

Downtown Boone Development Association

Monthly meeting -- March 7, 2013

IN ATTENDANCE

Board members: Dempsey Wilcox, Marsha Wapole, Evalyn Suddreth, Brad Harmon, Bob Meier, Andy Stallings, Sheri Moretz, Lynne Mason, Greg Lovins, Jamie Goodman

Staff: Pilar, Virginia

Others: Betty Bonds, Rita Jackson, Suzanne Thompson

At 8:32 a.m. Dempsey called meeting to order.

Sheri made a motion to accept the agenda. Bob seconded, all approved.

Marsha made a motion to accept the minutes. Evalyn seconded, all approved.

Dempsey noted that Evalyn is our new Treasurer, voted in during the last meeting. She provided a brief update on our finances. Pilar explained what the Appalachian Theater stock line-item was, and that we will be selling that as soon as it comes in.

Marsha made a motion to approve the budget. Andy seconded, all approved.

Executive Board meeting: Dempsey and Jamie did not make it, but Pilar and Virginia used the time to update Evalyn on the financial situation. We currently have \$164,000 in the MSD fund. Pilar noted that we should keep funds in this fund balance, especially to provide a buffer for the \$40,000 yearly payment on the theater.

Overall we have \$187,000 total for capital improvements, and we have several projects that we could partner with town on. The list includes sidewalks, meters, trees, lights, and restrooms at the Jones House on weekends.

Installation of new Trees for the area Rams Rack to Mellow Mushroom would cost a total of \$18,200. Bob asked why trees would cost so much, Pilar noted that the grates cost close to \$4000 each.

Meters for parking would cost approx. \$400 each, meaning a significant investment in each section that we update. Lynne noted that we may not have to rely on just DBDA money for parking meters but could consider the funds brought in from parking now. Marsha noted that the businesses downtown would appreciate better parking situation, and especially when the Theater will be operational. There was some discussion on the time-limits we would set, to discourage students from taking advantage of the spots. After general discussion, Dempsey asked Lynne to note to the town during their annual Budget retreat that we are ready for meters and will be willing to put DBDA money into the project.

Sidewalks: Pilar gave a short update on her research regarding sidewalks. Based on her quotes, if the town makes the improvements, it will cost \$7/sqft., but would be slow process and could take several years to do all of downtown. If we contract it out, we received estimates of \$17/sqft to \$25/sqft and we could possibly do larger chunks or all of it at once.

Pilar noted they were interested in updating the up-side of King street first, but Dempsey, Marsha, Bob and others were more interested in updating the down-side (where most of the businesses are). Lynne noted that she is not certain what the Town Council will support, but thinks if the DBDA shows support for spending the extra money that Council might be willing to make it a priority to find funding. The question then arose if we did King Street first, what would that mean to the Howard Street project. Lynne updated that the town is currently working on a design in the right-of-way, because of the issues with easements and some businesses that are not interested in participating with the project. Andy suggested acquiring the land of the easements, but Lynn was not sure if that cost would be feasible.

Betty Bond noted that with the Theater coming in, with the back side of parking, rear entrance, etc., it might help a long-term plan for Howard Street. Dempsey said he was more interested in a short-term plan, 1-3 years, because we have waited so long to improve Howard Street.

Pilar also noted other projects, and talking about how to prioritize what we want to do. Among those are also having restrooms on weekends at the Jones House, which would mean paying someone to staff the house.

Virginia relayed that in Blowing Rock, there are bathrooms in the BRAHMs Museum that are operated by the town, as well as a large facility in the Park. Those are both open 24/7. According to Virginia, there is constant maintenance, and some source of tension between BRAHMS and the town about this. Lynne noted that we need to look at possibility of a larger facility, possibly tied in to a parking facility, which is something we will need to eventually address.

Betty mentioned that there will be public restrooms in the Post Office following the current renovations. Sheri heard it would be 8-5 Monday through Friday.

Pilar noted that we have added port-a-potties on game days, and that we could use this for other events such as parades and other large events. Marsha asked what the cost would be to have port-a-potties for the whole summer season.

There was general consensus that the best option would be to do all the improvements at once for the streetscape, trees, lighting and meters.

Dempsey noted that it would be good to have Virginia and or himself at the town Budget meeting if possible, and it was agreed that Virginia was to attend.

Marsha made a motion that we dedicate our streetscape funds to the TOB for financing downtown sidewalk improvements. Bob second. All approved.

Appalachian Theater Update: Pilar noted that we are still in the silent phase of the capital campaign for the theater. There has been some discussion on how the \$75,000 from the DBDA would be allocated if we want to dedicate it back to the theater. Lynne noted that we should take this idea to the larger DBDA membership to see if they approve this. Pilar noted that with staff time spent on the process, facade improvement to the front of the building, and other expenditures, the amount the DBDA has spent on the theater is actually closer to \$100,000 of cash and in-kind spending. Dempsey suggested that we should wait to see if there is a major donor that steps up and wants to name the stage or lobby. Betty Bond suggested that the board consider setting up an endowment for the Theater for the future.

There was some general discussion about the possible positive contribution to the town from the theater, and how to promote buy-in from downtown stakeholders.

Spring Planning Meeting: Virginia noted that there is a conflict with the original date and time. Discussion resulted in a change to Wed. March 20 from 6-8 p.m. at the Jones House.

Board vacancy: Virginia and Pilar have been putting out feelers for the seat, and request that the rest of us do the same. Rob Olsen is our newest board member, board training for him will take place the first or second week of April, and other board members are welcomed to attend as a refresher if they are interested.

Festival of the Book: Marsha introduced Suzanne Thompson from the Friends of Watauga County Library to talk about the Festival of the Book, which is a celebration of books and readings. The event will take place June 21 and 22, and will bring in authors for readings and presentations, author panels. The theme this year is Southern Literature, and will include a writer's workshop, special readings by Sharyn McCrumb and others, and the day-long fair at the Watauga High School that is open to the public. Sponsorship opportunities are available for businesses, to help pay for bringing the authors here.

With no other business, Dempsey adjourned the meeting at 9:37 p.m.

Submitted by Jamie Goodman