

**Meeting Minutes for Hardwick Downtown Partnership
Birdsong Beer & Wine
Monday, February 20, 2023, 9 a.m.**

Present: Shari Cornish (president), Katie Tandy, Tracy Martin, Sandy Scott (secretary), Gary Michaels (treasurer), Emily Hershberger, Tobin Porter, Dave Gross

First meeting of the Hardwick Downtown Partnership (HDP) called to order.

Treasurer's Report: We have \$5426 in our account, which includes half of the ARPA funds allocated by the town.

- \$500 was spent on a PO box in East Hardwick (chosen because it's easy for Gary to receive bank statements).
- Gary is checking on whether or not we need to file tax documents this year.

Upcoming and ongoing networking opportunities:

- There is an online Monthly Downtown meeting the first Thursday of every month at 11 a.m. with Gary Holloway. Board members are invited to attend at any time.
- March 22 is Downtown Day at the State House, from 11-3. This will be an opportunity to talk to legislators and others about the new Hardwick Downtown Partnership and plans for the town.
- This Saturday, February 25, is the Hardwick Business Summit, from 8-1.
- National Main Street Now Conference in Boston will take place March 27-29.
 - Should HDP become a member of this organization?
 - Cost=\$295 per year
 - Could be a good resource
 - Emily made a motion to join, noting that we could decide not to renew if we don't find it useful. Tobin seconded the motion. 5 board members in favor, one undecided - motion is carried.

Report on the Preservation Trust bus tour of the Northeast Kingdom - This group stopped in Hardwick last week. Shari prepared and handed out folders with information about HDP and various local businesses and projects.

Kiwanis Spring Festival:

- The Kiwanis Club is holding a duck drop/rubber duck race as a fundraiser and would like to ask local businesses to sell ducks. They will also be asking business owners to support next year's event by choosing a day of sales, on which 10% of sales would be donated to the Spring Festival.

5-Year Strategic Plan:

- First looking at short term goals, as set by Heather Carrington.
- Gary asks how we get downtown businesses to buy into the HDP. Once businesses became members, they could post signage in their windows in order to support and promote a cohesive message about Hardwick and the HDP.
- Tracy suggests looking into how other towns structure their membership.

- Shari suggests charging businesses a nominal initial membership fee, with the invitation to donate in future years. We need to create a strong logo, perhaps building on the one used on the banners created last year.
- Tobin sees a need to educate people about the benefits of being members of the HDP.
- Tracy mentions that there are several upcoming opportunities to talk to people about the HDP, including Town Meeting and Spring Festival.
- Emily would like to see board members include information about the HDP in our newsletters.
 - Focus on marketing, set up a website.
 - There is professional development funding available to make this happen.
 - We need to have a clear message and visuals that are consistent across platforms.
- Dave asks what are the benefits that we can offer to members? There should be an email address where members can send questions and concerns that will be included on the board's agenda at each meeting. (Note: Shari has already created an email for HDP - hardwickdowntownpartnership@gmail.com)
- Emily suggests that we begin by sharing information about HDP and what we've accomplished to date with Hardwick businesses. We could ask for feedback to help us prioritize our short term goals.

Discussion of proposed quarterly meeting schedule:

- Tracy believes that we will need more meetings, especially in the first year.
- Further discussion leads to a decision that quarterly meetings will be executive sessions, but we will continue to meet monthly on the third Monday.
- Sandy asks if it would be worthwhile to schedule a longer meeting - perhaps a retreat - to allow the board to dig deeper into the tasks in front of us.
- Shari suggests that we hold the next meeting at The Galaxy Bookshop, so that Sandy will be able to stay with the meeting past 10, if needed.
- Next meeting will be held March 20th at 8:30 a.m. at The Galaxy Bookshop and will focus on marketing and growing membership.
- Tobin volunteers to look into professional development grants to support our marketing efforts.