Downtown Boone Development Association
Regular Board Meeting – June 28, 2022
8:30 am - In Person at the Jones House (604 W. King St.) and Webex

Board Members Present: Megan Mason, Denise Lovin, Sarah Long, Michelle Novacek, Lisa Flanigan Wayne Miller, Austin Northern (via Webex)

Ex-Officio's Present: Councilperson Becca Nenow and Mayor Pro-Tem Edie Tugman

MSD Members/Guests Present: Mike Forrester, Fulton Lovin

Staff Present: Paige Henderson, Mark Freed, Amy Davis, and Todd Moody

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Call to Order

Megan Mason called the meeting to order at 8:32am.
Megan asked that each person introduce themselves to the new coordinator, Paige Henderson, and each person present gave a brief introduction.

General Business

Request for Approval of June Agenda

Megan asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Michelle Novacek made the motion to approve the June Agenda and Denise Lovin seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Request for Approval of May 31, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Megan asked for a motion to approve the May 31 meeting minutes. Denise made a motion to approve the minutes, and Sarah Long seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Organizational

Introduce New DBDA Coordinator

Megan officially introduced Paige as the new DBDA coordinator, and asked Paige to speak more on her past experiences and training for this position. Paige shared with the board that she was an Avery County native and a graduate of Appalachian State University's MPA program. She shared that while in the program, she concentrated in nonprofit management, which is what lead her to pursue a hybrid position within town government. Paige served as the Executive Director for Tryon Downtown Development Association for nearly two years, where she gained valuable Main Street program knowledge and instruction from Main Street's Coordinator for Downtown Programming and Technical Assistance, Sherry Adams. Paige noted that she was excited to work with the DBDA board on fine tuning their Main Street work plan, and also noted the success of the Main Street 4-point approach as a guide to downtown revitalization. The board expressed their excitement for Paige to begin work and thanked her.

Megan spoke about the position that the board is in currently, and shared her belief that the board is in a great place for revitalization and growth. Denise agreed and asked about refreshing the board's knowledge of Main Street and the work plan. Paige and Megan agreed to the importance of this, and mentioned that they would speak more about this in detail later in the agenda.

The board also thanked Mark Freed for his great work as interim director and in the DBDA coordinator hiring search.

Town of Boone/DBDA Contract

Megan asked the board if there were any questions or concerns regarding the Town of Boone/DBDA annual contract. Paige shared that the contract generally outlines the board responsibilities in regard to the town and MSD dollars, specifically in the advisory function. Amy and Mark agreed, and noted that this had already been presented to and accepted by Town Council. Paige told the board that it was her understanding that no major changes had occurred since the last time the contract had been accepted (Mark did note some typos that would need to be amended). Megan called for a motion to accept the contract as presented (pending some minor grammatical edits that Mark agreed to make), and Michelle made a motion with a second from Sarah. The motion was approved unanimously.

Upcoming Vacant Board Positions and Reappointments

The board discussed upcoming board vacancies and reappointments to the board. Paige went through a list of current board members, noting the ending date:

- Megan Mason confirmed that her 1st term expires on 07/31/2023.
- Denise Lovin confirmed that her 2nd term expires on 07/31/2023.
- Wayne Randall was not present, and his term expires on 07/31/2022.
- Melody Pineda was not present, and her term expires on 07/31/2024, however, she has resigned from the board.
- Wayne Miller confirmed that his 2nd term expires on 07/31/2024.
- Michelle Novacek confirmed that her 1st term expires on 07/31/2022, and agreed to reapply for appointment of an additional term.
- Lisa Flanigan confirmed that her 1st term expires on 07/31/2024.
- Sarah Long confirmed that her 1st term expires on 07/31/2022, and agreed to reapply for appointment of an additional term.
- Brandon Bettis was not present, and his 1st term expires on 07/31/2022. The board agreed to have Paige and Megan try and connect with him regarding interest on reapplying.
- Jim Marsh was not present, and his 1st term expires on 07/31/2022. The board confirmed that they did not know of any active interest on his part to reapply.
- Austin Northern confirmed that his 1st term expires on 07/31/2023.

The group discussed the 4 board positions that would be vacant after July, and mentioned some of the gaps currently being experienced on the board. The group also made some suggestions about potential new members to ask. Megan and Paige discussed that they would reach out in the community and see if they had any interest, but the following were mentioned:

- Janelle Vaquera from Lucky Penny;
- Someone to represent the Western borders of the MSD: potentially someone from Safe Harbor, a lawyer, or other professional, Tucker Deal, Andy Brooks;
- Valerie Midgett of neighborhood yoga;
- Josiah of Venture/Local Lion;
- Other nonprofits mentioned were: Wine to Water, Safe Harbor, Hope Center, App Voices.
- Someone from the Remediation/Justice Center;
- A healthcare practitioner, like a chiropractor.

Denise asked Megan if she had followed up regarding absences in the bylaws ahead of recruiting new members, and Megan reassured her that she would. To that end, Megan brought up a conversation that she and Paige had regarding how best to equip board members for success downtown, and mentioned that they would work on creating a “guide” for board members to use that would allow them to quickly convey DBDA’s mission and goals, as well as the basic tenants of the Main Street program. The group also discussed how it would be helpful to create a “board expectations” agreement for new board members to sign so that they would be aware of their commitment at the time they join DBDA. The board tasked Paige with creating one before the July meeting.

Lisa Flanigan made a request that the meetings in the future be moved to a better format for virtual engagement, as she was unable to hear and participate from Webex in the current format. The board discussed moving the next meeting to the post office meeting room, in the planning and zoning department, as it is equipped with proper technology to amplify sound for virtual engagement.

Financial

Ideas for Budget/Work Plan Session

Paige addressed the need for the board to realign their budget and work plan goals for the next year, and the board agreed that a refresher and workshop was needed. Paige noted that this was a good time to revisit the work plan due to the recent staff changes, priority changes, and the availability to meet in person once again. Paige mentioned the importance of stacking the work plan against Main Street objectives to ensure that all of our goals are being met on that end. Megan agreed, and asked that Paige would have dates to propose at the July meeting.

Promotion/Design

Downtown Public Art

Paige briefly touched on the public arts committee and what she knew of the group so far, and also on the need to address the public art downtown that needed attention, such as the sculpture in front of the library. Megan spoke about the board’s close work with Amber Bateman at Watauga Arts Council. Lindsay Miller spoke up and added that she was involved with the public arts committee as well. Paige shared that she would likely have an update for the group at the July meeting.

July Freedom First Friday

Paige shared that for the Freedom First Friday, she would assist the parking staff in handing out handmade fried apple and peach pies to shoppers and visitors on Friday, July 1. Paige praised the parking staff and thanked them for their positive attitudes when dealing with downtown visitors. Megan asked if anyone had other events scheduled for the First Friday. Lindsay Miller shared that the Turchin Center would be hosting the kickoff to App’s summer series and would have live music and food. Paige also noted that the Watauga Community Band would be at the Jones House.

Boonerang Recap

Mark gave a brief recap of the successful first Boonerang festival, and noted that he would like more concrete evidence of success from brick and mortar businesses downtown. Paige noted that she would work on a survey to send to MSD members to try and get some solid Boonerang data. Mark mentioned to Michelle that he would appreciate work on a parking and facility use agreement in the future with the University. Mark noted some feedback regarding a need for better signage next year, more bathroom options, and more food options. Mark also touched on the success of the aluminum cups, saying that some people who received the cups for free over the weekend were still using the cups weeks afterward. Lindsay followed up with positive feedback that she had heard, even though she had missed the festival. Mark assured the board that next year’s festival would be even bigger, and the board voiced their enthusiasm for continued support into the festival’s second year.

Lisa Flanigan left the meeting at 9:20am noting that her workplace was short on staff.

Sidewalk Priorities

Todd Moody gave an update regarding sidewalk priorities for the town, and noted that Appalachian Street to College Street was complete, and shared the estimates for the following improvements: from N. Water Street to

Straight Street, the cost would be $90,000, 7 new streetlights would be $70,000, Shops at Farmers would be $40,000, and to complete sidewalk work for both sides of South Depot would be $95,000. The total for these improvements would be $295,000. Todd noted that $85,000 was already marked aside for this work, and stated that only $210,000 was needed to complete the rest of the work. He said that he had discussed these improvements with Amy (interim town manager) and they agreed to consult the board about pulling $110,000 from the MSD projects line and $110,000 from fund balance to complete the project. Todd noted that the work would stop at the intersection of Depot and Howard in light of the impending improvements to happen on Howard Street. Based on crew availability, Todd said that the projects could likely be completed by the end of the year.

Sarah made a motion to approve the transfer of funds to complete the improvements noted, and Denise seconded. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Comments were made further about the downtown resurfacing of King Street, and Todd noted that DOT crews were still working during the evening, and that his crews would continue to clean up along the sidewalks.

The board mentioned that they would like these improvements highlighted on social media and in newsletters, and asked Paige about who was currently managing the social media and website for the town. Paige said that she had been attempting to get in touch with WhiteBlaze regarding our social media contract and had some difficulty. The board agreed to discuss the topic further in July, and Paige said she would have another update.

Amy mentioned the ongoing project between the chamber and tourism board with local business Astro Yeti. The board was enthusiastic about discussing work with Astro Yeti, as many in the group had positive experience with them personally.

<u>Other business, questions, comments, or concerns</u>

Denise, Edie and Megan discussed the recent Pride parade/rally that had taken place downtown and at The Jones House, and shared their excitement for such a nice event. Denise inquired about the Pride flag outside of Town Hall, and asked if extra security measures had been taken after an incident involved it being pulled down. Amy, Todd and Paige shared that Public Works had taken steps to move the flag multiple times to secure it, and ultimately secured it with a chain to ensure it could no longer be pulled down.

Edie Tugman brought up a concern that she had received regarding itinerant merchants and other vendors downtown, stating that she had received a message from Austin Northern (owner of Blue Deer Cookies) due to the placement of an ice cream vendor near his brick and mortar business recently. Edie asked Austin to speak further since he was present on Webex.

Austin shared his concerns, and mentioned his issues in the past with the food truck that is parked in the parking lot for his business, but mentioned that he had sent in this particular complaint after an ice cream stand set up at Foggy Pines Book Store (in direct competition with his usual business). Austin shared that it could be discouraging as a business owner to continue investing in downtown if competition in the form of street vendors had the opportunity to set up whenever and wherever they like (without the burden of rent and taxes to the Town). Austin and Edie both spoke about the value of downtown businesses who pay MSD taxes and spend their money and time downtown to build the community, and noted that their frustrations should be considered on this issue.

Megan asked if Paige or anyone else had experience in how other towns may be handling this issue. Paige shared that she had recently completed both an itinerant merchant ordinance as well as a food truck ordinance at her last job. She told the board that she would be happy to share those ordinances with the board at the July meeting for further discussion. Wayne and Denise spoke a bit on the background of this issue in town, noting that it had been a larger conversation in the community before the pandemic that unfortunately got a lot of bad press for the organization, and then lost steam altogether after the pandemic began.

Mike Forrester asked if this issue was currently under review by town council, and Amy confirmed that it had been under discussion before the pandemic. Mark mentioned the survey that the DBDA had collected a couple of years back from the MSD regarding food trucks, and noted that responses were very conflicting.

Austin made a motion for Paige to bring the ordinances she worked on previously and asked that it be placed on July's agenda for further board discussion, and Michelle seconded. The board unanimously agreed. Denise asked Paige to see what, if any, ordinances may be present in Blowing Rock. Austin spoke up and said that Blowing Rock usually allows for a one-day permit in keeping with town events. Paige noted that requiring permits could be a great way for the town to collect extra money for facility maintenance, and also to have information on file in case any issues with the vendors ever occurred.

Denise asked Todd to give a brief update on Howard Street. Todd said that he had most of the easements needed to begin the project, and noted that two were under review by attorneys, and that only one was remaining to be discussed. Todd mentioned that if everything went well, hopefully the project would begin in the spring and would likely take 14-16 months to complete. Amy added that funding was in place and ready to go. Fulton Lovin asked if property owners were responsible for burying power lines that connected to the main line, or if the town would be responsible for burying those. Todd noted that it would be the responsibility of New River Light and Power. The board was excited to hear this feedback, and thanked Todd for his work and update.

Denise asked about an update on wayfinding downtown, and asked if Wright Tilley could provide an update at the next meeting.

Call for Adjournment

Denise made a motion to adjourn, and Wayne seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:54am.