

**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

In attendance: Mary Davis, Caleb Stephens, Chip Gray, Mark Malone, David Lockman, Leanne Barschdorf-Nichols, Jim Cassida, Tawni Whitney

Not attending: Dan Bacon, Candice Rinaldi, Jim Hendricks, Peter Joseph

Guests: Rebecca Doten, Nikki Yanok, Dan Piltch

2. Introductory comments

Mary welcomed everyone. She asked for introductions. She welcomed Nikki and Rebecca who had been nominated to fill vacant board seats at the September board meeting, and were slated for election later in the agenda.

3. Executive Director/Metrics Report

Keith said that the report format had been revised and that he was hoping to turn its focus more toward metrics. He said that he had also received an inquiry from The Retail Coach company, and that they had provided a report based on cell data which showed details on trips to Freeport for 2020, compared to 2019 and said that it presented an interesting picture of the toll COVID-19 had taken on the tourism-based businesses. Caleb asked about the report. Keith said that he would be meeting with them to discuss what they might be able to do with this data and to what extent it could be customized. Dan P. suggested asking them how much historical data this could be compared against, and for how many different locations in Freeport. Keith agreed and Mary asked Dan and Nikki to be involved in that discussion. Nikki presented data she had collected on spending for families/individuals living in the downtown area. It showed a picture of the downtown businesses being in part supported by downtown residents. Jim Cassida asked what it could show regarding spending categories outside of Freeport. Nikki said that she had not collected that data.

4. Strategic Agenda

a. Experiential/Coordinated Marketing

- Data on Traffic/Business Activity

(Discussed above)

b. Barriers to Development

Mary introduced the downtown priorities and asked Tawni to update the board on the effort to fill some of the vacant storefronts for the holiday season. Nikki asked about having something Maine Maple Sunday-focused as an option. Mary asked Mark what he is seeing as far as strategies for COVID recovery. Mark said that traffic to the Old Port in Portland had dropped off significantly. He said that many retailers are not staying open for the winter. Becky suggested an outdoor marketplace atmosphere, especially if COVID is still an issue.

c. Residential Development/Diversifying Uses

- Update from Residential Committee

Mary asked for an update on residential. Leanne said that the committee has targeted density and first floor residential as target policy changes for VC1 zoning district and were considering expanding beyond that zone to other downtown VC ("village commercial") zones. Mary asked the board what level of advocacy FEDC should be playing in residential projects. Leanne mentioned neighborhood opposition groups that had arisen in response to the golf course/Desert Road residential proposal. David disclosed that LL Bean is the seller in that transaction at the golf course, but that they are not developing or playing any other role than being a prospective seller. Nikki said that as a downtown resident, she would support FEDC being strong advocates for downtown residential development. David said that FEDC should have a position statement to explain if and why we support residential development from an economic development standpoint. Leanne said that we will have to be clear that the town will grow, and FEDC should have a recommendation to the council with a growth trajectory. Dave L. recommended talking with developers and ask what they're building to get a better sense of how it would impact the town and schools. Rebecca said that the town should be asking residential developers to do their own impact analysis for their projects, which is a common ask from many communities. Jim Cassida said that previous FEDC boards had avoided advocacy because of the backlash

we had received. Keith said that our position should be tied to economic development benefits for the town and to FEDC's mission; otherwise, we should let the town's functions and processes take their course. Dan P. said that more info is needed to determine whether FEDC should support any one project or another. For example, he suggested seeing an analysis of the impact of similar housing development in other communities, which FEDC could also present in a neutral way, without taking an advocacy position one way or another. Mary suggested that we have a statement, which takes a "holistic" approach to residential development in general, and a strong position on downtown residential. The board agreed.

5. Discussion on Strategic Planning Effort for Downtown

Mary spoke about the different timeframes for which efforts were needed, and the work undertaken by the "Street Gang" group. First, there needed to be an immediate focus on the holiday season. As discussed above, there were already efforts underway to fill some of the vacant spaces with pop-ups and with other temporary uses. There were already discussions about the first quarter of the year, which is typically a quieter time of year for Freeport businesses and how to improve it in 2021. Then, there is an effort which looks 3 years out. The group is seeking a consultant who has done this type of work before. Leanne asked if Keith had heard about growth/tax base goals for the town. Keith said that the future land use is a discussion that would absolutely be a part of the comprehensive plan update process. Mary said that the comp plan process would not likely begin in the next 18-24 months. Leanne suggested that FEDC come up with its own recommendations.

6. Election of Nikki Yanok and Rebecca Doten to Board

Keith explained the process: nominations would have to be made at least one board meeting prior to election. He said that both Nikki and Rebecca had been recommended and nominated at the previous meeting after meeting with a committee of the board. Mary thanked Leanne for being involved in that process. Keith said that the nominees had been largely discussed at the previous meeting but said that if there were any questions for the nominees, then this meeting would be the appropriate time. Dave L. asked Rebecca why she was interested in joining the board. Rebecca said that she sees that the town is in transition and is concerned about the direction, especially as it relates to downtown. Dave asked her to describe her role at Doten's Construction. She said that she is co-owner, and performs many different functions in that role. For the election of Rebecca Doten to the board, the vote was unanimous of all those present and voting. For the election of Nikki Yanok, the vote was unanimous of all those present and voting.

7. Consent Agenda

a. Approval of Minutes of Board Meeting on September 29, 2020

b. Acceptance of Financial Report for Period Ending September 30, 2020

Caleb moved and David L seconded the consent agenda items. The vote was unanimous of all those present and voting.

8. Executive Director/Metrics Report

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9. The meeting adjourned at 9:10