

Downtown Boone Development Association

Monthly Board Meeting – July 11, 2013

Board members in attendance: Lynne Mason, Andy Stallings, Sheri Moretz, Bob Mier, Evalyn Sudderth, Robb Olsen, Dempsey Wilcox, Greg Lovins, Jamie Goodman

Staff: Pilar Fotta, Virginia Falck

Others in attendance: Rio Tazwell

Dempsey called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

Rob took minutes for the first part.

Virginia presented the financials and budget report.

Andy made a motion to approve the financials. Sheri seconded. All approved.

Pilar reported a request to the Town of Boone to have an accounting system put on Pilar and Virginia's computers to improve financial reporting.

Jamie began taking minutes.

PARKING

(Summary of discussion by topic rather than chronologically): Dempsey reported on a meeting with the Town of Boone regarding parking that took place July 9 at 6:30 p.m. A lengthy discussion took place about the parking meters and the special meeting on Tuesday night. Town Council member Lynne Mason suggested that it would be helpful to have a formal plan coming from the DBDA, and strongly recommended taking the time to seek a long-term solution rather than a quick fix.

Dempsey noted that the two big issues we need address are student-parking issues and finding and implementing a user-friendly system. Pilar noted that there is no free parking regardless of what we choose, we just need to find a way that is fair and equitable.

Discussion took place about the possibility of hiring a consultant (as a non-biased third-party) to come in and do a full assessment of the parking situation in downtown, which Dempsey noted could be lengthy and costly. Dempsey suggested the possibility of going through the DBDA rather than the town (which would require an RFP and full process) by hiring a consultant to do a compressed review of downtown parking rather than a full process. It was noted that we could ask the consultant to review the report by Steve McLaurin that was introduced at the special parking meeting and provide feedback on that. There was general agreement that an unbiased third party expert would provide credibility and protection for both the town and the DBDA in regards to a decision. Pilar noted that we would need to set specific parameters for the consultant, and Sheri asked if we could spend some time researching names of consultants to take our questions to. Greg noted that ASU included a master transportation plan in the land-use planning they did with town, and has a consultant he could suggest. Council member Lynn Mason suggested possibly scheduling a work meeting with the consultant to address questions face-to-face.

Questions that were discussed for the consultant included student parking, implementing a user-friendly system. such as how to prevent or manage auxiliary parking w/ ASU, find a customer friendly solution, generate some revenue, and manage long-term parking. Sheri noted that it would be good to get a clear timeline from the consultant on implementation, as well as a recommendation on our fees.

Sheri and Andy both noted that regardless of the decision, there will be a learning curve and the merchants and parkers will need to be educated. Andy and Sheri also noted that we need to study towns that are more comparable in size to us, such as Hendersonville or Waynesville.

Dempsey noted that he recently visited a place that took coins in their meters, and struggled to find enough coins for the time he needed. Both he, Bob and Virginia noted that they felt newer technology with the ability to take debit or credit cards would be the best option.

There was some discussion about pay stations versus meters, with Rob noting that if we switch to pay stations, if one fails we have created an issue for 8-10 spaces and not just one or two. Bob mentioned that we should investigate Asheville's experiment with pay stations and see how that is working out. Bob mentioned that the primary reason we were interested in meters is they are recognizable by most people and would help with some of the budget shortfall or at least pay for itself. There was some discussion about what would work best in the winter, and it was noted that the town clears snow from downtown quickly and meters or stations would not be buried and inaccessible following snow storms.

Andy suggested that we could get more parking if we switched to diagonal parking on the South side. Pilar noted that because King Street is a federal highway, it is not legally wide-enough for diagonal parking on both sides of the street. Andy also noted that we need more crosswalks to prevent people from having to jaywalk. Council member Lynne Mason noted that the DOT is in control of this, and they have not let us make changes to 421 in the past, but that other towns have done this so it would be good if we could address this with the DOT again.

Town Council member Lynne Mason suggested that we should spend some time considering how we will assign the hourly rates, and suggested that we independently look at pay stations and costs, should not rely on just the consultant. She also noted that the town is not necessarily focused on something that generates a lot of revenue, but that is at least revenue-neutral and pays for a parking system downtown.

Sheri asked what the maintenance fee would be for situations like gum shoved into the meters. Virginia noted that studies indicate a need to raise \$22 per meter per month to maintain it, which should be no problem. She also noted that the biggest expense is the battery and labor to switch out, costs about \$2k per year.

Town Council member Lynne Mason recommended setting a time-limit for submitting a final recommendation to the Town Council, and suggested presenting at the August meeting on August 20. Discussion took place on what timeline we would want to give to present a parking implementation plan to TOB (30 or 60 days).

Plan of action that was discussed included:

- Sheri is to call Hendersonville and Greenville to see what they did for parking
- Virginia will contact Chapel Hill, Asheville and Blacksburg
- All board members are to email their list of 5-10 questions for the consultants, for Pilar and Virginia to narrow down to 10 total for us to review.
- Virginia will email a summary to the Town asking for an extension to August, and will send a full report of Steve McLaurin's proposal to the Town once she receives it.
- The Parking Subcommittee scheduled a meeting for next Thursday, July 18 at 8:30 a.m. to review everyone's research so far.

Pilar noted that we could possibly move forward with implementing pay stations at Depot and Town Hall lots. Andy noted that if we buy piecemeal it might be more expensive, and suggested waiting on those until we have the full plan.

It was discussed that in the short term, the meters near Capones that are already installed will be reprogrammed to \$1/hour, max 1 hour, continue with 50 cents an hour on Queen Street.

Appalachian Theater update

Dempsey reported he and Evalyn closed out the AT account, wrote cashier's check to the Town of Boone, and that today ATOTHC is scheduled to close on the theater building purchase. Dempsey then read the letter from the AT board thanking the DBDA for their help in making the process a reality.

Council member Lynne Mason then thanked the DBDA for going out on a limb on the project, it was a big leap, but we got it to work.

Howard Street Exchange Festival

Rio Taswell from Boone Community Network spoke, thanked us for support of his June event, which was a big success. He noted that Antiques on Howard and other businesses reported higher sales for those days, with some up to 3 times higher. They are finding new avenues of fundraising, with vendors paying for space, personal donations coming from the community, and the BCN will be hosting a time-bank auction for services. He noted that the BCN appreciates DBDA's willingness to cover the cost of the porta potties for July, and would also like to ask for support to pay for the porta pottie rentals for the remaining 3 festivals this year (July through September).

Virginia noted that she feels it is worthwhile to continue to support this to help ensure its success, and thinks that it will grow and benefit downtown. Jamie asked if there is sufficient funds in the DBDA account to support the festival, and Virginia noted that there are.

Jamie made a motion to allocate \$450 for portapotties for the remaining 3 Howard Street Exchange festivals in 2013. Bob seconded. All approved.

Dempsey adjourned the meeting at 9:46 a.m.

Minutes taken by Jamie Goodman