

DOWNTOWN WAYNESVILLE COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING

MINUTES

March 21, 2023, at 8:30 a.m.

Municipal Building Conference Room

Downtown Waynesville Commission Chair Jay Spiro called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. with the following members present:

Jon Feichter
Joyce Massie
Bob Williams
Jeremiah Smith
Courtney Tetrault
Susanne Blumer
Jeremiah Smith
Alex McKay

Members present on Zoom: Thomas Woltz

Staff members present: Jesse Fowler, Assistant Town Manager
Beth Gilmore, Executive Director

Others present: Spencer Tetrault

A motion by Courtney Tetrault, seconded by Susanne Blumer, to approve the minutes from DWC meetings on January 5 and February 21 carried unanimously.

DWC members who attended the Main Street Conference in Statesville shared highlights and insight.

DWC Chair Spiro said he had a great time and highlighted a tour of a \$1.4 million renovation project to convert an old building into lower-level retail space and upper story residential units. He said he learned a lot about historic tax credits and believes that finishing upper story units should be a priority on Main Street. He encouraged all board members to review conference sessions when they become available.

DWC Vice Chair Massie said she really enjoyed one session entitled, "Oh Dear, We Need a Volunteer" and urged all to take advantage of the conference presentations. Executive Director Gilmore will make the presentations available.

Spiro suggested that the DWC invite Jim Reece (one of the conference presenters) to talk with board members about revitalization efforts in Mt. Airy. DWC Member Woltz offered to help arrange the meeting.

DWC Member Tetrault said two conference sessions stood out to her- "Power of the façade" and "social districts." Tetrault noted there are free architectural design services available through UNCG to Main Street members. District members need to be made aware of this service.

Social Districts have been established in more than 30 municipalities across North Carolina, with almost no negative feedback. Tetrault said social district designations are making a big impact in terms of revenue and the amount of time people are spending downtown.

“It’s evident that those are topics we’ve really got to hone in on,” Massie said, emphasizing that the crux of the program is all about historic preservation. “Our main goal as a part of the Main Street program is preservation. We must stay mindful of that.”

DWC Member McKay explained there are national historic standards and local standards. Town leaders have more control over local districts and little control over national listings.

Board members held a brief discussion about historic landmark rules and tax credits. Spiro suggested the DWC should consider holding a district forum to educate the public about these standards.

Referencing another session, Spiro added that it’s important for the DWC to not become an event planning organization. Although special events are important, it’s easy to get lost in event details and lose focus on the other work we are responsible for doing.

Following a discussion about “eye sore” facades and how to approach buildings/awnings that need repair, members discussed the need for a façade grant program.

Assistant Town Manager Jesse Fowler said the town is working to draft a façade grant program.

Spencer Tetrault questioned how long that takes.

DWC Member Smith said the board should develop a façade grant program that includes incentives.

Assistant Manager Fowler said he enjoyed a session about the importance of asset mapping and using Google maps as a tool to do it.

DWC Member Tetrault said she also learned a lot during a session about vacant building policies, suggesting that the DWC consider implementing a policy that imposes penalties on property owners who allow buildings to remain vacant for extended periods.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:

In the absence of the Promotions Chair, Executive Director Gilmore presented an estimate from Hornsby Creative for designing a promotional brochure that includes an illustrated map of the district.

A motion by Joyce Massie, seconded by Susanne Blumer, to approve a \$2,500 contract with Hornsby Creative to design a promotional brochure with an illustrated map carried unanimously.

Executive Director Gilmore said plans are coming together for the launch of a “name brand” Appalachian True event focused on mountain heritage, lifestyle, and customs. The event, slated for April 20, 2024, is being planned in partnership with Haywood Community College, the Haywood County Arts Council, the Shelton House, and Folkmoot. It will be a 3-day event. The DWC will be responsible for hosting a Saturday vendor market on Main Street with live music and dance, educational displays, live demonstrations, and live performances by HCC’s lumberjack team.

There was no report from the Economic Vitality committee.

Design Chair Blumer reported that Hornsby is finalizing mural concepts and will present them at the next Design Subcommittee meeting in April. Assistant Town Manager Fowler announced the DWC was awarded \$7,000 from the Medford grant to be used to install “bumpouts.” The DWC also has \$17,500 set aside for this project, and there is also some money available in the Developmental Services budget.

Executive Director Gilmore said she and Fowler have been talking with attorneys to get estimates on trademark and copy right services for the new brand. There is a possibility that it could cost more than the \$1,500 originally allocated for this service.

A motion by Joyce Massie, seconded by Alex McKay, to allocate up to \$2,500 for trademark and copy right services if it's available in the current year's budget carried unanimously.

DWC members agreed that it's time to develop a plan for moving forward with social districts. A “social districts subcommittee” was formed including DWC members Massie, Smith and Tetrault. The subcommittee will meet on Friday, April 24 at 9:00 a.m. at Orchard Coffee.

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

A motion to adjourn by Alex McKay, seconded by Courtney Tetrault, carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m.

ATTEST:

Jay Spiro, Board Chair

Beth Gilmore, Executive Director