

**Meeting Minutes for Hardwick Downtown Commission
Art Park
Monday, May 16, 2022, 9 a.m.**

Present: Shari Cornish, Heather Carrington, Gary Michaels, Sandy Scott, Bethany Dunbar, Katie Tandy, Tobin Porter

- Motion to approve minutes from April meeting made by Bethany; seconded by Katie.

Item 1: Heather's update (Handouts - "Guiding Considerations in Prioritization Planning," "Main Street Four Points," and "Priority Goal Evaluation Rubric.")

- Heather has reached out to many of the people suggested on our Contacts list but has been met with silence from certain stakeholders.
 - These people may be best approached in the future when we have more specific issues to discuss.
- The NEK Municipal Plan and the Regional Plan should both be utilized when creating the 5 Year Plan. Layering plans, building off of what is already in place, will be a huge asset in winning grants.
- From the stakeholders who responded to Heather's inquiries, there were three common points:
 1. Hardwick's downtown has a strong business community: There is a good mix of businesses and a combination of long-term and new businesses. Business owners are engaged, well-networked, and work together.
 2. There is a need for infrastructure - better design, visual cues to help point people to the downtown and all it has to offer.
 - Capitalize on people who are already coming through town and figure out how to get them to stop.
 1. Need for bike & pedestrian access, better/more sidewalks, and a community gathering space.
- Discussion of Rubric for creating priorities/goals for 5 Year Plan - simple rating system and criteria, with a focus on what will create success for the downtown and help win grants.
- Discussion of grant writing
 - It will be important to remain involved with the town government - whether that is through continued collaboration or if the new Community Development Coordinator is also an employee of the Downtown non-profit organization - in order to support grants that need to be submitted through the municipality.
- The desire expressed by stakeholders for a gathering space can be met by Atkins Field
 - There is a need for more signage and visual cues (design) to lead people there.
 - This further supports the idea of including Atkins Field in the Designated Downtown map.
- Check-in on creation of map:
 - Gary has not continued on the photographing of downtown businesses, waiting to confirm what will be needed for the presentation.
 - Can the town's summer intern work on this? The intern originally expected to work for the town has taken a different job opportunity, so we are unsure about whether this position will be filled.

Item 2: Update on ARPA funds

- Select Board is creating an application for use of funds (\$885K available)
- A large portion of the funds will likely go toward fixing the town water system.
- Shari hopes that some funds will go into the Economic Development Fund.
- The Downtown Commission might consider applying for ARPA funds to support the creation of our non-profit organization.

Item 3: Update on grant funded activities

- Outlets have been installed on lamp posts for strands of lights in winter.
 - Shari is still searching for photos of the trees covered in lights over the winter.
- A second set of banners is at Green Screen Graphics and should be able to go up before Spring Festival. This will be the set sponsored by local organizations; in the fall, banners with logos tied to summer activity (eg. Spring Festival, Farmer's Market) will be replaced with the generic banners.

Item 4: Downtown and Historic Preservation Conference

- June 9th in St. Johnsbury
- Good networking opportunity; Shari and Gary will attend - anyone else interested is welcome to register.

Item 5: Other business

- Nora DeMuth is working toward buying the old Co-op building and has secured the promise of a loan from the Economic Development Fund.
- After meeting, Shari, Heather, Opie, and anyone else interested will take a walking tour of the town.

Meeting adjourned at 9:50.

Next meeting will be Monday, June 20, at 9 a.m. at Front Seat/Birdsong.