. After continued discussion Lane stated that she would get more information about cost for North Depot street upgrades and reach out to Triplett and Coffey for a quote on trashcans. After brief discussion, Kendra made a motion to move $200,000 from the undesignated fund balance to the special projects line that would pay for these upgrades. The motion was seconded by Jim and had a unanimous vote.

Other business, comments, or concerns

Lane stated that she had received a variety of complaints, specifically one regarding speeding near the courthouse. She continued that the police department had been quick to respond and has set up the radar trailer to encourage people to slow down when coming into town.

Call for Adjournment

With no other items for discussion Megan made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Monica and had a unanimous vote.