

**Meeting Minutes for Hardwick Downtown Partnership  
Galaxy Bookshop  
Monday, March 20, 2023, 8:30 a.m.**

Present: Shari Cornish, Tracy Martin, Bethany Dunbar, David (Opie) Upson, Sandy Scott, Emily Hershberger, Nora Lakhani

Emily motions to approve minutes from previous meeting, Tracy seconds - motion carries.

Item #1 - Organizational priorities & marketing

- Abrah Griggs has shared some ideas for graphics, based on the banners created last year, and she is willing to volunteer time to help HDP develop a logo.
- Tobins' research into grants to fund the creation of a website came up empty, but he suggested using NEK Funds. Shari thinks NCIC might have grants, and Bethany suggests trying the Green Mountain Fund through the Community Foundation, which has \$5K grants available.
  - In addition to funding, we will need to find someone to design the website. CAE and LVRT are both searching for marketing and web design help, so they may have names to share.
  - Emily mentions that the Co-op worked with Mary Admasian, who also worked on the Montpelier rebranding and knows about grant sources. Adds that what we will need to provide anyone who works on a website with content, and perhaps we should focus on what that will include.
- Tracy researched other downtown groups and learned that the choice to have paid memberships is split down the middle; some choose to do an annual drive for donations, rather than yearly memberships.

The following are ideas that came up during a brainstorming session, to try to pinpoint tasks and priorities in an effort to decide on next steps.

- Membership
- Logo
- Website
- Events
- Outreach to Hardwick businesses - an introduction of the Hardwick Downtown Partnership and its benefits to business and property owners.
- Energy efficiency in downtown
- How can HDP help the Town of Hardwick?
  - What are the intersections between the HDP mission and the town plan?
  - Can HDP offer financial support to the Spring Festival? Opie reports that the Spring Festival is in need of \$6K. Tracy requests that we see their budget before making a decision. Shari says we have \$5K in the bank, and that is our budget for the time being.

- Can we find a way to share information among businesses and organizations? (e.g. What events are happening and when? What types of grants are available?)
  - This could be part of our website content.
  - The website should be accessible to town members so that people can update their own business information and add events to the community calendar.
    - Note: There is a community calendar already available on the town website. This could be shared to the HDP website.
- Discussion: Events at Atkins Field and on Main Street are often very separate things - people don't tend to travel from one location to the other.
  - Opie is working to develop a live music series in June, July, and August. This could be held after the Farmer's Market - perhaps if the music takes place up on Main Street, it could draw Farmer's Market customers to Main Street.
  - Suggestion to create a trail between Atkins & Main Street - signage, a sort of story trail with narrative markers leading the way, directional signs with distances between locations noted.
- First Fridays: What is the work involved? We would like to see this happen again, but the last efforts fizzled because not enough people were willing to volunteer to organize the event.

- What is our 5 Year Vision? How do we get there?
- What are our individual strengths, and how can we utilize them to move our mission forward?
- We need to share clear messaging about what Downtown Designation is and how it benefits organizations and businesses in town.
  - Suggestions for sharing this information: Individual meetings with stakeholders; an HDP float in the Spring Festival parade.
- Discussion: Communication to town/stakeholders
  - Community calendar
  - Monthly newsletter
  - Share project information

- Who are our audiences, and what types of communication do we need to use to reach them?

- We have the stakeholder list, which Shari will share and Emily will turn into a Google sheet so that we can all add and update information.

- Nora volunteers to call stakeholders with a quick script to explain the Downtown Designation and its benefits.

- We can send out an announcement about Downtown Designation and its benefits, write a letter to the editor, share on FPF, and include in our business newsletters.

- Emily will share a blurb that can be used in various formats.

Other news:

- The Co-op is planning a Grand Opening event June 16.
- HDP is officially a member of the Main Street America Group.
  - Shari will share information from MSA about American Express grants that are available to some small businesses.

- Wednesday, March 22, is Downtown Advocacy Day at the State House. Shari and Tracy will attend and others are welcome. There will be opportunities to lobby legislators to continue support for the Downtown programs.
- The state tourism board will accept content from downtowns to post on their website.
- Wellspring has transferred its non-profit status to a new organization that will work to subsidize mental health and wellness services for people in the community who can't otherwise afford them.
- The library project is breaking ground!

Final discussion of HDP business:

- We should consider finding a grant to hire a photographer to take pictures of Hardwick in all seasons to use for website and other marketing materials.
- Emily suggests that we find a facilitator for the next couple of meetings - someone who could help us organize our task list. She can recommend a couple of people who have done this work for the Co-op.
  - Tracy thinks that the Community Foundation may have a grant that could pay for a meeting facilitator, but we might consider using this service for a longer meeting (full day?), possibly in May.
- Perhaps HDP should consider offering or facilitating business training workshops down the road.
- Bethany recommends that we consider a donation to the Spring Festival, but it could be restricted. We can decide which piece of the event HDP would like to be associated with, whether that is tents or music or something else.

Next meeting will be Monday, April 17th, at 9 a.m.