

**Meeting Minutes for Hardwick Downtown Commission
Zoom
Monday, January 17, 2022, 9 a.m.**

Present: Shari Cornish, Gary Michaels, Sandy Scott, Katie Tandy, Emily Hershberger, Alison Lowe, Bethany Dunbar, Jim Lovinsky

Item #1: Motion to approve minutes from last meeting by Gary, seconded by Katie.

Item #2: Jim Lovinsky has joined this meeting to discuss a Rural Development grant awarded to the Lamoille Housing Partnership (LHP); Jim worked with Sven Olson of Scale House to acquire and allocate grant.

- Grant reached its end date, but due to impacts of Covid on businesses, the USDA granted an extension.
- So far, \$30,000 of \$100,000 has been used to hire a consultant who created a marketing plan
- Jim & Sven are now ready to implement - must use remaining funds in the next 12 months.
- Plan includes ideas for branding and a downtown logo as well as collaborative events to bring people downtown.
- Alison, Shari & Jim will meet to discuss how this can work with the Downtown Commission's plans and goals for the Municipal Planning grant
 - MP grant is state funded, while RD grant - which requires a match - is federally funded.
- Jim will email the marketing plan to the group.

Item #3: Next steps in hiring a consultant to form a non-profit for the purpose of applying for Downtown Designation.

- Alison has created a template, which will be shared in a Word Doc with the group for comment.
- Main points:
 - 1. Put out a Request for Qualifications (2 weeks scheduled)
 - 2. Review and select a short list; schedule interviews. (1 week)
 - 3. Conduct interviews (allow applicants 2 weeks to prepare a presentation)
 - 3. Make recommendations to Select Board (they will make the final decision and be the ones to hire the consultant). (1 week)
 - 4. Process must be completed by May 30.
- Consultant will:
 - Guide Downtown Commission toward creating a non-profit.
 - Create a 5 year Work Plan.
 - Launch the organization and plan with a public event.
- Alison believes that the Rural Development Grant (held by LHP) could be used to help fund a director for 1 year.
 - The salary for this position is flexible; it could be \$23,000 or \$73,000, depending on funds available.
 - Shari and Alison will meet Thursday to finalize the RFQ

Item #4: Press release to announce Downtown Commission's progress to date.

- Should be shared with area papers, on town website, and on the DC Facebook page.

Comments: We need to bring Jim and Sven in on our planning, to avoid working in parallel or at cross-purposes. Also important to have David Upson involved, as the town and select board need to approve certain decisions, such as a logo.

Other business:

- Abrah Griggs has sent the banner design to the printer, and the go-ahead to print should be given this afternoon.
- Shari will work with Abrah to create an application form for local organizations to request a custom banner for the second set.
- The town has an electrician in line to wire the lamp posts for stringing lights. (AARP Winter Places grant)
- Co-op update: The first phase of fundraising, talking to large investors, is underway.
 - The official capital campaign starts next week, with a goal of raising \$250,000 by January 25.
 - A minor change to the name and logo of the business are coming.
 - There is no tenant yet in mind for the current Co-op building on Main Street.
- It is noted that the old bank building (South Main Street) may be under new ownership.
- Retail cannabis will be on the ballot at Town Meeting.
 - Katie believes that the downtown area may not be eligible for a retail spot due to proximity of high school and elementary school. This may or may not be the case.
- Shari stresses that including the Granite Shed in our Downtown Designation is very important. Bethany is working on a letter to add to the application, advocating for its place in the hub of our downtown.
 - Goals for the Granite Shed in 2022 are to have a design, marketing plan, and full budget in place.

Sandy moved to adjourn the meeting; Gary seconded.

Next meeting scheduled for February 21, 2022, 9 a.m., either on Zoom or at Birdsong.

Minutes submitted by Sandy Scott, January 18, 2022.