



**FINANCE AND GROWTH COMMITTEE MEETING
By Teleconference**

**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2022
4:30 PM**

MINUTES

Present: Chair Toni Moran, Shamim Patwa, Paul Shapiro, Mike Switchenko (by phone)

Staff: Cynthia van Zelm

1. Call to Order

Chair Toni Moran called the meeting to order at 4:35 pm.

2. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

3. Approval of Finance and Growth Committee Minutes from February 16, 2022

There was no quorum to approve the minutes.

4. Update on Budget and Supporter Campaign

Cynthia van Zelm said the Partnership Board approved the budget for FY22-23 on April 7. She said the membership campaign has been underway for around a month, and the current donation total is \$11,985, which meets the budget. A second renewal letter will be sent out the week of April 25.

5. Update on Partnership Strategic Action Plan Implementation and Sustainable Funding Working Group

Ms. van Zelm said the Promotion/Public Spaces working group, led by Sean Vasington, has had one meeting so far and is currently focusing on silent brainstorming.

The steering committee for the Wayfinding and Signage Plan met with consultant Merje and narrowed down the design options for a comprehensive family of signage for the Town of Mansfield. The steering committee will also focus on finding uses for the public spaces in Downtown Storrs.

Ms. van Zelm said the Business Owner/Property Owner Engagement working group, led by Steve Ferrigno, is being set up. The group will focus on engaging business owners in events and holding more social events to show support for the businesses.

Ms. Moran said the Sustainable Funding working group has discussed potential sources of funding. She said more input is needed from property owners and business owners, and that Kyle Muncy is working on engaging them more deeply. Ms. van Zelm mentioned financial commitments received from Oaktree Capital, Hart Realty, and Greystar. She added that she and Administrative Assistant Joshua Stern recently compiled a chart tracking donations over the past three years by person or entity for the Sustainable Funding Working Group.

Shamim Patwa said she thinks the Downtown needs to hold capstone events, possibly food-related, to draw people in and raise money. Ms. van Zelm said the recent Mansfield-Willi Restaurant Week was well received and helped the businesses that participated. Ms. Moran suggested linking restaurant specials with other Downtown Storrs events such as the Celebrate Mansfield Festival and Moonlight Movies; she said she has heard restaurant attendance tends to drop during these events. Ms. van Zelm said this idea has been tried in the past, but she will talk to Event Coordinator Denise Kegler about the possibility. The next major event will be Summer Stroll at the end of May.

Paul Shapiro asked if any progress has been made on filling the vacant storefronts in Downtown Storrs. Ms. van Zelm said Jefferson Fry Company has signed on to open a new location in the space formerly occupied by Husky Pizza.

6. Discussion of In-Person Meetings

Ms. Moran said she feels cautious about switching to in-person meetings while the BA.2 variant is rising. She believes meetings will need to stay hybrid until people are comfortable attending in person. Mike Switchenko said brainstorming can be easier in an in-person meeting, but he would have no issues with remaining remote or hybrid. Mr. Shapiro said he would want everyone to wear masks and remain socially distanced if a meeting is in person. He said hybrid meetings could be a way to ease back into in-person meetings. Ms. Moran said it would be easy for a small committee like this one to remain socially distanced during a meeting, but masks can muffle voices when a meeting is being recorded. She said hybrid meetings would allow individual members to make their own decisions.

The committee decided to continue with virtual meetings for the time being.

7. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 5:11 pm.

Minutes taken by Joshua Stern