

Business Development Commission

MEETING MINUTES

APPROVED

MEETING DATE: Thursday, July 28, 2016
LOCATION: City Hall
CALLED TO ORDER: 8:10 AM
MEETING ADJOURNED: 9:08 AM
NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, August 17, 2016

Name	Present	Absent
Pat Richards, Chair	X	
William Alverson		X
Pam Neihaus	X	
Rebecca Now		X
Chalegne O'Brien	X	
Mike Pincus	X	
Nicole Roach	X	
Jon Spiesman	X	
Vacancy		
Mayor Gerry Welch, Council Liaison	X	
Mara Perry, Staff Liaison	X	
Joan Jadali, Staff Liaison	X	

Also in attendance:

Council Member Bud Bellomo – City of Webster Groves
Ron Clipp – Chair, Old Webster Special Business District Commission
Bob Springer – Chair, Crossroads Special Business District Commission
Nancy Milton – Insight PR St. Louis
Fran Sudekum – Administrative Support

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion to approve the May minutes was made by Chalegne O'Brien, seconded by Mike Pincus, unanimously approved.

Insight PR St. Louis

Nancy Milton of Insight PR St. Louis shared with the commission the scope of what her company was hired to take on for the BDC four years ago. Insight PR St. Louis was charged with connecting the business community with the media. Their focus was tourism, hospitality, entertainment, and events. They were to bring "CVC" visitors to Webster Groves and give the Webster Groves business community a bigger presence. Nancy outlined several examples of some of the ongoing and completed projects they've handled; many of which were outlined in the "Highlights of Accomplishments of the BDC PR/Com Subcommittee" handout at the Commission's May meeting. Her most recent example was bringing Fox2 News to do a live shot of the "Women of 1916" at the Hawken House at Southwest Park.

BDC Budget Cut

Joan Jadali shared with those in attendance the following BDC budget items; these decisions were made by the Steve Wylie, City Manager:

- The \$12K in the BDC budget slated for PR work has been cut. This is the work that Insight PR St. Louis was handling.
- The “explore” newsletter/mailer has been reduced to twice a year (this piece was not part of the \$12K that was cut). Both these mailings will now be done in-house.
- There is still some money left in the budget for Holiday promotions which will also be handled in-house.

Several in attendance asked for more specific numbers on the budget figures. Joan did not bring that information with her to the meeting.

Several in attendance also asked for more information on the “in-house” aspect; who are the staff members that have been given the responsibilities for the mailers and Holiday promotions.

Many voiced their concerns over the lack of a Holiday plan in place as well as concerns over the ability of staff to handle the increase in workload without the professional expertise or media connections in this arena.

The BDC has been trying to pool resources of the various districts together in order to give Webster Groves businesses a bigger voice; concerns were very high by those in attendance that this effort would now go by the wayside and the districts would go back to doing their own thing with no city-wide coordination and thus smaller voices. None of the districts have someone who can step in and fill the gap made with the exit of PR professionals working with the BDC. That burden had been taken off the districts. Now it seems things will go backwards instead of forwards and become disjointed again. Members expressed their concern and high level of nervousness to hear the City is now taking on this type of work without a professional PR person on staff.

Many of the Commission members expressed frustration with these issues and feel it’s important to find out from City Council what the Council really wants from the BDC. Is the BDC a commission in name only with no support behind it? Commission members are volunteers and professionals in their own fields giving up their time to help make the City better. If anything that they say or recommend isn’t supported or followed thru, they feel they are wasting their time. They feel the value of their contribution is unappreciated.

Joan shared with the Commission that she did speak with Steve Wylie after the May Commission meeting as promised and let Steve know the views expressed at that meeting on the importance of keeping professional PR efforts going. She is waiting for him to get back with her in preparation for the next City Council work session on Tuesday which is slated to discuss the direction of business in Webster Groves. She promised to follow up with everyone in attendance afterwards.

Several members again requested that Steve Wylie attend a BDC meeting to address all these issues and concerns as had previously be requested at the May meeting.

Commission members and District chairs expressed once again the need for a point person to facilitate and initiate bringing business into Webster, target filling empty spaces, and help maintain existing businesses. This has been put forth several times by the BDC but funding has not been allocated.

Frustration was expressed over a District's feeling of always "fighting" with City Hall instead of working with City Hall.

Joan stated that holiday planning could be discussed in August and promised she wouldn't let holiday items drop. All in attendance were very concerned about the holiday planning and promotions and felt waiting till the next BDC meeting at the end of August was too long to wait and decided to move up the meeting to Wednesday, August 17.

An idea of consolidating the three districts into one was put forth as a discussion item.

CVC Membership Drive

CVC memberships are due tomorrow, Friday, July 29. Many businesses have not received any information about it. The membership drive was being handled by Mara Perry's staff this year instead of paying for administrative support due to added cost for that support. Last year's drive targeted gaining new members and renewing existing members. Mara stated that renewal letters were given out to those that were at the Old Webster Business District Commission meeting. Members asked whether a last minute push could be made to ensure enough members sign up; at least 15 are needed to keep the City's "neighborhood listing" status in the CVC guide. Mara said she would put additional staff on the project to make phone calls and pick up memberships.

Explore Webster Groves Website

Joan informed the Commission that malware was discovered on the Explore Webster Groves website so all the information that resided on that site will now be housed on the city website.

NEXT MONTH

- City-Wide Holiday Promotions Plan
- Invite District Chairs to the meeting to share items from their district.
- Items not yet covered due to lack of meeting time:
 - Discussion Topic - How do we pull the three business districts together to better use their resources?
 - Focus Group Commission Member Feedback

ADJOURNED

Meeting adjourned at 9:09 AM.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, August 17, 2016 at 8:00 AM – City Hall.