



**Mansfield Downtown Partnership
Board of Directors
January 5, 2023
Virtual
4:30 PM
Minutes**

Present: Ryan Aylesworth, Brian Coleman, Mario Conjura, Frank Gifford, Louis Goffinet, Rachel Goldberg, Toni Moran, Kyle Muncy, Ron Schurin, Colby Trembley, Emily Wicks, and Cara Workman

Absent: Steve Ferrigno, Sean Vasington

Staff: Cynthia van Zelm, Executive Director; Kathleen Paterson, Senior Communications Manager; Denise Kegler, Event Coordinator; Joshua Stern, Administrative Assistant

1. Call to Order

President Kyle Muncy called the meeting to order at 4:32 p.m.

2. Opportunity for Public to Comment

There was no public comment.

3. Approval of Minutes of November 3, 2022

Toni Moran made a motion to approve the November 3, 2022 minutes. Mario Conjura seconded the motion. The motion passed with Brian Coleman abstaining and all others in favor.

The Board recognized Denise Kegler, who will be leaving her position as Event Coordinator for the Partnership next week. She plans to continue to attend and volunteer at Partnership events and continue supporting the downtown in other ways. The Board will be holding a luncheon for Ms. Kegler next week at Kathmandu Kitchen.

4. Executive Director Report

Ms. Kegler said the weather presented some challenges for Winter Welcome, held on December 3, but indoor alternatives were found for most components of the event. Several of the displays, performances, and meet-and-greets were held in the Nash-Zimmer Transportation Center, with the meet-and-greet with Santa Claus in Barnes & Noble and performances by Nanette Adesso and Husky Hungama at the Ballard Institute. The Ballard also presented a light and puppetry show. Due to high winds, the Public Works department was unable to erect all but one of the trees for the Trim-a-Tree contest safely, but the Stuff-a-Cruiser toy drive still took place there; the rest of the trees were donated along with the toys. Ms. Kegler recognized the Public Works Department and the volunteers from the Board and said the event drew approximately 150 guests. All of the prepared gift bags, containing contributions from 17 Mansfield businesses, were given out, and Ms. Kegler hopes this aspect of the event will continue to grow.

Ryan Aylesworth praised the event and noted that it gave some people an opportunity to see the Nash-Zimmer building and the Library Express for the first time. Ms. Kegler said the Partnership staff decided to plan indoor alternatives for all elements for next year's event rather than scheduling a rain date. The downtown businesses, E. O. Smith High School, and the Mansfield Community Center are being considered as backup locations.

Cynthia van Zelm said preparations are in progress for the second annual Taste 2 Towns Restaurant Week, which will take place February 20 - March 5. The event website will soon be updated, and Kathleen Paterson has contacted the restaurants that participated last year. In response to a question from Ms. Moran about whether local restaurant chains can participate, Ms. van Zelm said the list of restaurants to invite is being expanded from last year. Mr. Coleman noted that the Mansfield restaurants were left out of much of the media coverage of last year's event. Ms. Paterson said the staff team is planning to be more deliberative this year about securing coverage rather than expecting the restaurants to do most of their own promoting. Mr. Coleman and Ms. Moran said some of last year's participating restaurants did not have the Restaurant Week specials that were promoted on the website. Ms. Paterson said the team has been focusing on providing the participating restaurants with a list of steps they will need to take to make the program successful.

Ms. van Zelm said the staff team for the Wayfinding and Signage Plan met with consultant team Merje on two days in November and December and have almost finished determining the locations for the signs. The Plan is for the entire Town, and Board member Sean Vasington was involved in planning the signs for Downtown Storrs. Ms. van Zelm and Ms. Paterson will meet next week with representatives from Merje to discuss next steps, with the goal of enacting the Plan beginning in February or March.

Mr. Coleman asked if digital signs that could promote events had been considered as part of the Plan. Ms. van Zelm said the Plan consists of traditional landmark signs, but noted that the Public Works Department often puts up a digital sign at the corner of Storrs Road and South Eagleville Road to advertise the Festival and other Town events. She also mentioned the kiosk planned in Downtown Storrs. Rachel Goldberg said signage in front of the restaurants participating in Restaurant Week could help promote this event. Ms. Paterson said that in addition to the posters promoting Restaurant Week, signage is being developed for the restaurants to display during the event. She said the types of signs used in the Town-wide Signage Plan are highly budget dependent.

Ms. van Zelm said the applications for the second round of the Town's ARPA Local Business and Nonprofit Relief Fund Program are being reviewed. So far, 18 applications from businesses and nonprofits from throughout the Town have been approved. Mr. Coleman asked if the Board could receive a list of which businesses and nonprofits received funding. Ms. van Zelm said Mr. Aylesworth will need to determine what information can be released.

Ms. van Zelm said she and Joshua Stern have been researching customer relationship management (CRM) programs, a priority listed in the Downtown Storrs Strategic Action Plan. So far, they have interviewed three CRM firms, and Mr. Stern viewed and took notes on a demo video from a fourth. He and Ms. van Zelm plan to discuss their findings with Governance Committee Chair Frank Gifford, with the goal of selecting a program to implement for the beginning of the next fiscal year.

Ms. van Zelm said the Planning and Zoning Commission recently received a pre-application for a Chipotle Mexican Grill on the corner of South Eagleville Road and Storrs Road, adjacent to Mansfield

Apartments. The PZC held a non-binding discussion of the proposal, at which the issue of traffic was discussed extensively. The development team is currently reviewing the comments from the meeting.

5. Report and Action Items from Committees/Working Groups

Working Groups

Mr. Muncy said the Sustainable Funding Working Group has not met since the last Board meeting. The chairs of the other working groups were not present.

Celebrate Mansfield Festival

Chair Emily Wicks said the Festival Committee will have its first meeting of the year next week.

Executive

The Executive Committee has not met since the last Board meeting.

Governance

Chair Frank Gifford said the Governance Committee met November 28 and discussed the annual Board Assessment survey. He reminded the Board members to fill out the survey and send it to Mr. Muncy by January 13. Mr. Coleman requested that the survey be anonymous if possible. Mr. Gifford and Mr. Muncy said the form is not intended to be anonymous, but that Mr. Muncy is the only person who can see which feedback comes from which Board members. Mr. Gifford said members are welcome to provide additional anonymous input independently of the form.

Finance and Growth

Chair Toni Moran said the Finance and Growth Committee recommends that the Board approve the September 30, 2022 financials.

Ms. Moran moved to approve the September 30, 2022 financials as presented. The motion was approved unanimously.

Ms. Moran added that the Committee has begun to work on the budget for the next fiscal year. The Town and UConn have both committed to increasing their contributions, for a total of \$175,000.

6. Correspondence and Communications

All noted.

7. Adjourn

Ms. Moran moved to adjourn. Mr. Trembley seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 5:19 p.m.