



SPECIAL CALLED MEETING

Annual Planning Retreat

January 15, 2025, at 8:30 a.m.

Town Board Meeting Room

9 S. Main Street

MINUTES

Downtown Waynesville Commission Chair, Dave Barone, called the meeting to order at 8:41 a.m. with the following members present: Jay Spiro

Joyce Massie
Grace Mason
Kirk Noonan
Alex McKay
Jessica Garrick

Staff present: Beth Gilmore, Executive Director, Downtown Waynesville Commission

Others present: Hannah White, Community and Economic Development Manager

Joy Almond, Main Street Program Specialist, N.C. Main Street & Rural Planning Center,
N.C. Dept. of Commerce

Ann Bass, ARC Community Economic Development Planner, Western Region,
Rural Economic Development, N.C. Dept. of Commerce

Paul Nielsen, News Reporter, Mountaineer Publishing

DWC Chair Barone welcomed board members and turned the meeting over to N.C. Main Street Program Specialist Joy Almond and ARC Community Economic Development Planner Ann Bass, from separate divisions within the N.C. Department of Commerce.



Almond said she understands the complexities of managing a local Main Street program. She recently stepped into the role as program specialist at the state level, after spending seven years as the director of Albemarle's Main Street program. Her focus is now on providing support for local programs in North Carolina's Western Region.

Almond offered board members a review of Main Street's "Four-Points"- Organization, Promotion, Economic Vitality and Design.

"Waynesville's Downtown is very charming," she said. "It looks like a Hallmark movie."

Almond asked DWC board members each to share about what they consider their "super-power" to be.

DWC Chair Barone announced a decision made by the Waynesville Town Council to approve a request to move forward with forming a 501(c)3 nonprofit extension of the DWC. The request was granted to allow DWC members to work with Town Staff and Attorney Martha Bradley to establish the nonprofit and present Articles of Incorporation for Council's review.

Almond said while she was director in Albemarle, they also converted to the quasi-public model, but the dynamics were different because they transitioned from a nonprofit to a quasi- program, as opposed to going from city to quasi like the DWC will do. The most significant benefit will be the DWC's eligibility for funding projects and programs with grants that are not available to municipalities. She encouraged board members as they work through the annual work plan to consider which projects and tasks can be delegated to the nonprofit once it's formed.

Almond led DWC Board Members through a review of the organization's annual work plan.

DWC member Spiro said he is "amazed" at the progress the DWC has made since adopting a vision statement in 2022. "I think we have made great steps forward toward accomplishing our vision," he said.

Almond said after reviewing the DWC's annual work plan with DWC Director Gilmore and Ann Bass, she recommends scaling back the plan to two economic strategies instead of three, to make the plan more manageable.



Gilmore suggested removing the “Base Camp” strategy for now, to focus on “Mountain Heritage” and “Center of Commerce” strategies. Outdoor adventure-themed retail offerings are more limited on Main Street and therefore will require the most work to build that part of our image.

DWC member Noonan agreed, stating that “base camp” also insinuates lodging, which is also limited within the district.

Furthermore, vacant space is scarce within the district which limits the potential to grow “base camp” retail offerings, Almond added. Bass said a lot of outdoor amenities in this region are still temporarily closed since Hurricane Helene. She suggested “taking a hiatus” from that part of the plan temporarily and reconsidering it later.

Board members agreed to remove “base camp” as an economic strategy from this year’s plan but opted against making any changes to the Vision statement.

DWC members discussed the objective for strategy two- to expand the number of retailers offering locally manufactured items.

DWC Member Noonan said, that seems like a waste of our time. That’s something businesses should want to encourage for themselves. We don’t need to focus our efforts on that.”

Spiro suggested that members educate merchants and encourage them to offer more locally manufactured items. Almond suggested window clings with QR codes to identify retailers who sell locally sourced goods.

Noonan said there isn’t a lot of awareness among merchants.

Gilmore noted that “scannable signs” with QR codes are included in the marketing campaign that’s in progress by Kanipe Creative.



Spiro suggested the DWC establish a way to “certify” merchants selling local goods with an “Appalachian True” distinction.

Gilmore said she has concerns about “certifying” merchants and developing a standard that would ultimately exclude some people and require someone to monitor it.

DWC Member Mason questioned if it is “fair” to the merchants who don’t want to participate, or are not able to participate? Also, if MSD tax money is being used to fund the program, it should be beneficial to all.

Noonan agreed, “this is self-regulating. We don’t need to spend our energy on this stuff.”

Bass said the City of Robbinsville launched a similar campaign to identify locally made products by providing merchants with a small sticker to put on items that are made locally, rather than marking the business.

DWC members liked the idea and White pointed out that it will align with the mission of the nonprofit.

DWC members reviewed the annual work plan to identify which “strategy 1 projects” should be retained and shifted to a different part of the plan.

DWC Member Massie said she would like to see a new “Meet Me at The Arch” event added to the calendar to mark the June anniversary.

DWC Member Spiro noted that Sylva takes advantage of having the most popular courthouse and people come from everywhere to see the building. Waynesville should capitalize on the Gateway arch in the same way. He added that the board has done a lot of work toward planning projects, now it’s time to implement.

DWC Member Massie said she feels “out of the loop” on certain projects and would like to receive more consistent updates.

DWC Board members discussed the Time Square project and whether now is the time to pursue those plans.



Ann Bass suggested the board approach the Time Square project from a different perspective, by first determining what activities the space will be used for and then designing the project to accommodate the intended use.

Executive Director Gilmore offered an update on the mural project. We are ready to issue an RFQ for artist bids but can't move forward with the RFQ until the funds are available to cover the cost of the project. We can't determine the cost until we open it up for bids, so we are at a standstill until we have a better idea about cost and a plan for funding.

Board members reviewed each project within the annual plan, removing projects that have been completed and updating the plan with new ideas to pursue during the upcoming year.

Board members discussed the formation of committees to manage projects and decided to continue with "Four Point committees" delegated to projects segregated amongst the Four Points- Design, Promotions, Organization and Economic Vitality. Each committee will be chaired by a DWC board member and include a blend of board members and non-board member stakeholders who have an interest in the MSD.

The following committees were formed and chairs appointed:

- Organization Committee Chair: Grace Mason. DWC committee members: Dave Barone.
- Promotions Committee Chair: Jessica Garrick. DWC committee members: Joyce Massie, Ava Harvat, Beth Gilmore.
- Design Committee Chair: Kirk Noonan. DWC committee members: Jay Spiro, Alex McKay. Stakeholder members: Carla Youse and Thomas Woltz.
- Economic Vitality Chair: Hannah White. Stakeholder members: Ann Bass.

Executive Director Gilmore explained the next steps should be to establish a monthly meeting schedule for each committee and begin recruiting additional members. The board will wait to adopt a final annual work plan after committee members have been selected and project plans have been established, delegated to volunteers and assigned deadlines.

The next DWC meeting will be held on February 18 at 8:30 a.m.



A motion to adjourn by Alex McKay, seconded by Jessica Garrick, carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:42 p.m.

ATTEST:

Dave Barone, Board Chair

Beth Gilmore, Executive Director