

MEETING MINUTES
MEETING OF THE ST. ALBANS CITY DOWNTOWN BOARD
& BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF ST. ALBANS FOR THE FUTURE
6:00 PM TUESDAY FEBRUARY 23, 2021
VIA REMOTE CONNECTION

Approved March 23, 2021

Board Members Present: Maureen Brown, Chair; Erik Johnson, Secretary Treasurer; Jeremy Read; Rachel Sink; David Glidden; Ashley Cleare; Keith Longmore; Donna Howard; Valdemar Garibay

Board Members Absent: Emily Richards, Vice-Chair; Elizabeth Reed; Ben Letourneau

Public Present: Lexie Benware

Staff Members Present – Wendy Coy, Minute Taker; Chip Sawyer, Director of Planning & Development; Marty Manahan, Director of Public Works

1. **Call to Order – Chair Brown called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.**
 - a) **Attendance and introductions** – None
 - b) **Additions or Deletions to the Agenda** – Member Longmore wanted to discuss the City’s not putting a Cannabis bill on the ballot for Town Meeting Day.

2. **SAFF Financial Report** – Mr. Sawyer reviewed the SAFF Financial report. Member Johnson asked if there was any way to track what Downtown Dollars were being redeemed and who was redeeming them. It can be tracked on the report. Mr. Manahan asked how many \$5.00 were still out there. Some have been redeemed. 230 were issued in June. They went to students. FoT has not yet indicated what amounts would be going to Martha’s Kitchen. They will indicate it at the next meeting.

3. **Check Signers - Member Glidden made a motion to approve the resolution to remove Elizabeth Reed as a check signer, maintain Maureen Brown and Marty Manahan at their current authorizations, and add Erik Johnson with full authorities. Member Sink seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.**

4. **Discuss renewal of SAFF/City “merger” contract** – Mr. Sawyer reviewed the changes that were made to the contract between SAFF and the City of St. Albans. He recommended that the Board approve the changes so he can bring it to the City Council for approval.

Member Howard made a motion to approve the Downtown St. Albans Community Reinvestment Agreement as presented. Vice-Chair Johnson seconded the motion. It passed with all in favor, except one dissention by Member Longmore.

5. **Discuss annual media schedule** – The Merchants Committee realized that there should be a marketing calendar so that there can be preplanning for annual events. Mr. Sawyer reviewed the first draft of the calendar. Member Johnson thought that it was a good start. Member

Glidden questioned some of the time frames on some of the events. The Board discussed the possibility of restrictions on various events due to COVID. Member Sink asked if the downtown restaurants would be interested in doing their own restaurant week. Mr. Sawyer said he would look into it. The Board agreed to review it again next month. Member Glidden suggested showing it to LONDONmiddlebury so that they could use it. Mr. Sawyer agreed.

6. Discuss events/programs/committees –

- a) **COVID recovery activities** – Member Longmore asked if there was any advantage to defying the Governor’s mandates. He expressed frustration with the restrictions and allowing the Governor to decide who is essential and nonessential workers. The COVID mentality is going to have a permanent effect on the mentality of the City. Member Howard stated that there is an unequal economic impact on various members of the community. Chair Brown stated that people don’t want to leave their homes. They don’t want to go somewhere that people aren’t being safe. Mr. Manahan stated that the City isn’t necessarily in favor of the mandates but they have to follow the executive order. Member Longmore sees Cannabis retail as an opportunity to bring new businesses into St. Albans City. Due to lack of infrastructure, Cannabis retail can’t start for another year. Mr. Manahan suggested that Member Longmore reach out to the Mayor and City Council give be sure that his opinion is heard. Mr. Sawyer stated that if the Downtown Board wanted to take a position on Cannabis Retail it would carry weight with the City Council.
- b) **Break the Winter Blues, Rotary Hearts event, Maple Festival, etc -**
- **Break the Winter Blues** – There has been some good participation. Mr. Sawyer acknowledged the amount of work that Member Howard has done in getting businesses to participate.
 - **Rotary Hearts Event** – Member Glidden sated that roughly 30 hearts have been sold and raised about \$9,000.
 - **Maple Festival** – Mr. Sawyer put out an update last night. There are businesses that are doing windows and there will be some sort of photo contest.
- c) **Welcome Decals** – Mr. Sawyer is going to offer them to the businesses. Member Longmore thinks that the Welcome decals are very offensive. He believes that St. Albans has always been a welcoming town and didn’t need decals stating that. Member Glidden stated that he works with youths who have seen these signs in other communities and wondered why St. Albans would not advertise itself as a welcoming place. Mr. Sawyer stated that the decals were purely optional for the Downtown businesses
- d) **Downtown Dollars** – This was discussed as part of the budget discussion. Member Howard has had an explosion of people bringing them in.

- e) **Social Media / Website** – Member Cleare thought the social media meeting training was a great meeting. Mr. Sawyer asked if the Downtown Board would like a presentation of the numbers next month or a strategy meeting or half and half. Chair Brown would like a little bit of both. Member Longmore asked if there would be an ability to add more conservative social media options. Member Howard supported a varied social media plan. Member Cleare suggested that LONDONmiddlebury craft an email introducing LONDONmiddlebury and suggesting hash tags and social media support that the Downtown businesses could do. Ms. Benware suggested crossovers with various businesses. Member Howard mentioned that there is an obstacle with getting people to read the emails. Secretary-treasurer Johnson suggested having a sheet that lists the upcoming opportunities for Downtown businesses and to visit them in person. Member Howard asked when there would be a poster box in the parking garage. There is one there now with a Break the Winter Blues poster in it.

- f) **Arts** – Member Reed and Member Howard are doing National Poetry month. There is a meeting on March 10th on how to connect with performers and what the restrictions might be in the coming year. There is a new hope painting up in the park. They are looking for more spaces where public art can be installed. There is a new art supply store in the City.

- g) **Kingman Street, Center Street, Stebbins Street, Etc.** – Kingman Street goes out to bid tomorrow. Center Street and Stebbins Street are going to be part of the summer sidewalk project. Center will be extended out by another foot. Stebbins will have a new sidewalk all the way down to the new dance studio. Congress and Main - NMC is operating their vaccine clinic on the third floor. Champlain Housing Trust is about 70% occupied. Secretary-Treasurer Johnson asked if there was any updates on Taylor Park. Improvements to Houghton Park is being done now with Taylor Park still on the agenda to be done.

7. Other Business

- a) **Approval of January 26, 2021 Meeting Minutes** – Member Howard made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Member Longmore seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.
- b) **Next Meeting Date and format** – **March 23, 2021**: It will be the same time and format.

8. Public Comment – There was none.

9. Adjourn – Member Howard made a motion to adjourn at 7:23 PM. Member Glidden seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.