

MEETING MINUTES
MEETING OF THE ST. ALBANS CITY DOWNTOWN BOARD
& BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF ST. ALBANS FOR THE FUTURE
6:00 PM, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2020
VIA REMOTE CONNECTION

Approved January 26, 2021

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

Board Members Absent: Jeremy Read; Ben Letourneau.

Public Present: Paul Deyoe and Kelsey O'Farrell from NBC5.

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

1. **Call to Order – Chair M.Brown called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.**
 - a. Attendance and introductions.
P.Deyoe and K.O'Farrell introduced themselves as representing NBC5 and wishing to discuss holiday marketing opportunities.
 - b. Additions or Deletions to Agenda. None.
2. SAFF Financial Report.
Mr. Sawyer reviewed the financial report. The biggest difference is Downtown Dollars. They have been selling a lot of 50/50 Downtown Dollars. There is \$21,000 out in the community. Mr. Manahan stated that they received \$450.00 for FoT donations in the last two days. Member Howard stated that she received \$145.00 from Mayor Smith for Mayor's Photo Contest. Mr. Sawyer stated that they received \$400 from Mr. Woods for a locally produced video.
3. Discuss social media consultant proposals.
 - a. Possible Executive Sessions – There was no executive session.

Mr. Sawyer reviewed the Social Media Consulting Services RFP responses and impressions of each firm. He shows the breakdown of how much each event, merchants and unencumbered would pay each month. The City is willing to split the costs but has a limit as to how much they can commit to over 12 months. He recommended that the contract be for six months. The Board narrowed it down to three companies – Bent Media, Sp!ke, and LONDONmiddlebury.

There were some reservations expressed by the Board that Bent Media underestimated the amount of time that it would take for them to do the social media

tasks that they submitted. Vice-Chair Johnson would like someone local to Vermont but outside of our local area so that there can be new ideas. Secretary Treasurer Reed liked the idea of supporting a local company like Bent and helping them get started. Chair Brown agreed with going local and liked the idea that LONDONmiddlebury would help train the Board to eventually be independent.

Member Glidden asked what would happen if the proposal submitted was wrong in the amount of time that was quoted. Member Howard stated that if a contract was signed, they would be stuck with the contract. Member Sink was concerned with Bent having woefully underestimated on the costs and the fact that they may not have the complete skill set that is needed. Member Howard suggested that the Board could try Bent and, if it doesn't work, change consultants in six months. Member Sink didn't think that it would be the best use of our resources to have to get a new company up to speed with the social media needs twice.

Member Richards mentioned that if the Board does the Social Media contract than it can't afford to do any of the other marketing that has been presented. She believed that social media is the right place to spend the money. She preferred LONDONmiddlebury. Mr. Sawyer will go back to LONDONmiddlebury and see what services they can provide for \$1000/month.

Motion by E.Reed to negotiate a 6-month contract with LONDONmiddlebury for social media services with a do-not-exceed of \$1,000 per month. Seconded by V.Garibay and approved with all in favor except D.Howard opposed.

4. Discuss holiday marketing options.
 - a. Discuss shared funding for marketing activities.
 - VPR - There is a VPR advertising spot with 18 mentions. It is \$670.00. Mr. Sawyer wanted to know if the Downtown Board would be willing to split the cost with the City.
 - NBC5 - Ms. O'Farrell and Mr. Deyoe discussed a Shop Local Holiday campaign. If there was a purchase of a Shop Local Holiday Package, the business / Downtown would be tagged by video and audio 150 times. The concept is to advertise the whole Downtown with spotlights on specific business add buy ins. Ms. O'Farrell thought that there would be an opportunity to advertise the Downtown Dollars. Member Howard pointed out that there would need to be various merchants that signed on. Mr. Deyoe stated that 3-5 merchants is the best and they can pair like businesses. Member Cleare asked if there was a slide that showed the demographic that was watching NBC5. 18 – 25 is the hardest group to reach. Member Longmore asked how the masks and Governor's directive is incorporated into this. MR. Sawyer wasn't sure that there was time to get all of the businesses involved. Mr. Manahan asked how long it would take to get an ad together. Mr. Deyoe stated that it would just take a couple of days.

Member Howard stated that the Board would need to go to each business but most don't want to talk the day before Thanksgiving. The TV ads are a great idea but hard to get organized now. Member Sink was not onboard with NBC5 as they are expensive and it is hard to gauge whether the advertising is effective. She suggested putting money towards Facebook and advertising the holiday raffle advertising. Member Garibay asked if WOKO had been considered. Member Howard thought that it was too late to get into the advertising. Vice-Chair Johnson suggested that the Board channel the info about the Shop Local Holiday package to the merchants over the next 5 days. State up front that they were looking for 5-10 merchants to participate at a cost of \$350 - \$1000. If any of the businesses are interested, connect them with NBC5. It doesn't cost the Downtown Board anything. Members Sink and Richards will work on an ad for the Holiday Raffle

Motion by D.Howard to spend another \$690 in Merchants funds on the VPR advertising. Seconded by D.Glidden and approved with all in favor.

Motion by R.Sink to spend \$500 to boost Facebook ads for the Holiday Raffle. Second by V.Garibay and approved with all in favor.

- b. Develop an annual media schedule - Tabled for January.
5. Discuss events/programs/committees.
- a. COVID recovery activities – There will be some money coming out for lodging and restaurants. There is likely to be more federal money after January 20th.
 - b. Website Update – Mr. Sawyer recognized the efforts of Vice-Chair Johnson for the amount of effort and time he has put into the Downtown website page. The homepage will be redesigned.
 - c. BINGO, Holiday Raffle, FoT, Last Night, etc -
 - i. Bingo - It shut down on Sunday. There were twelve submissions. Mr. Sawyer recognized Member Garibay for the effort he me gave in getting prizes. All the prizes will be given away.
 - ii. Holiday Raffle – Member Richards got the printed material today and will be distributing it. Thirty businesses are participating. Each business gave at least two gifts cards. The sponsorship money was used to purchase gifts cards at all of the participating businesses.
 - iii. FoT – Member Howard stated that they did a soft opening with the trees yesterday. They will be kept up through most of the holiday season. Sixty or seventy dinners have been sold so far. They would like to have a Santa in an empty store front with a background so that the kids could visit safely.
 - iv. Last Night – Member Reed reached out to Northwest Action TV. They will be doing a free two hour special on New Year's Eve. They have all

of the equipment and will be sending it to the participants who will be doing pre-recorded clips. They have been reaching out to bands but cannot have people from multiple households so selection is limited. There will be full online paint and sips. Mr. Sawyer stated that the committee came up with the idea of local celebrities volunteering to do something like kiss the pig. There would be a vote ahead of time. Member Howard suggested that each vote be a dollar to make this a fundraiser. An idea was to invite all of the former mayors to participate. Member Howard asked if there would be snack specials to take home from local restaurants. Vice-Chair Johnson suggested a countdown to midnight and do a snack special give away every ten minutes. The time of the special was discussed so that there would be the most viewership. Member Howard suggested using the drone footage of last year's fireworks. Vice-Chair Johnson suggested drone footage of a tree lighting in the park. There was an agreement to have a check-in next week on Last Night.

- d. Welcome Decals – Mr. Sawyer presented the welcome decal. It will be a small window cling decal. There was a discussion of having different options and each business could decide which option they wanted. They will be given away for free. Member Howard suggested doing a large one in the park and having the little ones echo it. Vice-Chair Johnson offered to help with the digital design.
 - e. Downtown Dollars – Downtown Dollars are available on line. There have been some ads in the Messenger and on Facebook. Member Garibay asked if there was a way to have all the businesses participate. He volunteered to contact the non-participating businesses.
 - f. Arts – No new developments
 - g. Other – Member Garibay is hosting a blood drive at St. Mary's on December 27th from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm. It will also be a can drive for Northwest Family Food. Operation Happiness has drop offs in Georgia, St. Albans and Swanton. The bookmobile is also doing a book drive. There is a drop off outside of the Eloquent Page.
6. Other Business.
- a. Board terms expiring – Chair Brown and Members Howard and Sink have terms expiring at the end of this year. Mr. Sawyer has sent out emails asking if they would like to renew their terms.
 - b. Approval of Minutes.

Motion by D.Howard to approve the minutes of October 27, 2020 as presented. Second by E.Reed and approved with all in favor, except D.Howard abstaining.

- c. Next meeting date and format – The Board canceled the Dec. 22 meeting by consensus.
 - d. Other.
7. Public Comment – None.
8. Adjourn.

Motion by E.Richards to adjourn. Second by E.Reed. Meeting adjourned at 7:53 PM.