

MACHIAS REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE MINUTES

January 11, 2019

9:00 at Sunrise County Economic Council (SCEC) Building

Present: Angela Fochesato, Chair, Anne Ball, Maine Development Foundation, Jim Jackson, member of the Re-enactors and the Historical Society, Kyle Winslow, Downeast Coastal Conservancy, Sandi Malagara, Business owner, and Christina Therrien, Machias Town Manager

Public Comment: There was no public comment

Chair Announcements: Angela stated that she had notified all the local newspapers about this meeting.

Minutes: Jim Jackson felt the minutes should be corrected to list Joe McBrine is the leader of the re-enactors, strike the words unofficial leader. Motion by Sandi Malagara to approve the minutes as corrected, second by Christina. All Agreed.

The committee welcomed Anne Ball as our guest speaker. Anne stated that she wanted to address the new letters of agreement from MDF that have recently been sent out. There are a few changes but the three biggest are:

A regular coach will be assigned from the MDF Advisory Council. The coach will be checking in once a month to remain informed about community projects and to assist our committee members reach their goals. MDF understands that most downtown committees are a group of volunteers and not paid staff. MDF wants to provide ongoing support to ensure the communities are successful.

MDF will be conducting some virtual trainings to assist the committees. They understand that it is hard for people to travel throughout the State to attend the meetings sometimes. There are 6 virtual trainings planned for 2019 that address topics that are very pertinent to the work being done in downtowns throughout the US. Each training is 45 minutes long. They will be presented in real time before the work day or at lunch and they will be recorded so they can be viewed later.

MDF is asking some representative from the group to attend some of the regularly scheduled trainings in person whenever possible. The first Downtown Institute of 2019 will be in Rockland on March 20th, focusing on workforce development and previous offenders. The trainings are usually one-half days long and run from 9-12. The cost is very minimal and averages around \$30.00.

MDF is asking communities to track one data point during the next year. They would like us to begin with volunteer hours.

Christina took this opportunity to advise the members that she and Charles Rutledge, SCEC have been discussing holding a community forum to ask the community members what they would like to see with the downtown development. Christina thinks the date and time is Monday,

February 11th, 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. but will need to confirm. No newspaper ad or agenda has been prepared yet. Christina will ask Charles to send a copy to the Chair of this committee and another notice to the Machias Bay Area Chamber of Commerce.

There was a lot of discussion on how to communicate better. Christina suggested that a central calendar of events would be a great way to learn what other groups are working on and dates of activities. Angela stated that the chamber just had a person help them with a website and the individual did a great job. A single website would be a great way to stay better connected.

Anne stated that the Machias Downtown Plan is getting outdated. The plans are usually for a period of ten (10) years. The Machias Plan was finished in the 2008-2009 timeframe. The committee should review the plan to determine what goals have been completed and what ones should still be put into an updated plan. Sometimes priorities change and adjustments should be made to allow for new thoughts, goals, and objectives. The Downtown Plan needs to be current in order to apply for CDBG Downtown Revitalization Funds.

She also stated that downtown committees seem to do better when they are not under the umbrella of the Town and act as a separate non-profit entity. The committees generally work on: Design and Presentation, Promotion and Events, Organization, and Economic Vitality. A good way to get started in 2019 is to collect some survey data. Anne has some sample surveys that can be used to help engage the community. Angela stated that the Town does have some recent survey data that was collected by the Town and the Chamber. Anne suggested the committee revisit that data to develop a workplan.

Anne asked each member at the table to speak about opportunities and challenges. Kyle spoke about a project underway to restore and protect the Schoppee Marsh. He indicated that many people still didn't know about the park. There is a definite need for better signage so more people can enjoy all the park has to offer. Downeast Coastal community receives a lot of assistance from college students and various groups. Jim Jackson spoke about the idea of putting an old settlement at the park with the first building being a blockhouse. That would increase the visibility of the park and draw more people. Sandi spoke about the Green team. The members voted not to get involved in the edible garden project but they do flash mob weeding projects throughout the town. Last year they constructed some new flower boxes for locations in the community with the assistance of some college students. Anne suggested that we should look at short term volunteers, project volunteers. Some people do not want to be part of a committee 365 days a year, but would show up for a project.

Angela agreed that there is a communication problem and that she feels some people talk at other people and not to them. She thinks connecting the West Side Trail to the Industrial Park is important for people to walk. There is an interest from people at Davis Estates.

Motion by Christina and second by Sandi to send a letter of support to DECC for inclusion in their grant application for restoring the Schoppee Marsh. All in Favor.

The group adjourn around 10:45 a.m.