

Downtown Boone Development Association

Regular Board Meeting – November 22, 2022

8:30 am - In Person at Watauga County Library (140 Queen Street) and WebEx

Board Members Present: Megan Mason, Denise Lovin, Lisa Flanigan

Wayne Miller, Austin Northern, Sarah Long

New Members Present: Suzanne Livesay, Renee Bauman, and Kendra Sink

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

MSD Members/Guests Present: NA

Staff Present: Paige Henderson, Brad Farthing, Mark Freed, Officer Ferrin Page

Call to Order

Board President Megan Mason called the meeting to order at 8:37am

General Business

Request for Approval of November Agenda

Megan asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Sarah Long made the motion to approve the July Agenda and Austin Northern seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Request for Approval of October 18, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Megan asked for a motion to approve the October 18 meeting minutes. Renee Bauman asked to correct the spelling of her last name in all future minutes from Boughman to Bauman. Sarah made a motion to approve the minutes, and Lisa Flanigan seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Organizational

Welcome New Board Members

Paige introduced the three newest board members, Suzanne Livesay, Renee Bauman and Kendra Sink, and asked each of them to provide the board with a brief introduction.

Suzanne Livesay shared that she is the current Executive Director of the Appalachian Theatre, and that she had relocated to the High Country as a full time resident in the last couple of years. Prior to living in Watauga County, Suzanne lived in a lot of tourism-rich areas, such as Tampa and Orlando. Suzanne told the board about her excitement to share some of the things she had learned in these other areas to make Downtown Boone even greater.

Renee Bauman shared that she is the current Executive Director of F.A.R.M. Café downtown and has been for the last ten years, although she is excited to take a step back in her programmatic role at the café and get more involved in the community. Renee told the board that she had been interested in joining for some time, but finally felt that she was able to dedicate the time. Renee shared her excitement to get further immersed in the downtown scene.

Kendra Sink shared that she is the current General Manager of Mast General Store, and that she had previously served on the DBDA board for a number of years. Kendra shared her excitement to get involved once again with the board as she loved the feeling of “being in the loop” with all the happenings going on downtown. Multiple members of the board remarked that they were excited to work with Kendra once again.

December Meeting Schedule

Paige and Megan clarified that the meeting schedule for DBDA meetings should always be the last Tuesday of the month at 8:30am, unless conflicts arise. Paige and Megan wanted to offer the board the opportunity to break for the month of December for the holidays, since the end of the month would be so busy for everyone. Sarah made a motion to approve skipping the monthly meeting for December, and Austin Northern seconded. The board determined that the next regularly scheduled meeting would be January 24th at 8:30am at the Watauga Library on Queen Street, as there would be a conflict with the meeting room on the final Tuesday of the month.

Annual Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast

Paige shared details with the board about the Town of Boone annual volunteer appreciation breakfast, which would take place on December 2nd at 9am at the Daniel Boone Inn. Paige asked any interested attendees to RSVP with Laney Pilkington by November 28th.

Promotion/Design

Committee Updates

Megan gave a brief promotion and design committee update, and shared some larger committee goals for 2023, including continuing to update and refine the social media strategy, and planning for a session with NC Main Street staff to ensure that our budget and work plan get proper attention.

Social Media Metrics

Laney Pilkington was supposed to attend the meeting to share social media metrics that she had gathered with the board, but had a work conflict and was unable to attend. Paige shared that Laney had shared the figures with her ahead of the meeting, and all of the metrics across our platforms had drastically improved. Megan reminded the board that Paige and Laney were working together to create and share content while following the strategic guidance from the design/promotion committee.

Festive First Friday Update/Needs

The board began to discuss upcoming Festive First Friday, and it was mentioned that App Theatre would be hosting a fundraising gala on the same evening (December 2nd). Suzanne gave a brief rundown of what would be happening that evening, stating that the Harris Brothers would be entertaining, doors would open at 6:15pm, a silent auction would be held, and that a local beer from Lost Province called Standing Ovation would be released on the evening to help with fundraising. Paige gave a brief rundown of all of the First Friday events to coincide with the evening, and mentioned to the board that she had talked with Suzanne earlier in the week about potentially hosting some of the silent auction items on the street so that they could engage the visitors for First Friday.

Paige shared more First Friday news about the Carolina Snowbells (also to be at App Theatre for the whole weekend), Mrs. Claus at the Post Office, Grinch performances at the library, and the snowball fight in the Hope Center lot.

Renee shared that F.A.R.M. Cade had decided to work toward engaging First Friday visitors by opening for a ticketed dinner on First Friday evenings, and shared that it had already sold out for December 2nd.

The board did note that all of the happenings going on during December 2nd, while exciting, would likely put a strain on parking for evening. The board tossed out some possible solutions, noting that Peacock Lot (at the University) would likely be free and open due to winter break.

Façade Grant Vote

Paige shared with the board that she had received a façade reimbursement grant request from Shoppes at Farmers for their recent façade renovations.

Edie asked about the referral process with Planning and Inspections, to which Paige replied that she had been working with Jessica Mitchell from P+I to streamline the façade request process and cross-reference with any rehabilitation guidelines for downtown businesses interested in obtaining permits.

Renee asked about the awning that runs along the building that F.A.R.M. Café is located in, but specifically, if awnings are the town responsibility or the property owner's. Paige clarified that awnings would be the responsibility of the building owner as they are attached to the buildings themselves.

Lisa asked about retroactively approving requests- after the work had been completed. Kendra shared a brief history of why the board had initially decided to offer façade grants, noting that they were created to incentivize the downtown region to invest in building upkeep. Kendra also noted that retroactive approval shouldn't be an issue- as the grants cannot be paid out until the project is complete and approved by Planning and Inspections.

Sarah asked about a point on the application- for requiring two quotes for the work, and the board read through the application and noted that while two quotes were encouraged, they were not required.

Megan wanted to also have the application updated to clarify that the period to apply for reimbursement should be limited to 1-year post-completion, and the board agreed. Suzanne moved to update the application to reflect this, and Sarah seconded.

Sarah moved to award Shoppes at Farmers the full award amount (\$5,000.00) for their façade reimbursement, and Kendra seconded. The motion was approved unanimously by the board.

Economic Vitality

Vendor Recommendation Workshop Recap and Vote

Paige asked Megan to read the entire DBDA vendor recommendation to the board (which had been created by members of the board at the vendor workshop a week prior to the meeting).

Sarah shared that she thought the recommendation had great suggestions, and that she appreciated that the recommendation had taken town staff needs into account as well.

Renee asked how the board planned to communicate this information to the groups that usually pop-up as vendors.

Austin shared his belief that business owners would help disseminate the information when possible, and would also be likely to share with Town Hall if they noticed violations.

Ferrin also noted that the police department, and specifically the downtown officer, would be happy to help enforce the policy.

Edie thanked the board for their thorough research and dedication to drafting a recommendation for council.

The board briefly discussed “lemonade law” or a way to allow kids to still pop-up on the street, and also mentioned adding a clause for area nonprofits or fundraisers.

Austin noted that he was not under the impression that the policy would completely solve the issue, but that he was hopeful that this would be a good start for the board to take.

Becca Nenow asked Paige about the sign-up process, and Paige shared that she had planned to incorporate that into her weekly duties as Downtown Development Coordinator, with the help of Laney (to add a calendar and sign-up form on the website).

Paige shared her hope with the board that the council would receive the ideas and further instruct the town attorney and necessary planning staff to draft an ordinance. Paige also shared that it was her belief that the recommendations would provide some sense of order downtown for vendors and businesses alike. Paige asked the board for their permission to submit to Boone Town Council for inclusion on the December agenda.

Austin made a motion for the recommendation to move forward, and Kendra seconded.

Other business, questions, comments, or concerns

Call for Adjournment

Megan asked for a motion to adjourn, Suzanne made a motion and Sarah seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:33am.