



**Mansfield Downtown Partnership
Board of Directors
February 2, 2023
Virtual**

4:30 PM

Minutes

Present: Ryan Aylesworth, Mario Conjura (joined at 5:15 p.m.), Steve Ferrigno, Frank Gifford, Rachel Goldberg (joined at 4:35 p.m.), Toni Moran, Kyle Muncy, Ron Schurin (left at 5:13 p.m.), Colby Trembley, Sean Vasington, Emily Wicks (joined at 4:34 p.m.), and Cara Workman

Absent: Brian Coleman, Louis Goffinet

Staff: Cynthia van Zelm, Executive Director; Joshua Stern, Administrative Assistant

1. Call to Order

President Kyle Muncy called the meeting to order at 4:31 p.m.

2. Opportunity for Public to Comment

There was no public comment.

3. Approval of Minutes of January 5, 2023

Toni Moran made a motion to approve the January 5, 2023 minutes. Steve Ferrigno seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Executive Director Report

Cynthia van Zelm said preparations are underway for the second annual Taste 2 Towns Restaurant Week. So far, Dog Lane Café, Little Aladdin, Fenton River Grill, Gansett Wraps, Hops 44, Stix 'n' Stones, and Coyote Flaco are committed to participating, and the Partnership is waiting to hear back from some other restaurants. Monday is the deadline for restaurants to sign up, and the major publicity efforts will begin next week.

Emily Wicks joined the meeting at 4:34 p.m. and Rachel Goldberg joined at 4:35 p.m.

Ms. van Zelm said the Connecticut's Countryside initiative held a summit this past Monday to update stakeholders on the progress that has been made on marketing Mansfield, Coventry, Bolton, and Tolland as a region. The summit was well attended and included presentations on the major pillars of the initiative. A marketing brochure for the region is being produced with consultant DKA, and Nichols College is developing a website for Connecticut's Countryside. The region will also apply for an Eastern Regional Tourism District grant, which would go toward creating videos for the website. The hope is that committees will come out of the summit.

Cara Workman asked if the information from the summit is being compiled. Ms. van Zelm said Connecticut's Countryside intern Josh Hull is working on a draft. Ms. Workman and Ms. Moran praised the summit, with Ms. Moran saying it opened up the possibility of joint meetings of conservation or agriculture commissions from different towns in the region. She said the initiative will be looking for volunteers in the future. Ms. Workman said she will be in touch with the UConn Foundation about ways to encourage interaction between UConn students and alumni living in the region.

Sean Vasington asked if the Town keeps a list of the geographic designations it is located within, such as Connecticut's Countryside, Mystic Country, and the Last Green Valley Heritage Corridor. He said this list would be useful for UConn to have as well. Ms. van Zelm said Administrative Assistant Joshua Stern could help compile this information.

5. Set April Meeting Date

Board members and staff noted that the April meeting date had been left undetermined because the first Thursday of April is the first day of Passover. The Board discussed possible dates for the meeting and settled on Monday, April 3.

Emily Wicks made a motion to schedule the April Board meeting for Monday, April 3, 2023 at 4:30 p.m. Ms. Moran seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

6. Executive Director Evaluation at March Meeting

Mr. Muncy noted that Ms. van Zelm's evaluation is scheduled for the March 2 Board meeting and that the Executive Committee will meet earlier that day to begin the evaluation. He reminded the Board members to fill out the evaluation form included in the meeting packet by February 20. Ms. van Zelm will complete a self-evaluation and progress report by February 6.

7. Report and Action Items from Committees/Working Groups

Working Groups

Mr. Vasington said the Strategic Action Plan dashboard was updated January 24; 12 of the 15 Tier 1 strategies and 2 of the 7 Tier 2 strategies are currently in progress. He said the Promotion/Public Spaces Working Group met last week. A local artist recently contacted the Partnership with a proposal to create art in one of the empty storefronts. There would be a small stipend associated with her work. Mr. Vasington suggested issuing solicitations to artists with a stipend commensurate with the initial stipend.

Mr. Vasington said the Promotion/Public Spaces Working Group also met with the Department of Public Works Engineering Office to discuss the potential expansion of Betsy Paterson Square. He said there are no imminent plans by the Town or the State Department of Transportation for such an expansion, but he has offered to create some diagrams as a basis for further discussion.

The Board viewed and discussed the artist's rendering of the proposed mural and suggested a few changes on layout. Ms. Wicks said two UConn art professors plan to have their classes create murals in the downtown, to be installed around March 20 and remain through May 6. One class plans to create a tape mural, most likely in the former Wingstop space; the other class has made paintings that will be printed and installed in the former Geno's Grille space.



Ms. van Zelm said the UConn Landscape Architecture program's work with the Partnership will begin soon, with a site walk February 22, a planning session March 24, and a walkthrough March 27 with the class that will be making the recommendations. A final review with the Working Group will take place April 28, and the students or their professors will present to the Board at its May 4 meeting.

Ms. van Zelm said signage consultant Merje is working on the final programming for the Town-wide signage plan. The signage steering committee will meet February 16 and plans to give an informational presentation to the Town Council on February 27. The hope is to begin installation of the signs in the fall and to begin the installation in the downtown. Ms. Goldberg expressed interest in joining the tour of the downtown.

Mr. Ferrigno, Chair of the Business Owner/Property Owner Engagement Working Group, said the group met last week and discussed increasing traffic to and from the downtown, possibly by facilitating the use of a food delivery system like Uber Eats or DoorDash to UConn dorms. The group is also discussing a project to capture the positive narrative of the downtown by engaging UConn students to write profiles of the downtown businesses. These pieces could be published in *Mansfield Connections* and distributed on social media. In response to a question from Joshua Stern about whether *The Daily Campus* or the UConn Journalism department would be involved, Mr. Ferrigno said Ms. Goldberg plans to speak with some of UConn's English professors about engaging their classes.

Mr. Muncy, Chair of the Sustainable Funding Working Group, said he and Ms. van Zelm recently had a call with one of the property owners and sent out appeal letters to the major property owners. The Hart Realty Group has recommitted to its contribution, and other contributors have been asked to give on an annual basis rather than separately for each event.

Ron Schurin left the meeting at 5:13 p.m. and Mario Conjura joined at 5:15 p.m.

Celebrate Mansfield Festival

Chair Emily Wicks said the Festival Committee had its first meeting of the year and brainstormed ideas for improving the event. The Festival has been scheduled for Saturday, September 30, with the rain plan to hold the Festival the same day at E.O. Smith. Ms. Workman noted that the inauguration of President Maric will take place Friday, September 29.

Executive

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

Finance and Growth

Chair Toni Moran said the Finance and Growth Committee met to discuss the budget, which the Board will renew at its April meeting. The budget has been adjusted to accommodate changes in personnel with Event Coordinator Denise Kegler's departure.

Governance

Chair Frank Gifford said the Governance Committee met January 23 and reviewed the bylaws and the Board members' terms. The Committee also reviewed the Executive Director's updated job description and voted to recommend to the Board that it be approved.

Ms. Workman suggested that because the Executive Director is a leadership position, the description should contain more language about leading and managing rather than assisting and coordinating. She also questioned the term "good skill" and said the term "construction" should not be eliminated in case



there are future construction projects in the downtown. Board members discussed the likelihood that the Partnership will be involved in construction in the future, with Mr. Muncy noting that significant renovations will likely take place. Mr. Gifford noted that it is important not to delete the “assist” language if the Board has the lead for a particular job. He suggested that the Governance Committee review the job description again incorporating this feedback before the Board approves it.

6. Correspondence and Communications

All noted.

Ms. Moran noted that public tours of the newly completed Mansfield Elementary School will be offered starting in the next month.

7. Adjourn

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

The meeting adjourned at 5:31 p.m.