Downtown Boone Development Association
Budget and Main Street Work Plan Retreat – January 12, 2021
9:30 am – Webex Virtual Meeting

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

Ex-Officio's present: Dustin Hicks.

MSD members/guests present: Rosie Bentley.

Staff present: Lane Moody, Mark Freed an Ferin Page.

Call to Order

At 9:36 Kendra called the meeting to order.

Approval of Retreat Agenda

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

Review of Current Fiscal Year Budget

Kendra opened and asked Lane to review. Lane stated that she included in the packet a copy of the current year budget, a copy of the budget with her notes and current transaction detail. Lane continued that she spoke with Amy Davis the Town's Finance Director and she advised that while sales taxes were up slightly, she thought it would be appropriate to move forward with a flat budget. Kendra inquired about the estimate of unspent money from this year and where the monies that are unspent from this year go. Lane stated that she had not calculated that but could work to bring those numbers back and stated that the unspent money goes into a fund balance account. Lane continued that she thought that when looking into the fund balance it would be a good idea to take into consideration larger streetscape projects. Additionally, she thought that due in part to COVID that the budget could stay the same as last with the exception of the Professional Services Line, Advertising Line and MSD Projects/Streetscape line items. She explained that White Blaze is currently coming from the Professional Services line but could be considered a form of advertising. Lane suggested that the Board consider increasing the Professional Services line to $14,000 and decreasing the advertising line to $10,000. Lane also mentioned getting more clarification regarding advertising later in the meeting. Lane continued that regarding the MSD Project/ Streetscape line she thought it would be appropriate to discuss the projects with the Town Manager, Public Works and possibly Appalachian Architecture before adding line items. Kendra then inquired about the insurance line and why it was so high, at $4,000. Lane reviewed the insurance that is taken from this line and stated that she was still watching this line because additional art had been added downtown and thought that there was potential for more art projects downtown that could call for more insurance, including the Queen Street Stairs project. The Board briefly discussed the timeline for the stairs project. Denise inquired about the face masks purchase. Lane confirmed the amount and that they all masks have been delivered.

Kendra inquired about the use of the hand sanitizer stations and expressed her concern that they go unnoticed. Lane stated that she could inquire with public works about the use. After a short discussion, Lane stated that she would talk with public works and order stickers for the hand sanitizer station. Kendra then inquired if there were any other items that the Board felt need to be reallocated. Kendra mentioned updating the professional and advertising lines as discussed and there were no other suggestions during this discussion.

2021 Goals

Organizational

Lane opened by reviewing this is relation to our Main Street work plan. She continued by stating that she anticipated that in accordance with the Main Street goals she thought that partnering with the Chamber of Commerce to continue educational opportunities would be advisable. She reviewed the recent discussion that had occurred during the Downtown Advocacy Committee which is working to pinpoint where additional community education is needed, the specific example from the committee was regarding renovation work and anticipated Historic Preservation Design Guidelines. She thought that any budgetary needs to accommodate those meetings would come from the meeting expense line and proposed that it be kept the same. She also suggested keeping the Public Officials Travel and Training line the same in anticipation of in person conferences in 2022. Lane continued that any website updates listed in the work plan would need to be paid from the Professional Services line and reiterated the need to increase that line. Kendra inquired about the timeline for the Historic Preservation Design Guidelines and Lane stated that she was unsure but she did have a copy of a timeline from Planning and Inspections that anticipated Town Council voting on the guideline in the spring. Kendra then inquired about the benefits of the design guidelines. Lane stated that she was a little unsure about speaking to those benefits and that she would inquire and bring those back, but that it was her understanding that it would be to protect the character of the town and potentially property values. Dustin then chimed in that they felt the benefit would be the opportunity for control over development and making sure that it fits within the context of what already exists. Dustin continued that it should prevent things from being built that could be considered out of character. He finished up that currently the Historic Preservation Commission and Community Appearance Committee are working to collaborate on the guidelines for downtown and once they have finished the guidelines should be presented. The Board briefly discussed the potential pros and cons of the guidelines. Lane then commented that it could be beneficial for the Board to be knowledgeable about the guidelines. With no other suggestions the Board moved onto the next item.

Promotional

Lane opened by stating that she thought this goal is where she thought advertising could be clarified. She continued that currently she only has print advertising listed as a line item under advertising. Denise thought that money should be put into having White Blaze also advertise on Google. Kendra clarified and asked Denise if she is proposing that White Blaze handle the DBDA's social media as well as Google ads. Denise replied that was correct and also inquired if there was an opportunity to partner with the TDA. Lane stated that she would add potential collaboration with the TDA under our organizational goals. Denise stated that she felt there is a good opportunity for a creative campaign. Kendra inquired about the need to print brochures. Lane stated that she had ordered maps in 2020 and that a line item for brochures is typically included in the printing line. Kendra then inquired about the Special Projects line. Lane stated that she would it would be good to keep it the same, continuing that First Friday, Boone BOO!, and Eggstravaganza all come from this line. She also took a moment to inform the Board that 2022 is the Town of Boone's Sesquicentennial (150^{th} Birthday) and they might want to include the celebrations as a line item. Kendra asked the Board if there were any other suggestions, there were none so the Board moved on.

Design

Lane opened by stating that the Board might need to pause these goals until there is opportunity for the Town Manager and Public Works to weigh in. She continued that currently 33% of budget has to be set aside specifically for streetscape work and anticipated the continuation of sidewalk replacement, potential trashcan replacement, Queen Street Stairs improvements and opportunity for collaboration with Public Works. Lane also stated that she thought that education of the HPC guidelines goal should be listed under design goals. Kendra then reviewed her recollection of the approval of the Downtown Streetscape plan and stated that she felt the need for additional recycling containers in downtown. After some discussion, the Board decided to wait to set these goals until they could gather additional input.

Before moving directly to economic vitality Kendra did discuss public art opportunities in downtown. She felt that more money need to be allocated to public art. Lane stated that currently there are 3 spaces allocated for public art and $1000 dollars per space. Lane continued that the Community Appearance line is currently set at $18,000. $15,000 towards façade grants and $3,000 towards public art. Kendra inquired about how many grants have been given during the past year. Lane stated that one grant in the amount of $1800 had been given. Kendra expressed her appreciation of the grant program but felt like it wasn't being used a lot. She asked the Board what they thought about increasing the amount of money to go towards public art. Monica expressed her support for increasing the amount of money to be put towards public art. After continued discussion, the Kendra made a recommendation to change the Community Appearance line to allocate $12,000 towards façade grants and $6,000 towards public art.

Economic Vitality

Lane opened by stating that she thought the goals for Economic Vitality would be similar to those already laid out Organizational goals. Referring to continued community partnerships and continuing educational opportunities for downtown. With no additional comment Kendra moved on.

Financial Sponsorships

Lane opened by stating that the bulk of the sponsorships are partnerships with the Jones House for events, but that the two continuous items were sponsorship of the concert series and weekend staffing for public restrooms. She continued that these items come from the community improvement line. Lane also informed the Board that Megan had proposed that the Board look into ways to give back to the community and if that is something the Board was supportive of it could come from this line. Kendra then inquired about the status of the request from Town Council about permanent restroom trailers in Downtown. Lane stated that she was not aware of the status. Mark chimed in that the cost of the trailers would be very expensive and that the Jones House was a more efficient after reviewing the trailer options. Kendra asked if there were any questions or suggestions. There were no comments so the Board moved on.

Final Budget Recommendations

Kendra asked for final budget recommendations. Lane asked if she could review her notes from the current discussion. Kendra agreed and Lane stated that she would increase the Professional Services Line to $14,000 and decrease the Advertising Line to $10,000. She continued that she would add White Blaze Google ads as an item within the Advertising Budget, add Sesquicentennial into the Special Projects line, not list items under the MSD Projects/Streetscape line until input has been received from the Town Manager, Appalachian Architecture and Public Works. Finally, she would change the Community Appearance Line to allocate $12,000 for Façade Incentive Grants and $6,000 for Public Art. Kendra inquired if there were any additional recommendations. There were no additional recommendations so the Board moved on.

Main Street 2021-2022 Work Plan

Review

Lane opened by stating that she included in the agenda packet the changes that she made within the current work plan to get National Main Street Accreditation.

Economic Positioning/ Vision

Lane asked the Board if there were any suggested changes to the current Vision Statement that is *Downtown Boone serves as the concierge to an elevated experience for both locals and visitors. Home to the largest University in western North Carolina, Appalachian State university, tucked against the backdrop of the Blue Ridge Mountains, downtown is the first-place destination for Boone residents after home and work and the beginning point for all adventures.* Kendra stated that she like the statement and asked again for any feedback. There were not any suggested changes to the vision statement.

Mission Statement

There were not any suggested changes to the mission statement that is *The Downtown Boone Development Association's mission in part is to promote the historic preservation, protection and use of Boone's traditional downtown area, including the area's commercial, civic, and religious enterprises and residences. To encourage property owners to maintain, improve and beautify downtown properties.*

Economic Development Strategies

Lane opened by stating that she anticipated a few more months of COVID related closures and thought that it might be productive to work to add the DBDA narrative to our social media, working with the HPC to understand the new guidelines Kendra stated that she liked Megan's idea about trying to give back to the community and asked her to speak a little more to that. Megan explained that she had a loose idea that she would still like to flesh out, but that she thought it would be a good idea to give back to the community. She continued that she would like to hear what others comments were and then she could work on some ideas. Kendra did acknowledge that the DBDA would be limited due to restrictions placed on where MSD funds can be spent. Kendra then inquired if there were any obvious needs in the downtown area and there was not much feedback. Lane acknowledged that due to the variety of businesses in downtown it would be hard to identify one goal that was beneficial to all and within the MSD limitations.

Main Street Work Plan Recommendations

Lane followed up by stating that the three new goals she would like to include in the work plan are the goal of learning about the HPC design guidelines, developing the narrative about who DBDA is and reflecting that in social media and looking for opportunities to give back to the community. Lane then reviewed where she thought those could be added into the work plan. She continued by stating that she would take the comments from the retreat and work to update the work plan. Jim suggested that a downtown ambassador could be beneficial, especially on the weekends. The Board also discussed how to increase the popularity of the scavenger hunts. Lane finished up by stating that she would bring back an updated work plan at a future meeting.

There were no more comments so the meeting adjourned at 11:26am.