

Meeting Minutes
Meeting of the St. Albans City Downtown Board
& Board of Directors of St. Albans for the Future
6:00 PM Tuesday August 25, 2020
Via Remote Connection

Approved September 22, 2020

Board Members Present: Maureen Brown, Chair; Erik Johnson, Vice-Chair; ; Emily Richards; David Glidden; Elizabeth Reed, Secretary Treasurer; Ashley Cleare; Keith Longmore; Jeremy Read; Valdemar Garibay; Rachael Sink; Donna Howard

Board Members Absent: Ben Letourneau

Public Present:

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

1. **Begin Recording**
2. **Call to Order – Chair Brown called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.**
 - a) **Attendance and introductions** – None
 - b) **Additions or Deletions to the Agenda** – None
3. **SAFF Financial Report** – Mr. Sawyer reviewed the financial report. There is a credit coming for the change that was made to the FoT Squarespace account.
4. **Discuss events/programs/committees –**
 - a) **COVID recovery activities –**
 - I. **NIFT Program** - The State is partnering with NIFT. The program will provide thirty dollar gift cards for any business that signs up to be part of the program. When the customer subscribes, they will get codes for two businesses that are not in the immediate area. The customer will go to that business. Business will get a new customer and the customer will probably spend more than thirty dollars. There is a webinar tomorrow at 3:30. The link was sent out to the businesses. Member Longmore considers NIFT a waste of money. People will not put on masks for \$30.00. Mr. Sawyer stated that “the train has already left the station” on this program. Mr. Manahan states that is will be hard to get people to participate in NIFT.

Chair Brown asked about the NIFT program and if the businesses are donating the gift cards. The money for the gifts will be from the State’s budget. It is free for the businesses and the customers. The State will be doing a lot of outreach and the City will be doing ads on Facebook and around town. Member Longmore asked how do we salvage St. Albans. When the Governor mandated

masks it removed hope that this pandemic would be ending. People are demoralized. He believes that it will get worse and worse. Vice-Chair Johnson stated that the Downtown businesses have seen an upswing. There was a significant change once the mandate was issued. People are feeling safer. Member Longmore stated that masks were a political issue not a science issue. The canceling of the enhanced unemployment also didn't help. Secretary Treasurer Reed commented that the mask situation will not be taken care of until the pandemic is taken care of. We can't control that but we can support the program. Member Garibay asked how many gift cards there were being issued. Mr. Sawyer wasn't sure.

- II. **State Grant** - There is a \$10,000 grant program being done by the State. The applicants need to quickly spend this money. Mr. Sawyer suggested that the City will use it for the Downtown Dollars. Whoever pays for the cards will only have to pay half their value to get them and it will put another batch out into the field. The \$10,000 could be added to the NIFT program but it wouldn't be as specific for the businesses. Mr. Sawyer was looking for the Board to make a motion to have the Chair sign a letter of support for a grant application.

Member Glidden made a motion to have the Chair sign a letter of support for the grant. Member Garibay seconded the motion. The Board approved it with one dissention by Member Longmore. Member Longmore doesn't believe that this will help the Downtown. He suggested that the grant money be used for a party for the City to restore hope somehow. We need to move forward. Per the State, there are restrictions as to what the money can be spent on. It needs to be spent on some sort of buy local program. Mr. Sawyer stated that there were a lot of people downtown on Saturday and that the City needs to tap into the people who are still going Downtown. Member Cleare has been talking to the customers in her store. She had three who just moved to the area and were out poking around in the stores.

b) FoT / Last Night –

- I. **FOT** - One dance group has signed on board for the video. Member Howard asked if the groups could perform in City Hall for the taping. The Committees idea is that trees would be decorated and displayed in the vacant downtown buildings and in the stores. The idea is to have the trees up before Thanksgiving so there would be two or three weeks. Vice-Chair Johnson suggested a Take a selfie with a tree program. There was an idea to have a map where all the trees are located so people know where to go to see them. Mr. Sawyer and Mr. Manahan discussed putting a tree in the alcove at City Hall. The City will talk to Grant Butterfield about putting them in the windows of the new building. The City will think about whether there will be fireworks this year. It would be hard to social distance during the display. Member Howard asked is there was any

way to do the fireworks higher. Maybe the top of parking garage. Probably not due to the buildings around the park. Mr. Manahan stated that the City looked it the first year that they had the parking garage. Insurance wouldn't allow it due to buildings in close proximity. Member Howard suggested putting the Chair back in the park as a sign of a return to normalcy. There was discussion on how to keep it sanitized; how to keep people from not social distancing while taking pictures; how it is a positive symbol of St. Albans.

II. **Last Night** – Vice-Chair Johnson and Secretary Treasurer Reed discussed getting things in motion. They are still discussing whether it would be completely COVID friendly with ecommerce only or have lite events. Mr. Stump, owner of the Frozen Ogre, came up the idea of doing something like a Dick Clark special - a Last Nite live. Get local bands to tape ahead. Maybe the Mayor doing a countdown. They are still looking for volunteers to help. Chair Brown asked to be added to the email chain.

c) **Bingo / Holiday Raffle** – Only three participants in the bingo so far. Member Howard stated that it needs to be better advertised. She suggested that a Downtown Dollar card be given to everyone who participates in the Bingo. She doesn't feel that the City/Board is making the best use of their resources. More outreach needs to be done for the Bingo program. The Christmas Raffle has people going around asking how things are going and handing out cards. The Board needs to invest in it more. Chair Brown stated that the raffle would be brought up at the next merchants meeting. Mr. Sawyer suggested that the bingo card be made a little easier on the next round. People are taking them. There needs to be review on how they are submitted. Member Howard suggested the tattoo be moved to a different square or combined as a service downtown. Secretary Treasurer Reed wants an automatic prize coverall option. Give away Downtown dollars if you fill the whole card up.

d) **Welcome Decals** – Mr. Sawyer will work on it for next month. Member Howard stated that she saw a good decal that she will forward to Mr. Sawyer.

e) **Downtown Dollars** – Downtown Dollars needs to be more customer forward. Different ideas are being considered:

- I. Give out things to businesses to help them participate.
- II. If you buy a cards to distribute now, your money will be matched.
- III. Distribute cards to large employers who have essential employees

Downtown Dollars are still coming in. Member Garibay asked what they looked like. They look like a gift card. Mr. Sawyer showed the Board what the card looked like.

f) **Recent Public Art activities** – There is interest in another art wall. People would like an art wall in the parking lot by Food City. The City doesn't own that space. The City is considering new locations.

- g) Social Media/Website** – Mr. Sawyer is working on putting out the RFP. It should be out next week.
 - h) Mayor’s Photo Contest** – Vice-Chair Johnson told the Board that public works is putting up signs and taping the winner tomorrow. Once the winners are announced, the auction will be on line. They are using auction32.com. They are hoping that the longer time frame of the auction will give people the opportunity to bid more. Mr. Manahan stated that the photos have been mounted and posted in the park.
- 5. Other Business**
- a) Approval of July 28, 2020 Meeting Minutes** – Member Glidden made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Vice-Chair Johnson seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.
 - b) Next Meeting Date** – September 22, 2020
 - c) Other** – None
- 6. Public Comment** – None.
- 7. Adjourn** – Vice-Chair Johnson made a motion to adjourn at 6:56 PM. Member Garibay seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.