

FREEPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
TUESDAY, October 27, 2020 7:30 AM
Web Meeting via Zoom
MINUTES

1. The meeting convened at 7:30 AM

In attendance: Mary Davis, Dan Bacon, Ed Bradley, Jim Hendricks, Jim Cassida, Leanne Barschdorf-Nichols, Caleb Stephens, Tawni Whitney

Not attending: Mark Malone, Candice Rinaldi, David Lockman, Chip Gray, Peter Joseph

Guests: Nikki Yanok, Dan Piltch

2. Introductory comments

Mary thanked the board for their advocacy, and said that we would need more of that in the future.

3. Strategic Agenda

a. Experiential/Coordinated Marketing

Keith presented slides and information collected by Visit Freeport on some of the visitors during the late summer weekends, and during the Makers on Main event.

b. Barriers to Development

c. Residential Development/Diversifying Uses

The committee on residential development gave a summary of their activities. Leanne spoke to changes that will need to occur to support increased residential development. Specifically, she talked about transition zones and greater density allowances. Dan B. suggested checking with the town and developers to make sure that FEDC is advocating for changes that will actually help some of the projects being explored. He talked about building height, density and parking. Ed asked about the sewer district. Keith spoke about how the change at the sewer district in regard to connection fees came into being, and the role that he/FEDC played in encouraging that change. Ed suggested thanking the sewer district formally for their action on this issue. The board agreed. Dan B. and Leanne spoke about targeting areas of the town for growth, re-thinking and reconsidering how we need to change and adapt. The board asked about process. Keith spoke about the current need for an update to the town's comprehensive plan, and wanting to move much faster and get action items in place much sooner than that process would allow. Mary said that this was a good opportunity to talk about the strategic planning effort. Dan described the concept of "tactical urbanism" which involves making small changes to physical space that gives downtowns more appeal. Leanne asked which consultants they would recommend. Tawni said that one had emerged as a front-runner, and that they had been impressed by the "first 20 vertical feet" concept to downtown improvements. Mary said they were still checking on that consultant's availability. Jim H. recommended that the town council be engaged to give strong input and involvement on this effort so that it is clear that it is being done at their direction. Mary and Keith agreed, and Mary said that she and Tawni have been in touch with Peter Joseph and Caroline Pelleteir about this. Dan B. also recommended developing a clear "scope of work" document for the consultant to work off of, as this tends to help generate a better finished outcome. Ed asked how a consultant takes a plan and turns it into action/commercial activity downtown. Keith said that implementation is the most important part of any plan. In order to get implementation, we need clear action steps, committed partners and community buy-in. Dan Piltch said that the comprehensive plan has zoning/policy change recommendations but is missing a goal/mission. He asked if the group leading this effort will have a clear goal/mission. Mary said that talking with consultants had been educational. They talked about rate-of-change, and she learned that 10-year plans (like the town's comprehensive plan) were not viable. A five-year plan might be viable, but maybe not. A plan with an outlook of 3 years or less into the future is more do-able. Dan P. suggested a clear vision so that the town can take the correct actions, and he discouraged the group from wanting to take short-term actions that did not move toward some larger goals. Leanne talked about macro-level shifts and how they are effecting local issues, and suggested goals that are related to that shift. Dan B. said to focus on keeping businesses viable for the coming holiday season. If something could be done now, then it should be done.

4. Discussion on Strategic Planning Effort for Downtown

Mary gave an overview of the strategic priorities for downtown. Ed asked about the coordinated calendar effort that had been worked on in late 2019. Mary said that COVID made it temporarily irrelevant, but everyone agreed

that it was a good idea and should be revisited once events are allowed. Mary talked about housing demand, interest in Freeport and in downtown, and discussed the sewer district's decision to reduce connection/capacity fees in 2021. Mary introduced the larger, strategic planning effort that would result in a transition plan for downtown, as it emerges from COVID-19, and how this effort could feed into the town's efforts to update its comprehensive plan. She said that she and Tawni had been meeting with potential consultants for this effort and were encouraged by some of the discussions. Tawni spoke about the consultants they had met, and thanked George Casey for his help and guidance.

5. Discussion on Filling Vacant Board Seats

Mary and Leanne had met with 4 candidates who had submitted applications for 2 existing board vacancies. They described them all as strong candidates. They said that three of the candidates emerged: Nikki Yanok, Sarah Tracy and Rebecca Doten. Leanne and Mary described the three candidates, and their individual strengths. The fourth candidate, they said, should be highly considered for a future vacancy. With only two seats available for new members, they asked the board for guidance. Ed Bradley offered to resign effective immediately to make room for the third candidate. He explained that he was running unopposed for a seat on the Town Council, and did not want to create issues by having too many sitting councilors involved in FEDC business. Leanne moved to nominate Nikki Yanok, Sarah Tracy and Rebecca Doten for election to the board. Jim H. seconded. Keith said that election would have to take place no sooner than the next FEDC Board meeting, which would be at the end of October.

6. Consent Agenda

a. Approval of Minutes of Board Meeting on September 15, 2020

Keith said that there was no financial report because the board already accepted a financial report for the period ending August 31 at the board meeting on September 15. Leanne moved approval of the minutes and Dan seconded. The vote was unanimous of all those present and voting.

7. Executive Director/Metrics Report

Keith presented his report. The board did not have follow-up questions.

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 AM.