

DRAFT - Downtown Improvement Committee

Meeting Minutes August 12th, 2016

1. Call to Order and Welcome

A regular meeting of the Nashua Downtown Improvement Committee was called to order at 7:50 A.M. on August 12, 2016 in Nashua City Hall, Room 208 by Chairman Marylou Blaisdell.

Members Present: Marylou Blaisdell, Richard Lannan, Sy Mahfuz, Simon Sarris, Ron LeFleur, John Koutsos.

City Staff: Tim Cummings, Jay Chittidi

2. Approval of July 8th, 2016 Meeting Minutes

Meeting minutes to be approved at the September committee meeting, draft minutes posted.

3. Letter from Executive Director of Great American Downtown Regarding Funding

M. Blaisdell presents the letter regarding funds requested from Surplus Parking Revenue.

M. Blaisdell notes that if there is no business plan for how GAD will use funds, it will be difficult to gain approval from Board of Aldermen.

4. Surplus Parking Revenue Allocation Calendar Year 2016

T. Cummings presents the Surplus Parking Revenue CY 16 Draft Budget created by James Vayo. T. Cummings suggests that the pie chart be used to start conversation on how money will be used, but not detailed enough to bring to Board of Aldermen.

T. Cummings notes for record that Alderman Ben Clemons is out of town this week. B. Clemons wants Board to know that his focus on how best to use Surplus Parking Revenue would be marketing.

R. Lannan wants to know how J. Vayo developed the priorities on pie chart, as the full committee did not have input on it.

T. Cummings says that because there is no administrative position for the Downtown Improvement Committee, J. Vayo and the Economic Development Division of the Mayor's Office created a non-binding draft for the committee to work with. T. Cummings notes that J. Vayo used the 2016 Downtown Survey to establish priorities.

S. Mahfuz says that the committee should approach the draft as rough and changeable, as the priorities can be set by the committee.

Sunday Market Line Item

M. Blaisdell moves discussion to the first line item in Surplus Parking Revenue budget, the Sunday Market set at \$14,000, requested by Great American Downtown.

J. Koutsos notes that there is a “day” and “night” Downtown, and the committee needs to recognize that an expanded Sunday Market may not attract both groups.

S. Mahfuz notes that for weekday and daytime businesses, like his, expanding to weekend is a low-incentive and tiring model.

S. Sarris says that changing the market day might not be for the committee to recommend.

J. Koutsos clarifies that he meant that new businesses don’t have incentives to open on weekends.

S. Mahfuz suggests that the committee can offer more funds to GAD if the market moved to Saturday.

S. Mahfuz says that businesses will reevaluate weekend times when more foot traffic arrives to Downtown.

J. Koutsos asks why money isn’t put towards to permanent downtown improvements instead of putting money towards non-profits like GAD year after year.

T. Cummings notes that he agrees, but funding GAD and Sunday market is really a marketing strategy, since the events that the organization holds attracts visitors and customers to the downtown.

S. Sarris says that there have been discussions about expanding the market to shut down part of Main Street, the effect to which would be a more attractive weekend venue for Downtown. However, it will take two overtime police officers and cost an additional \$10,000-\$15,000.

S. Mahfuz says that he agrees with T. Cummings regarding marketing strategy, but until a really detailed plan as to how changes will occur and money used, the committee should hold on approving funds for expansion.

M. Blaisdell asks if committee has additional questions before a call to vote.

R. Lannan asks when the money needs to be approved and spent, T. Cummings explains briefly how the money is available to approve and spend now.

M. Blaisdell moves discussion to second line item, Public Arts set at \$18,000. Funds in this line item would involve projects by CityArts Nashua. M. Blaisdell asks committee if it wants to continue relationship through next year and provide funding.

R. LaFleur asks why more art is not being put in public art spaces; M. Blaisdell says new administration is more open to that.

S. Mahfuz says that committee should continue relationship and work closely with Kathy.

S. Sarris agrees, and adds that the committee should be involved in conversations as to what the art projects are and how much they will cost. S. Sarris stress that the committee must encourage art, but needs to understand costs and vision.

M. Blaisdell calls for committee for continue relationship with public art, but committee suggests more conversations and specific discussions with Kathy Hersh and CityArts before approving money for project.

M. Blaisdell moves discussion to third line item, Trolley Services set at \$16,000. Committee asks for gauge of success of the Downtown Trolley.

T. Cummings says that it well-received and has ridership, cannot speak to whether it is helping downtown. Suggests that Director Sarah Marchant would be able to provide more details.

S. Mahfuz suggests that the committee seek matching funds from downtown businesses, to see if stakeholders have bought in and support the project. This move could also cost DIC less money.

T. Cummings notes that government can engage in more risky projects, like the trolley, to pave the way for support of new ideas. Private groups may not buy in yet.

M. Blaisdell moves discussion to the Marketing line item, set at \$8,000. The letter from GAD asks for \$8,000 for marketing. M. Blaisdell's opinion is that a marketing plan for all of downtown needs to be in place, and a marketing firm called in.

M. Blaisdell notes that Alderman Ben Clemons would be supportive of GAD's request.

S. Mahfuz notes that all of the initiatives and line items can be seen as marketing, since each can bring a lot of attention to Downtown.

S. Sarris says that money towards events like the Sunday Market would be more likely to see success than ad campaign.

M. Blaisdell moves discussion to the LED Lighting line item set at \$10,000, at the request of GAD for holiday use. M. Blaisdell notes that the project overall will cost \$25,000-\$30,000, and Mayor Donchess has allocated \$10,000 to the project already.

T. Cummings notes that the allocated funds from Mayor Donchess went directly to GAD.

S. Sarris reads from the letter from GAD, which invites DIC to participate in the selection of a lighting package should an investment be made in the project. S. Mahfuz asks committee to discuss the issue in detail with Paul. Committee members are supportive of possible full-year lighting. S. Sarris suggests that the committee propose additional to GAD for permanent lighting in Downtown.

M. Blaisdell will discuss further with Paul Shea.

Seeing no discussion on the matter, M. Blaisdell entertains additional ideas and comments.

T. Cummings brings attention to "fitness loop" planned for downtown. Committee notes that it is not aware of this plan at all.

M. Blaisdell asks if committee is open to the idea of continuing Holiday Stroll into the holiday season to benefit from foot traffic. Committee is open to that discussion.

M. Blaisdell brings attention to Market Analysis line item, set at \$14,398.

T. Cummings explains that J. Vayo set the value of the line item to balance budget, but that in truth, a market analysis would be very helpful information to have for the future of downtown.

S. Mahfuz says that he is supportive of many of the line items in the budget, but the Downtown Improvement Committee has to be fiscally conscious. Wants the public to know that the committee is not opposed the ideas, but it need to be stewards of the appropriated money that he wants to continue discussion at next meeting.

S. MAHFUZ LEAVES MEETING AT 8:40 AM

M. Blaisdell summarizes meeting thus far, offers to talk to P. Shea about lighting, Sunday Market, K. Hersh about Public Art, and J. Vayo and T. Cummings about survey to restaurants regarding trolley.

5. Wayfinding and Signage RFP Update

T. Cummings provides update on Wayfinding package. Phase 1 involves the design, and carries a cost of \$50,000. There will be a meeting of the Board of Aldermen's Finance Committee on Wednesday, August 17th in the Aldermanic Chamber. Support from committee members regarding the package would be welcome. Informs committee that fabrication and installation of signage will cost \$25,000 based on allocation initially proposed by DIC, but more money may be needed to equip Downtown with the proper number of signs.

M. Blaisdell and committee members say that DPW and Community Development said that installation would not cost DIC anything. M. Blaisdell offered to confirm the matter with Director Lisa Fauteux of DPW.

1. Other Business

R. Lannan notes to committee that walkway in front of his place of business will be put in this fall. He is completing planning with Positive Street Art about lighting up the entire building and details for painting a mural which should be completed between September and October.

2. Adjournment and Next Meeting

MOTION TO ADJORN THE MEETING MADE BY R. LANNAN AT 8:59AM. SECONDED BY M. BLAISDELL AND APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

The next meeting will take place on September 9th, 2016 at 7:45 a.m.



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James Vayo

City of Nashua, Downtown
Specialist



August 9, 2016

Downtown Improvement Committee
229 Main Street
Nashua, NH 03060

Dear Downtown Improvement Committee,

Our goal is two fold, to enhance the quality of our Downtown visitors' experience, and to grow our Downtown's small business driven economy. I am honored that the committee recognizes Great American Downtown as a strong partner in building vibrancy here in Downtown Nashua. I am also honored that we would be considered as an organization with programming worthy of investment, and that it is recognized that this investment will move us toward our shared goal.

I am writing to you with regard to the 2016 calendar year allocation of surplus parking revenue, as presented to the Downtown Improvement Committee. Elaboration on budget line items has been requested, and I would like to share with you how Great American Downtown will serve the Downtown Improvement Committee's purpose well with the following investments.

Nashua Farmers Market

A thriving public market is a key component to a vibrant urban community and economy. In the past two seasons we have worked diligently to build the market from 8 total vendors in 2014 to over 35 vendors coming to the market as of August 2016. In addition to adding traditional market vendors with a greater selection, which now drives over 600 consumer visits to Main Street each week, we have also grown the number of Downtown businesses that sell at the market from zero in 2014, to five as of August 2016. The response to the market growth has been very positive, both on the part of vendors who report increasingly improved sales performance, as well as consumers who have named us the #2 market in the State of NH by WMUR viewers

In the 2017 market season, it is our goal to grow the market from 35 vendors to 50, and to bring on 5 additional vendors who operate a business in Downtown Nashua. We will also seek to drive our weekly consumer visits as a result of the Nashua Farmers Market's draw up to

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900 each Sunday. This increase in foot traffic will build on what is already becoming a bustling Sunday event in Downtown Nashua, and will result in an increase in collateral economic activity for both our brick and mortar businesses that operate on Sunday, as well as Downtown businesses that take advantage of the market audience and join in as a market vendor. We will also aim to be recognized as the best market in the State of NH by consumers in 2017.

An amount of \$14,000 has been proposed, to invest in the continued growth of the Nashua Farmers Market. If allocated, I have no doubt that we will accomplish all of the above in 2017. The funding would be used for the following:

- \$6,000 for additional part time staff to support this program in the next stage of growth.
- \$4,000 for market amenities (i.e. Tents, tables, sound equipment)
- \$4,000 for marketing (\$3,000 EDDM Mailer, \$1,000 Web Ads)

The above items will allow for Great American Downtown support additional market staff through this growth period, until vendor subscription fees and an increase in high value sponsorships allow for the market to be a self supporting program. This investment will also allow us to attract folks to the market, by reaching out to a broader audience. Ultimately, the goal for the marketing efforts and market growth are to reach a point where minimal advertising is required as a result of building a well trained consumer base, and having a market so substantial that word of mouth drives most new visits.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 82% of employed people work weekdays, with 32% of the working population working on weekend days. Thus, a significantly greater portion of employed persons spend their leisure time (and dollar) on evenings and on weekends. Downtown brick and mortar businesses are not presently open to the extent that they produce an attractive shopping environment for consumers who are free to make an afternoon out of leisurely shopping, dining and exploration.

Downtown Nashua's primary competitors are the City's well developed retail corridors, which are open for long hours 7 days a week, and online retailers which are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. With regard to the Nashua Farmers Market and our Downtown economy, we will accomplish our end goal with this program when Sunday walking consumer traffic reaches a critical mass that creates conditions that

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make it financially advantageous for not only restaurants to operate on Sunday, but also for retail businesses owners to find it advantageous to operate on Sunday. In 2017 we will build toward this with the support of this funding, and I believe we will accomplish our ultimate goal when the market has reached 60-70 vendors in 2018 or 2019, depending on trajectory.

Holiday Lights Program

In 2015, it was a pleasure to organize the 22nd annual Winter Holiday Stroll. A very common piece of feedback that we have received at Great American Downtown, relative to this event and the general holiday season, is that Downtown's holiday lighting is in need of significant improvement/investment. This is no wonder, as much of our holiday lighting was built into the trees which were removed as part of the Main Street Sidewalk Improvement Project. In 2016, with this project nearly completed, we are now in a position to take stock of what holiday lighting Downtown does have, and select a set of lighting products that will enhance our visitor experience during the darker months for years to come.

My estimate for the cost of a substantial holiday lighting package fall in the range of \$25,000-\$30,000. Mayor Donchess, after receiving requests from Great American Downtown and Downtown merchants and visitors, was able to find \$10,000 within his budget for Downtown Lighting. In the next few weeks, a committee of Downtown stake holders will work to identify lighting products and develop an overall design concept for the 2016 Holiday season, and will place a product order in the second week of September to ensure arrival with ample time for installation prior to the Winter Holiday Stroll.

Great American Downtown's goal for this project is to fully fund a lighting design at a cost of \$25,000-\$30,000. We will work to raise \$5-10,000 from private donors. I hope that the Downtown Improvement Committee will agree that an allocation of \$10,000 will be a worthwhile investment, and will help make for a robust lighting project and a bright 2016 holiday season in Downtown Nashua possible. Should the committee see fit to make this investment, I would be glad to have any of the DIC members join the lighting team as we select the package together.

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Downtown Marketing

Great American Downtown has significantly grown the marketing side of our operations over the past year. From growing our weekly (previously occasional) e-newsletter "The Downtowner" subscriptions from under 2,000 to over 4,000, to increasing our reach significantly on all manner of social media, to the complete rebuild of the DowntownNashua.org website and development of a central community calendar, we have been very busy on this front. In my role as Executive Director, and as a resident of Downtown, I operate knowing that there is a whole lot that is already great about our Downtown community. It is in communicating with more people what we have to offer that we will find an increase in Downtown visits, and a resulting increase in consumer spending.

I hope that the Downtown Improvement Committee will agree that conveying with those who may not know and love Downtown like we do, why they should want to, is perhaps the best investment of all. The proposed budget includes \$8,000 for marketing. I envision using this funding as follows:

- \$4,000 for development of video collateral
- \$2,000 for advertising to promote Downtown collateral
- \$2,000 for targeted marketing campaign to grow our e-newsletter subscriptions from residents of 03062 zip code, a segment of the city which demonstrates greatest discretionary spending capacity, with a mean household income of \$103k annually per US Census Bureau with the goal of gaining 500+ new subscribers from this campaign in 2017.

Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to call or write should you like to connect to discuss any of the above items.

Warm regards,
Paul Shea, Executive Director
Great American Downtown Inc
Hunt Memorial Building
6 Main Street
Nashua, NH 03064
603.508.0687 m
PaulWShea@DowntownNashua.org

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THE CITY OF NASHUA

Economic Development Division
Downtown Specialist

"The Gate City"

To: Marylou Blaisdell, Downtown Improvement Committee Chair
From: James Vayo, Economic Development Division Downtown Specialist
Cc: Tim Cummings, Economic Development Division Director
Date: August 11, 2016

Re: CY'16 Parking Revenue Allocation for a Downtown Market Analysis

Request

The Economic Development Division is requesting the Downtown Improvement Committee to consider setting aside an amount of \$14,398 in excess parking revenue funds to procure professional services to produce a market analysis focused on identifying retail sales leakage from the consumer area for Downtown Nashua and identification of retail clusters with higher than average opportunity for success in the downtown area.

Consumer Area

The scope of work for professional services will include identification and analysis of the market area for downtown as well as sector strengths and weaknesses.

Deliverable

The allocation of funds to a market analysis would result in the creation of an RFP to solicit services from professionals in the specialty field of market analysis. A contract for services would be reviewed and selected by the Downtown Improvement Committee. Scope of Work for the contract will be depend on the ability to negotiate for additional services with a selected professional.