

City of Ashland – Main Street Board Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Ashland Main Street Board was held on **Wednesday, October 7, 2020 at 8 a.m.** via GoToMeeting.

Committee Members Present: Katie Gellatly, Kevin Porter, Kyle Ellefson, Kevin Stranberg, Betsey Harries, Mary McPhetridge

Committee Members Absent: Renee Britain, Eric Lindell

Staff Present: Megan McBride, Lucas Phillips

Lucas Phillips opened the meeting at 8 a.m.

Agenda

1) Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda by Kyle Ellefson, seconded by Kevin Stranberg. Passed unanimously.

2) Consent Agenda

Motion to approve the minutes from the September 9, 2020 Board Meeting by Betsey Harries seconded by Katie Gellatly. Passed unanimously.

3) Public Comment (non-agenda items)

None

4) New Business

a) Update on Building Improvement Grant Program

Lucas Phillips provided updates on the status of the Building Improvement Grant program, particularly that the City is working on shifting the funding source around to provide more flexibility with the program, so that more projects can be funded due to the apparent need. City staff are working with the State, the City's finance director and city administrator in order to ensure that the CDBG funding is redirected to projects that better fit the state requirements, and will hopefully be able to use other funding sources to fund additional Building Improvement projects in the downtown. City staff will re-evaluate proposed projects, including ones that were previously rejected, in order to see what can be funded, and will return proposed projects to the Main Street Board for recommendations on how to prioritize funding.

b) Updates on technical assistance project timeline from WEDC

Lucas Phillips explained that he consulted with WEDC, and they stated that they will come visit Ashland sometime next spring and spend a few days in the city in meetings and getting the “lay of the land”. After that, they will create a strategic plan for the downtown that’s centered around the Main Street approach and the Four Points (Economic Vitality, Design, Promotion, and Organization). There will be one additional element selected by the Main Street Board and staff, which WEDC stated could be pretty much anything, such as wayfinding, housing, public spaces, pedestrian planning, public art, etc. Lucas Phillips asked Board members to consider what this fifth point should be, and said that it would be an ongoing conversation over the next couple of months.

Mary McPhetridge asked if the fifth point could be considered after the strategic plan is received from WEDC – Lucas said he would check and see, but that it sounded like it was all considered at one time.

Kevin Porter asked if the Main Street Board could assist with the downtown murals in any way. Staff will be inquiring as to the needs of the mural program and seeing if there are any opportunities to assist.

c) Discuss COVID-19 and Main Street

Lucas Phillips said that he has been keeping an eye on what other Main Streets are doing during this time, as well as looking at creative fundraising opportunities. He gave Board members a rundown of some of the events that other Main Streets have been doing during this time in order to keep up the support of downtown businesses.

One marketing idea that staff has considered is a community-sponsored gift basket for healthcare workers or other essential workers that has products from downtown businesses. These items would be purchased, not donated, and would provide income from local businesses while providing an opportunity for community connection.

Mary McPhetridge announced an upcoming radio ad blitz that features a “shop downtown before you shop online” campaign, which encourages shopping locally, and will begin soon and continue into the winter. She also mentioned that the Chamber of Commerce has a “kiosk” that could be used to display business information as well as pamphlets for visitors, and the kiosk could be put out in the spring in one of the parklets downtown.

Additional signage was asked to be considered – particularly along Highways 2 and 13 – to direct visitors and people passing thru to the downtown.

d) Discussion of WEDC “First Impressions” Event on October 21

WEDC Staff and other Main Street managers will be traveling to Ashland on or before October 21st to give us feedback on many aspects of downtown, including living, visiting, and doing business in the downtown. This meeting will be held at the Northern State Bank boardroom in the morning, then the visiting members will have some time to walk

through downtown before reconvening to give feedback in the afternoon. We will share the feedback received at this event.

5) Announcements/Reports/Comments/Questions

N/A

6) Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Mary McPhetridge. Seconded by Kevin Porter. Passed unanimously.
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Meeting was adjourned at 9 am. Minutes done by Lucas Phillips.