Downtown Boone Development Association
Regular Board Meeting – May 25, 2021
8:30 am – Webex Virtual Meeting

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

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

MSD members/guests present: Laura Kratt

Staff present: Lane Moody and Brad Farthing.

Call to Order

Kendra called the meeting to order at 8:35am

Request for Approval of May Agenda

Kendra asked if there were any changes for the agenda. Lane stated that she was not aware of any changes, but did have two items that she would like discuss at the end of the meeting. Austin then made a motion to approve the May agenda. Wayne seconded the motion and it had a unanimous vote.

Request for Approval of February Minutes

Austin made a motion to approve the February minutes. Kendra seconded the motion and it had a unanimous vote.

Request for Approval of April Minutes

Megan made a motion to approve the April minutes. Kendra seconded the motion and it had a unanimous vote.

Approval of Financial Statements

Lane stated that the money for her laptop had not come out of the budget yet. She also informed the Board that the Town is at the end of their fiscal year and spending is only for emergencies and everyday necessities. Jim then made a motion to approve the financial statements. Kendra seconded the motion and it had a unanimous vote.

Organizational

Approval of Town of Boone Contract

Lane opened by stating that there had been no changes made from the previous year's contract. Austin then made a motion to approve the contract with the Town of Boone. The motion was seconded by Kendra and had a unanimous vote.

Rescheduling of July Meeting

Lane opened by stating that she has a schedule conflict and asked if the Board would consider moving the July meeting up by one week, from July 27 to July 20. After brief discussion, Megan made a motion to move the July Downtown Boone Development Association Board Meeting to Tuesday, July 20. The motion was seconded by Denise and had a unanimous vote

Design

Queen Street Stairs Update

Bill Dixon opened the discussion by stating that he was going to go over the progress of the Queen Street Stairs project and then seek input from the Board. He started the presentation by reviewing the different roofs that had been initially considered. Bill showed the current renderings that had been chosen after input was collected from the design committee as well as other Town Departments. He stated that the goal would be improvements to the stairs, which includes a covering and bench at the bottom of the stairs, a roof over the stairs and then an updated walkway at the top of the stairs. Bill spoke about the roof and stated that its current design was influenced by the desire to avoid having to get easements, which could potentially be needed on the right side of the stairs. Bill stated that storm water would be collected on the Town's property and could possibly be filtered at the bottom of the stairs by a rain garden. Bill continued that the roof was low profile in an effort to protect the stairs as much as possible. Bill stated that Planning and Inspections Department had been very receptive during their review, however they did suggest possibly adding in more benches. Bill continued that a solar component, as well as heating the stairs, had also been suggested within the project. Bill then asked for any feedback from the Board and stated that he anticipated coming back in June with potential costs. Wayne inquired about the time frame for completion. Bill thought that the costs would influence the time line. Kendra and Megan expressed their support of the project. Jim spoke about some additional drainage in the area. Sam asked if the landscaping that is shown was current or what is being proposed. Bill stated that it was neither, but there is opportunity moving forward to discuss the landscaping and make upgrades as needed. After brief discussion, Bill stated that he would work to get cost estimates back to present at the June DBDA meeting and later to Town Council.

Public Art Update

Lane opened the discussion by reviewing the previous decision to pause the call for public art submissions, in order to choose art that is complementary of the Sesquicentennial celebrations and then give an opportunity to review the process as a whole. She continued that she had asked the artist currently displayed to keep their art until the fall. However, "Lucky Lady" next to Town Hall had already been committed to another show. Lane stated that she discussed with Watauga Arts Council Director Amber Bateman and she was able to find a quick turnaround replacement piece by a local artist. Lane also noted that during the discussion surrounding the Sesquicentennial that it might be beneficial to stagger the installment by having two pieces installed this fall in anticipation of the celebrations and one installation as part of the Sesquicentennial celebrations. Lane informed the Board that during the design committee meeting last week the committee chose a piece of art to replace the lady bug for one year. She continued that during past discussions the Board had expressed a desire to up the payment to artist and she was asking to pay the artist $1,200 for the year. Kendra inquired about what is replacing the lady bug. Lane apologized and stated that she neglected to include a picture. Kendra then made a motion to increase the payment to $1,200. Denise stated that she would like to see the art. Lane stated that she was having trouble locating the picture at the time. After a brief discussion, Kendra stated that she was able to get a hold of Amber and she would send the picture over. Lane asked the Board if they would like to move to the next item and then come back when a picture could be located and apologized about the lack of foresight.

Lane was able to find a picture of the sculpture that was chosen and shared it with the Board. Kendra stated that Amber assured her that the piece would be cleaned before it is delivered. After brief discussion, Denise made a motion to approve the payment of $1,200 to the artist selected. The motion was seconded by Kendra and had a unanimous vote.

Howard Street Project Update

During the pause in the public art discussion Lane took a moment to offer a brief update on the Howard Street Project. She stated that currently the Town is still in the process of working on bid packages.

Promotion

Discussion of First Fridays

Lane opened that currently there are no events planned for the June First Friday but that she would like to start working on plans for events for the first Friday in July. She continued that she would like to work with Mark Freed at Cultural Resources to discuss using the Jones House lawn, but currently he is out of town. She continued that she would work to get the promotions committee together to start planning. Denise then asked about where the guidance was coming from related to events. Lane stated that it was her understanding that it was combination of the Town Manager and Town Council. Sam responded that he wasn't aware of where the guidance was coming from, and then he asked to speak about an issue that had come up at the May Town Council meeting.

Sam stated that Jacob Comer came before Town Council requesting the Town Council designate a Pride Day and have town buildings fly Pride flags. Sam stated that the Town Manager was concerned about the request because it would open opportunities for social causes that the Town Council might not support. Sam continued that during the Town Council discussion, there was a request to ask the DBDA for input, clarifying that he didn't expect to talk about it now but did want to put it on the radar. He stated that Town Council had recently enacted a few measures supportive of inclusivity, to show that the town is open and inclusive. He spoke briefly to those measures. He also stated that he felt that if supported, it would only make sense if the celebration took place when ASU students were in school. Sam stated that during the Town Council discussion, Council Member Connie Ulmer suggested that there would also need to be other days that celebrated other groups within the community. Sam stated that he liked the idea of celebrating numerous groups within the community. Sam finished up by saying that the Town Council did support the DBDA considering the request and wanted to give the Board a heads up that it was discussed. There was discussion reviewing the pros and cons of potentially taking up the request.

After discussion of the request, Denise then asked again about COIVD 19 guidance. Sam stated that the Town had lifted their State of Emergency order. He continued that it was partially due to the potential difficulty to enforce certain restrictions after the recent changes by the Governor. He continued that the remote meetings order was in the State of Emergency that had been lifted and suggested that now it would be up to the individual Boards to decide how they move forward. After a brief review of the current COVID cases and lifted regulations, Kendra highlighted the need to get the promotions committee up and running very soon to get planning for July.

Update of Google Ads

Lane stated that she included the google ads report from White Blaze Marking for the Board's review. Lane highlighted that the click through rate ideally is around 1%-2% but the DBDA's is 20%. She continued that she is still working with White Blaze Marketing to tighten up pieces of the website in response to some of the Google findings.

Other business, comments, or concerns

Lane reminded the Board that both Wayne, Kendra and Monica's terms on the Board would all be expiring in June. She continued that Kendra and Wayne were Town Council appointed positions and Monica's is a Board appointed position, of which she has received one application. Finally, she urged the Board to let her know if they knew of any people who might be interested.

Lane stated that the she wanted to give an update on the Downtown Advocacy Committee. She stated that the Committee was a partnership of the DBDA and the Chamber of Commerce and had been developed in response to Council Member Furguiele's proposal of a small business rescue plan. She continued that the DAC has met with a variety of Town Departments and David Jackson updated Town Council of their progress at the May Town Council meeting. Lane stated that she thought the presentation went really well and reviewed some of the suggestions of the DAC.

Denise inquired about wayfinding signs. Lane stated that it was her understanding that when the DBDA discussed the wayfinding signs the Board thought that it would be efficient to use the County wide signs as a template for any downtown signs. Lane continued that it was her understanding that the County wanted a few local landmarks to be listed on the signs, but those requests were not in line with DOT standards. She stated that it was her understanding that there had been a request for help from our state level representatives and would be working the request through the NC General Assembly. Denise suggested that the DBDA might want to consider taking up the project on their own. Lane finished up by saying that she would see if she could receive a status update on the project.

Denise then spoke about COVID recovery and how her staff is working to make people feel comfortable, while adjusting to the lifting of regulations. She continued that she saw an excellent example at COBO. Denise stated that the employees that did not have masks on did have on buttons that said vaccinated that were from the health department. She inquired if there were any additional buttons that could be given to downtown businesses. Lane stated that she would follow up with Jennifer Greene and David Jackson.

Sam then took a moment to update the Board about Town Council. He stated that at the May Town Council meeting Dustin Hicks resigned from the Town Council starting in July and that the Mayor and all 5 Town Council seats would be available for consideration by the voters. He continued that he was not aware of any incumbents that would be running.

Call for Adjournment

Megan made a motion to adjourn. Wayne seconded the motion and it had a unanimous vote.