

Downtown Business Improvement District
Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday, May 21, 2020

VIA ZOOM DUE TO COVID-19 SHELTER IN PLACE ORDER

1. Call to Order/Roll Call/Welcome Guests

Board - Erika Bowker, Jeff Brusati, Adam Dawson, Jaime Ortiz, Bonnie Ayers Namkung, Jed Greene, Elisabeth Setten, Tobi Lessem, Morgan Schaffler

City of San Rafael – Simon Vuong

Guests – Meg Reilley - Marin Society of Artists, Rick Lewis - Gold Rush Jewelers

2. Called to order by Erika at 10:10

3. Approval of April Minutes* - Motion Jaime/2nd Bonnie. Approved unanimously -members listed above.

4. President's Report, Erika Bowker

Downtown retailers opened doors for curbside pickup. String lights are being installed on 4th Street. Thank you, Eda, for doing so much.

5. Executive Director's Report, Eda Lochte

Thanks again to Erika for handling the BID social media. She reports 1,000 followers on Instagram and 3,300 on Facebook. It's very helpful for us in getting the word out.

Visited downtown shops and some owners wanted to keep shoppers outside of their store for longer and some wanted to open.

Unfortunately some businesses won't be reopening : Starbucks (not virus-related), D'Lynne's Dancewear (after 35 years), Cameron Salon, Marin Hair, Iron Springs (closing in the works before COVID) and possibly others.

Good news: our ad campaign is complete and well received. Got a lot of clicks to the website.

Banners across 4th St. are installed and sortable directory of retailers on the BID website is finished. Still need more businesses to create their free listing, so tell everyone you come in contact with.

4th St. overhead Tivoli Lights are almost done – luckily we have enough money in the May Madness account to fulfill our \$10,000 commitment to the City. Big thanks to Bill Guerin, Public Works Director, for fighting to continue with this project in the midst of all this. It will literally be a bright light for Downtown!

The City is working hard to help our retail and restaurants—Zoom meetings with the Mayor, City Manager, Public Works Director, Joanne Webster, Danielle of Economic Development Dept., Kate Collin of City Council and many other City leaders to brainstorm the best way to help. Some ideas:

Parking – the City and the Parking Dept. acted fast to get free 15-minute parking space signs up. Four spots per block, first and last space on each side of street for every block of 4th Street and side streets with active businesses. Downtown and the West End. Also offering free one-hour parking in all garages and giving friendly first warnings to parkers that overstay. Not aggressively ticketing in pick up zones and not all spaces. Will ticket around construction zones though.

Considering: closing 4th Street for “Dining Under the Lights’. Outdoor tables will help with distancing and City is looking to fasttrack or not require permit fees. Eda sent survey to all 64 restaurants in BID asking for their opinion and what constraints may get in their way. Out of 17 responses so far with 80% interested doing it, most interest for Thurs. through Sat. Some survey respondents said they don’t like the idea. Cost barriers they’re concerned about: permits and fees, equipment and tables. Interesting in selling packaged food at Farmer’s Market– 52% said yes.

Brainstorming – The City is talking about closing streets to allow space for dining tables to be six feet apart. Could have public works paint 10x10 squares on the street to designate layout. Could have more than once a week, maybe every even day. Try a prototype in a small area and see how it works. Very European to be at outside tables in the evening. Find a way to include art and music. Could start small and attach to 2nd Friday Art Walks. Think about having strolling musicians. Could eventually be summer nights under the lights. The new lights give us an excuse to promote the Downtown. Could rotate so that different restaurants are open on different evenings, names starting with A through D on Wed., E through G on Thurs., etc.

Farmers Market is in flux, but have asked them not to bring outside prepared-food vendors and only allow our own restaurants. No entertainment either. Was Lootens to A St., maybe expand into A St. between 4th and 5th. Thurs. is easy because public and city is used to street closure that night. *(Note: AIM, the Farmer’s Mkt folks since decided to postpone FM until 2021.)*

Can we form a committee to be involved in those discussions? Jed would like to participate and we need someone from the restaurant community.

6. Treasurer’s Report, Jed Green

Got our payment from City. Have about \$120,000 in cash. Don’t have a lot of expenses right now due to event cancelations. Will need to save for leaner year next year or consider spending to jumpstart downtown. Have about \$2,000 in deposits from May Madness participants. Have had some printing and advertising expenses.

7. Economic Development Report, Simon Vuong

The City is waiting for info from county health director as to when stores can have in-store shoppers. Solano County got green light today, but we don’t have a timeframe from the county. The county has the ability to go slower than state guidelines, but most California counties can open alongside the state guidelines. We’ll keep you informed.

Talked to commercial real estate brokers and have no specific report on businesses planning to close permanently. Restaurants and bars are in trouble. Bars may not be able to open if they don’t serve food. This is unfortunate because we want to promote San Rafael night life.

Will find out when the Tivoli lights on 4th St. will lights go on.

8. DSRAD Report, Elisabeth Setten

California Arts Council cut the \$10 million proposed to expand the arts districts this year. Will still get our allocated \$5,000 a year till the five-year grant period is up. We've allocated our budget to our social media coordinator this year.

Congrats to Meg Reilly of Marin Society of Artists (MSA) for winning a grant to fund a mural. It will be in the Canal Dist. and she will contact the City regarding approval.

MSA is also making a bid to purchase their building. Meg needs community help, especially because fundraising was turned upside down by COVID. She asked that everyone go to the website and pledge support, can be in the form of moral support or dollars.

Eda sent a photo to the BID list about the new teal-colored metal DSRAD bike racks – the first one has been installed on the corner of C Street at Citibank.

Bonnie asked for a local Starbucks contact. They've moved out and their windows are a great location for a new art piece. Lynn Sondag, head of the Dominican Univ. art dept. and creator of the vinyl stick-on art at the old San Rafael Jewelers building, has offered to create a new piece. We need permission from Starbucks, since their lease runs through September. Simon and Morgan may have appropriate contacts.

Morgan announced that the framed art installation at the C and 5th parking garage has been cycled to the second set of artworks. She encouraged everyone to go take a look.

9. New Business/Suggestions for Next Agenda

Bonnie said her office lease runs out June 30 and she'll be moving her operation home. Since she'll no longer be in the BID area, she'll be leaving the board. She expressed her thankfulness for having met and worked with such a great group. Many well wishes and thank yous were said!

10. Adjourned at 10:58

11. Next Meeting: Thursday, June 21, 2020, 10am, via Zoom.