

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: B. Coleman

Ex-Officio Members Absent: A. Moran

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

Others Present: Charles Ausburger, Town Council Member (joined meeting at 6:07 p.m. and left at 6:59 p.m.)

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Ferrigno called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

2. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Stern said he will correct the dates in the header of the minutes and in the approval of the previous minutes (item 3).

Watson MOVED, McKenney SECONDED to approve the February 16, 2023 minutes with the above corrections. Motion PASSED unanimously.

4. REPORTS

A. Subcommittee Reports

None of the subcommittees had met since the previous EDC meeting.

B. Staff Updates

Van Zelm said the second annual Taste 2 Towns Restaurant Week ended last week, and 21 restaurants, including 8 in Mansfield, participated this year. There was more media coverage of the event this year, including features on WFSB and WTNH, radio interviews on WILI and WHUS, and articles in *the Chronicle* and *Mansfield-Storrs Patch*. A press conference with Lt. Gov. Bysiewicz was also held at Trigo Wood Fired Pizza. The Partnership will send thank-you notes to the Mansfield restaurants and sponsors, and van Zelm will also call the participating restaurants to thank them. A survey was sent out to the restaurants, which gave positive feedback; one suggestion was for Restaurant Week to have a theme. EDC members shared positive feedback about restaurants they attended during the event.

Van Zelm said Taste of Mansfield is accepting nominations for its second Champion Awards through March 24; two nominations have been received so far. EDC member Lucy Aldrich has volunteered to serve on the committee to review the nominees; Diane Dorfer has also volunteered to serve, representing the Agriculture Committee.

McKenney, a member of the steering committee for the Connecticut's Countryside initiative, said a flyer is being produced for Connecticut's Countryside to promote the four towns at UConn, visitors' centers, and other places. A website is being developed as well to highlight the agriculture, arts and culture, outdoor activities, and other features of the region. Ferrigno suggested giving copies of the flyers to real estate offices. Van Zelm said Connecticut's Countryside received a grant from the Eastern Regional Tourism District for a promotional video, to be produced by DKA. Regional committees on agriculture and the arts are being formed as well.

C. Business Updates (Openings/Closings)

Ferrigno said a Lego store will be opening April 1 in the complex where Dollar General and Red Rock Café are located. Van Zelm said she noticed activity at the former location of Sam Tree Store. She said Chase Bank is expected to open in March or April.

D. Housing Updates

Ferrigno noted a memo from Jennifer Kaufman regarding housing updates and said work is continuing on The Standard. Van Zelm said the PZC denied the application for a Mixed-Use Center-Transition zone across the street from The Standard.

Coleman asked about the vacancy rate of The Oaks on the Square. Van Zelm said she has heard they are currently about 90% leased.

E. EDC Calendar

There are no significant updates.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS AT MEETING

A. Town Council Budget Presentation

Ferrigno and Dilaj outlined the budget presentation, which will be given to the Town Council on March 27. The presentation begins with an overview of the EDC's history and mission and lists the 2023 work priorities of the three subcommittees. It then discusses the ARPA Business and Nonprofit Relief Fund Program and the EDC's other 2022 accomplishments, including supporting Taste of Mansfield and Connecticut's Countryside. The presentation concludes with the EDC's 2023 goals, budget proposal, and recommendations to the Council. Coleman asked Ferrigno to send the presentation slides to the EDC members.

B. Business Networking Event

Ferrigno said the EDC will reach out to the Downtown Partnership Board about the possibility of partnering on a business networking event. He said it would likely take place in July or August.

C. Discussion of Center for EcoTechnology Waste Reduction Assessment for Businesses

Van Zelm said Town Recycling Coordinator Virginia Walton told her the Center for EcoTechnology, located in Massachusetts, offers free waste reduction assessments for businesses. She proposed sending the information out to Mansfield businesses through the Business Digest. The assessments are not binding and are individualized for each business. In response to a question from Coleman, van Zelm said the Center would be able to work with businesses on composting or effective use of plastics. McKenney and Dilaj expressed support for the idea.

D. Town/UConn Collaboration Update

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

E. UConn Student Collaboration

Ferrigno said he, van Zelm, and Cara Workman, Director of University Events and Conference Services at UConn, recently met with representatives from UConn's Undergraduate Student Government (USG), who expressed interest in assisting with economic development in Mansfield. The possibility of having USG support a multi-use sidewalk on Route 195 from Four Corners to the UConn campus was discussed. Aylesworth said the first of two requests for funding has been submitted for this project, part of a larger vision that includes roundabouts at Four Corners.

F. Promotion of Arts in Mansfield

Van Zelm said the Town Council has allocated a portion of the Town's ARPA funding for public art, a potential art fair, and direct grants to artists. She worked with Wendy Bury from the Cultural Coalition to develop a request for concepts encouraging artists to design potential public art displays; three artists will be chosen and compensated \$1,000 each to develop full proposals. It has been suggested that some art displays not be permanent. The request for concepts is up on the Town website and has been promoted; proposals will be accepted through April 6.

Ausburger said he recalled a proposal to design art spaces across Mansfield to encourage art to be produced on a rotating basis, potentially forming an arts trail. He said the intention was to give young residents an outlet to express themselves. Van Zelm said the request for concepts was based on what the Town Council approved in August, and she had later received the suggestion to look into art displays that are not permanent. The Arts Advisory Committee (AAC) had also mentioned the idea of an arts trail. Ferrigno and Aylesworth said possible locations for rotating art displays are listed in the request for concepts. The Commission, staff members, and Ausburger discussed the request for concepts, with Ausburger saying the AAC has expressed concern that the concept has changed from the original intent.

Van Zelm said staff and the AAC will review the concepts received. In response to questions from Coleman, Aylesworth said artists could submit ideas as individuals or in groups and that the idea of an art show or festival is still being discussed. Van Zelm said she is waiting to receive feedback from the AAC about the level of interest in this idea. Organizing an event for this spring would not be possible given the timeframe, but a small art display at the Summer Stroll in May might be possible. Aylesworth said the AAC would be the best conduit for contacting artists.

G. State of Connecticut Cultural District Discussion

Ferrigno said the EDC is in the process of identifying partners at UConn for this effort. Van Zelm said she will meet tomorrow with Workman and Bury.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

All noted.

7. FUTURE MEETINGS

A. Upcoming Meeting Schedule

The next regular meeting is scheduled for April 20, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.

B. Future Meeting Topics

No future meeting topics were discussed.

8. ADJOURNMENT

McKenney MOVED, Dilaj SECONDED to adjourn. Motion PASSED unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:06 p.m.

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