

MINUTES

Members Present: Chair S. Ferrigno, K. Dilaj, N. McKenney, L. Watson

Members Absent: L. Aldrich, A. Raggi, V. Souter-Kline

Ex-Officio Members Present: A. Moran, B. Coleman

Ex-Officio Members Absent: None

Staff Present: C. van Zelm, Executive Director, Mansfield Downtown Partnership; J. Stern, Administrative Assistant, Mansfield Downtown Partnership

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Ferrigno called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Watson MOVED, McKenney SECONDED to approve the January 19, 2023 minutes as presented. Motion PASSED unanimously.

4. REPORTS

A. Subcommittee Reports

Ferrigno said the Development Project Review Subcommittee met recently to discuss the proposed moratorium on use of the DMR and PVRA zones and the proposed amendment related to affordable housing. The Subcommittee wrote a letter, included in the meeting packet, to the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Ferrigno and other members of the Business Support and Outreach Subcommittee plan to resume business visits soon.

B. Staff Updates

a. Restaurant Week – taste2towns.com – Feb. 20 to March 5

Van Zelm listed the eight Mansfield restaurants participating in Restaurant Week and said Partnership Senior Communications Manager Kathleen Paterson and Town Communications Specialist Margaret Chatey are involved in promotion efforts. Lt. Gov. Bysiewicz will hold a press conference about Restaurant Week on Friday at Trigo Wood Fired Pizza; Moran and Town Manager Ryan Aylesworth will attend, and the participating restaurant owners from both towns have been invited. A total of 21 restaurants are participating between the two towns.

Van Zelm said the Connecticut's Countryside initiative held a summit to inform stakeholders about the ongoing efforts to promote the region. The possibility of forming regional committees to promote agriculture, culture and entertainment, and outdoor recreation throughout the region is being discussed. The Connecticut's Countryside team has also applied for a grant from the Eastern Regional Tourism District to create a video to go along with an upcoming promotional brochure.

C. Business Updates (Openings/Closings)

Stern said Brooklyn Dumpling Shop closed earlier this month. Fade Masons Barbershop and the GoPuff distribution center, both near Four Corners, recently closed as well. Spice Venue opened in late January in the Fresh Fork Café space, and Kathmandu Kitchen has brought back its lunch buffet on Fridays. Chase Bank is scheduled to open in the former Bruegger's Bagels/Jamba Juice space sometime in the spring. Music center Waldron's Studio 88 relocated from Willimantic to Kirby Mill in Mansfield.

D. Housing Updates

Ferrigno noted the link to the development map maintained by the Planning and Zoning office. He said the Holiday Mall and associated buildings have been leveled, and site work is underway for The Standard at Four Corners.

Coleman noted that there have been public concerns about the activity in the Four Corners area. He thinks the public should be made aware of the zoning regulations and the Opportunity Zone. The Commission discussed the Opportunity Zone and some current and proposed developments, noting that The Standard and other projects have been in the works for years and that abutters receive notice when an application for development is being considered.

E. EDC Calendar

There are no significant updates.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS AT MEETING

A. DRAFT Town Council Budget Presentation Outline

Ferrigno pointed to the outline of the budget presentation included in the meeting packet and said last year's presentation was used as a template. The presentation will most likely be given at one of the two Town Council meetings in March.

B. Business Networking Event

Ferrigno said the Downtown Partnership has held networking events for the businesses in the downtown, and the EDC has discussed the possibility of expanding the events to Mansfield businesses in general. He said early summer might be the best time for such an event and that the EDC could begin by inviting businesses where EDC members conducted business visits before the pandemic.

C. Town/UConn Collaboration Update

The Town/UConn framework team has not met since the last EDC meeting.

D. Promotion of Arts in Mansfield

Ferrigno said the staff is still waiting on input from local artists about a possible art fair. Stern and van Zelm noted that local artist Jillian Welenc has created a mural in the windows of the former Bliss space and has expressed interest in painting other spaces as well.

Van Zelm said a portion of the Town's ARPA funding has been set aside for the arts, including solicitations for public art. She worked with the Cultural Coalition and the Arts Advisory Committee (AAC) to put together a request for concepts for public art, which she hopes to send out next week. The plan is for the staff and AAC to ask the top three artists who respond for full-blown proposals; paying each artist \$1,000 was recommended as well. She noted that there is interest in digital art as well as traditional art.

Moran suggested that any public art displays be rotating rather than permanent. She noted that the trunk of the oak tree that was taken down at Betsy Paterson Square is still at the transfer station and could be used for a sculpture.

E. State of Connecticut Cultural District Discussion

Ferrigno said the Commission is looking for a contact at UConn to participate in these discussions. Van Zelm said she is waiting to hear back from Cara Workman, of UConn Events and Conference Services, about a possible contact. Dilaj said she would also be willing to reach out to someone she knows at the UConn School of Fine Arts.

Van Zelm said the Coalition will be holding another roundtable about artistic collaboration in town on February 23, and the EDC members are invited. In response to a question from Coleman, she said the Coalition is in charge of invitations and keeps a list of Mansfield artists through the Parks and Recreation department. Coleman will reach out to some artists he knows.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

All noted.

7. FUTURE MEETINGS

A. Upcoming Meeting Schedule

The next regular meeting is scheduled for March 16, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.

B. Future Meeting Topics

No future meeting topics were discussed.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Dilaj MOVED, McKenney SECONDED to adjourn. Motion PASSED unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:
Joshua Stern
Administrative Assistant
Mansfield Downtown Partnership, Inc.