

**MANSFIELD DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIP  
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION COMMITTEE  
September 11, 2014  
5:00 PM  
Mansfield Downtown Partnership Office  
23 Royce Circle**

**MINUTES**

Present: Curt Hirsch, Ron Liu, Paul McCarthy, Matt Rusconi, Rene Schein

Staff: Cynthia van Zelm

Guest: Steve Smith, part-owner of Dog Lane Cafe

**1. Call to Order**

Partnership Executive Director Cynthia van Zelm called the meeting to order in Chair Steve Rogers absence, at 5:00 pm.

**2. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**3. Presentation from Steve Smith, part-owner of Dog Lane Café**

At Mr. Rogers suggestion, Ms. van Zelm invited Steve Smith, part-owner of Dog Lane Café to talk about his experience as a new business in Storrs Center. Mr. Smith said overall their experience has been very positive. The summers have exceeded expectations.

He noted that they continue to seek information on events going on at UConn so they can be prepared for customers. Paul McCarthy said UConn has good information on the intercollegiate games but less of a handle on camps and clinics since they are run privately.

Mr. McCarthy said UConn University Events and Conference Services would have all the events. Ms. van Zelm said that the Director Cara Workman has provided information on all the major UConn events to the businesses at prior monthly business meetings. Ms. van Zelm said the goal is for Kathleen Paterson with the Partnership to provide an updated list to the tenants at their October meeting.

Mr. McCarthy will also give Ms. van Zelm a contact at UConn Athletics who will have a schedule of all sports events on campus.

Mr. Smith said he is hearing less complaints about parking than previously.

Ms. van Zelm asked Matt Rusconi (Moe's and Mooyahs), Ron Liu (H.A. Café) and Rene Schein (Storrs Automotive) about their experience.

Mr. Rusconi said his experience has been that summer was better than expected as well, and this summer was better than last. He noted the correlation with the downtown and the rise in reputation of UConn. People in eastern Connecticut now have a destination.

He noted that the trash location for business trash was not ideal as it is not right next to the business.

Ron Liu said that the location of H.A. Café near construction has resulted in some growing pains. He said with further build out, there has been more traffic in his restaurant. He noted that the local community comes out more in the summer. He is continuing to work to engage customers from the Hartford area.

He encouraged consistency of parking enforcement for the on-street parking near his business.

Rene Schein said her new location has affected her business in a positive way. Parking in the Dog Lane lot can be an issue as non-customers continue to park in her designated spots.

All mentioned a concern about whether there would be a saturation of the market, especially for restaurants and retail. Is there a finite pie? They expressed interest in the development team being cognizant of the tenant mix. At that same time, with more apartments and housing coming on line, there will be a larger pie.

A question was asked about whether there had been discussion about shuttles to and from the downtown to the UConn games. Mr. McCarthy and Ms. van Zelm said they were both involved in these discussions and had hoped this would come to fruition but staffing and finances became an issue. Mr. McCarthy said the last discussion was whether the businesses downtown would be interested in collaborating on paying for the shuttles. He said UConn Athletics was very interested in enhancing the fan experience by making the parking and traffic more seamless. Ms. van Zelm will follow-up.

#### **4. Approval of Minutes from July 10, 2014**

Ms. Schein made a motion to approve the minutes of July 10, 2014. Mr. McCarthy seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

#### **5. Discussion of Storrs Center Business Questions/Issues and Ideas for Marketing**

The discussion of Storrs Center business questions was addressed in the above Agenda Item.

Mr. McCarthy referred to the filming by ESPN of Storrs Center tomorrow for a spot during the UConn/Boise State game on Saturday. He said the shots are shown before commercial breaks. The game is being televised nationally so it is great exposure. The shots will be good for a while and then hopefully ESPN will do additional filming in the winter.

Ms. Schein asked if ads in the UConn/WRTD buses had been pursued. Ms. van Zelm said the Partnership has had an ad about the Festival on UConn buses but not on a regular basis. She will follow-up with UConn and WRTD.

Ms. van Zelm said the ReminderNews is publishing an Almanac on a quarterly basis and one of the features will be Storrs Center. She shared the Storrs Center page and indicated that businesses will be receiving an introductory letter from her asking if they want to purchase a business card ad on the facing page of the Storrs Center page.

Ms. van Zelm mentioned the future events that would benefit downtown businesses including the Festival next week, the Pup Crawl on the morning of October 18, and trick or treating on October 25 from 4 pm to 5 pm.

#### **6. Update on Tenanting and Ideas for future Businesses**

Ms. van Zelm said that CVS should be opening at the end of September and Brueggers Bagels/Jamba Juice in October.

Mr. Liu asked whether there would be entertainment attractions in the next phase that would serve as destinations. He suggested a movie theater or bowling alley. Also, what about a Forever 21 or Urban Outfitters?

There was some surprise by Committee members that retail has not been attracted to Storrs Center yet, given the UConn audience.

Mr. McCarthy suggested an Apple store or Nike outlet.

## **7. Adjourn**

Ms. Schein made a motion to adjourn. Ms. McCarthy seconded the motion. The motion was approved. The meeting adjourned at 6:20 pm.

*Minutes taken by Cynthia van Zelm.*