

Business Development Commission

MEETING MINUTES

APPROVED

MEETING DATE: Wednesday August 17, 2016
LOCATION: City Hall
CALLED TO ORDER: 8:19 AM
MEETING ADJOURNED: 9:29 AM
NEXT MEETING: Thursday, September 22, 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

Council Member Ken Burns – City of Webster Groves

Keli Richards – Commission Member, Old Webster Special Business District Commission

Joe Fichter – Chair, Old Orchard Special Business District Commission

Bob Springer – Chair, Crossroads Special Business District Commission

Christi Johanningmeyer – Commission Member, Crossroads Special Business District Commission

Nancy Milton – Insight PR St. Louis

Fran Sudekum – Administrative Support

Representatives from each of the three business districts were in attendance along with several City Council members. Introductions were made by all and Pat Richards gave a brief overview of the BDC's wish to improve communications with the business districts and shared BDC's efforts on city-wide PR efforts.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

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

CITY-WIDE HOLIDAY PROMOTION PLANNING

The holiday shopping season, is the lifeblood of the small businesses in Webster Groves. Promoting Webster and its businesses during the holidays is extremely critical. It is also important now more than ever, to generate sales tax revenue in Webster.

Commission members shared their frustration with the changes in the BDC's budget this year which eliminates hiring a professional to put together a holiday promotions package; that function has now been brought in-house. Members argued the City doesn't possess the

expertise to do that type of job and in addition it adds additional responsibility onto city staff which already have a full-time load and they are concerned it will suffer as a result. Both public relations and marketing take time, a solid knowledge base, and a network of media contacts; the business owners don't have that time or expertise, in their own businesses.

Commission members stated again their disappointment in the direction the City is taking with the BDC during the holidays and going forward. Many are frustrated with the situation and question why the City would make such an impactful change without the input of the businesses; they don't feel their time and input on the business-related commissions is valued.

Joan Jadali provided handouts of information from previous holiday seasons, holiday budgets from all three districts, 102.5 radio ad information, the holiday explore mailer, and Webster-Kirkwood Times print ads. She has worked up a holiday promotional plan for 2016 using 2015 as the template. She will be the staff person to oversee the holiday promotions this year. She has worked with the PR Sub-committee since its beginning and doesn't foresee a problem.

Commission members stated following last year's plan may not be appropriate for this year; they don't possess the professional knowledge to know what this year's trends are and what direction the plans should take this year. They stated they believe Joan is very hard working, but she does not have the tools she needs to take on a PR or Marketing role. They are very unhappy with the removal of a professional PR person or marketer in that role. Members are concerned with their ability to determine what works, what doesn't work, and what needs to be done without the input of someone who does that for a living. Members stated no one in attendance at the meeting has that knowledge base. Everyone is very concerned about fourth quarter sales.

Bud Bellomo acknowledged everyone's frustrations with how these changes had been handled and could have been avoided if the BDC and the businesses had been part of the process. He encouraged all in attendance to take a look at Joan's plan, digest it, and see if we can move forward. Several members stated we couldn't waste any more time since the fourth quarter is here and we need to have a plan.

A discussion was held regarding the need to promote Webster Groves both internally and externally. We need to encourage people who live in Webster to do their business in Webster, but we also need to attract those that live in the surrounding communities to come to Webster to do their business. The message to people living outside of Webster is very different from the message going to those inside Webster. Gerry Welch has previously sent Joan a proposed communication plan that addresses internal vs. external communication. She will share it with those in attendance.

There actually needs to be two different plans, different media types, etc. to attract the internal vs. the external. Several members felt that more resources should go to digital marketing and social media, possibly to attract those outside of Webster, but not sure how to move forward on that. Pam Neihaus reminded members the BDC had paid for the expertise of a media buyer in the past; perhaps we should engage that person again and ask for input. The PR Sub-Committee could meet with the media buyer and get input on the plan that Joan has put together and bring that information back to the next commission meeting. Members of the PR Sub-Committee will include Bud Bellomo, William Alverson, Joe Fichter, and Christi Johanningmeyer.

Several ideas were put forth on the distribution of the explore mailers.

- Could the explore mailer be provided to business owners so they in turn could send it out to their client lists?
- Could the City send it out to the business owners via email? Joan stated she would love to have all the email addresses of Webster businesses.
- Could paper copies of the mailer be provided to business owners so they could pass them out in their shops/locations?
- Could paper or electronic copies of the mailer be distributed to the schools?

Joan stated there's a thought to integrate in the non-holiday quarterly explore mailers with the City's Community Connect newsletters. Members stated that the City informational newsletters should not be integrated with the business message; they are two distinct messages and should not be muddled together. Pat Richards stated the marketing of Webster businesses has to be a clear concise message of who we are; giving us that larger voice for Webster Groves.

Members restated their acknowledgement of all the hard work that Joan has prepared.

ALERTS & COMMUNICATION

A discussion was held around the best way for Webster businesses to be alerted by police or fellow businesses in the cases of emergencies and activities which business owners need to be made aware of. If business owners had contact information (email addresses and phone numbers) of fellow business owners, they could alert each other in addition to being alerted by police. There is a need for an action plan to be put in place. Pat Richards will contact Captain Spears to see what can be done in the arena.

CVC MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

The CVC membership drive resulted in 17 members.

EXPLORE WEBSTER GROVES WEBSITE

The explorewebstergroves.com site was infected with a virus and can't be brought back. The information is being looked at to integrate it into the City's Civic Plus website. Perhaps a sub-committee of the BDC could help with the business aspect of integrating the two. The directory of businesses has been moved to the City's site.

NEXT MONTH

- Continue representation from business districts at BDC meetings
- Holiday Action Plan
- Input from PR Sub-Committee's meeting with media buyer
- Police Alert System
- Email and phone number listing - district sharing

ADJOURNED

Meeting adjourned at 9:29 AM.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, September 22, 2016 at 8:00 AM – City Hall.