

**MANSFIELD DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIP  
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION COMMITTEE  
October 9, 2014  
5:00 PM  
Mansfield Downtown Partnership Office  
23 Royce Circle**

**MINUTES**

Present: Steve Rogers (Chair), Jessica Chiep (co-owner with Ron Liu of H.A. Café), Jennifer Holt, Curt Hirsch, Paul McCarthy, Rene Schein

Staff: Cynthia van Zelm

Guest: Jacob Buck, part-owner of Friendly Fire

**1. Call to Order**

Steve Rogers called the meeting to order at 5:05 pm.

**2. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**3. Presentation from Storrs Center business – Friendly Fire**

Mr. Rogers said the Committee's role continues to evolve as Storrs Center gets built out. The Committee wanted to keep in touch with the businesses to see what their experience has been in Storrs Center and if they have any concerns. At the invitation of the Committee, Jacob Buck, part owner of Friendly Fire, was invited to attend the meeting.

Mr. Buck said that Friendly Fire opened in the former Grand Union plaza about six years ago. Business had been slow so when he and his business partner Dan Keener heard about Storrs Center, they pursued locating there. They moved into 9 Dog Lane on June 1, 2013.

Mr. Buck said Friendly Fire is a combination of a cyber café and hobby shop. They sell space to customers to play games. They also stock and host board games.

Mr. Buck said that business does slow down in the summer but they are having more events in the summer to increase their traffic.

There was an issue when customers came to the late night events and had trouble getting out of the parking garage if they have been there for more than 8 hours, but that appears to have been resolved.

Customers can play individual and group video games.

Friendly Fire has coordinated with E.O. Smith High School which has a board game club.

He said that customers range in age from teenagers to people in their 50's.

Mr. Rogers asked how Friendly Fire markets its business. Mr. Buck said a lot of the recognition is word of mouth and through facebook. They have done traditional ads in the past as well.

Mr. Buck said the rates are \$3.00 an hour or \$15 a day. Monthly passes are available as well. They are open from 11 am to 9 pm on weekdays and can close at 11 pm or 12 am on weekends or when events take place. Mr. Buck said they host board game nights on Wednesdays.

He said the business has been successful. A bad day in the Storrs Center location matches a good day in the former location.

Mr. Buck said their main clientele is UConn/Eastern/E.O. Smith with some other high school kids.

He said it was important for Friendly Fire to add the board games as many LAN centers are struggling (a LAN Center is the use of a computer connected over a LAN to other computers to play multiplayer computer games).

#### **4. Approval of Minutes from September 11, 2014**

Rene Schein made a motion to approve the minutes of September 11, 2014. Paul McCarthy seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

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

Jennifer Holt asked if the Chamber could meet with the tenants to talk about the opportunities to market through the Chamber and to generally provide information the Chamber. Ms. van Zelm said there is a tenant meeting next week and she will follow-up with master developer LeylandAlliance who hosts the meetings.

Cynthia van Zelm said the pub crawl (dog walk) will be held on October 18 from 9:30 am to 11:00 am and will include a walk from the Town Square to the Moss Sanctuary. She said trick or treating is also planned in the downtown on October 25 from 4 pm to 5 pm.

Ms. Holt asked about the success of the Celebrate Mansfield Festival. Ms. Chiep said it helped H.A. Café that the tents were set up down Dog Lane and Royce Circle so that people realize the other businesses that are located there.

Mr. Rogers asked if the monthly Square Fairs had a positive effect on business. Ms. Chiep said she did not see a significant change in business on those Fridays.

The Committee continued to discuss the lack of a central website for all events at UConn. Mr. McCarthy said that Athletics has its own calendar but non-UConn athletic events are not necessarily captured on UConn calendars. Ms. van Zelm said she would continue to work with UConn on providing information on various events on campus. Cara Workman with University Events has presented to the tenants a calendar of events in the past. Ms. van Zelm will work with the Partnership staff to at least provide updated information to businesses on major events at Jorgensen, school vacations, etc.

Ms. van Zelm provided information on advertising on UConn buses (handout) as discussed at the last meeting.

#### **6. Adjourn**

The Committee decided not to meet in November and December unless a pressing issue occurs. The next meeting will be in January.

Ms. Schein made a motion to adjourn. Ms. McCarthy seconded the motion. The motion was approved. The meeting adjourned at 5:55 pm.

*Minutes taken by Cynthia van Zelm.*