

Notes from Spencer Economic Development Committee Meeting

Thursday, April 25, 2019 @ 6:00 pm

Spencer Town Hall/Conference Room A

In attendance:

Chris Woodbury, John Stevens, Shirley Shiver, Warren Monette, Paul Dell'Aquila (Town Planner); Tony Pepe (via phone at first, then in person)

c.t.o 6:02 p.m.

Warren made a motion to adopt minutes of 3/28/19; second by Shirley; amended by John to change reference from "Worcester Wares" to "West of Worcester"; motion passed 4-0.

Paul gave his Planner's Report.

There was discussion about the Downtown Design Guidelines Open House held on April 23 in Town Hall. John noted that it was a good use of the Rotunda. In the past there have been some concerns about using the space since due to the war memorials, but this type of event was respectful and appropriate.

John gave an update on the planning for the Street pARTy; he had recently spoken to Mary Baker Wood about incorporating some Spencer history into the event day, and she noted that she was looking for the push to do a museum opening at the library, and this could be a good excuse. John would reach out to Mary about attending the next planning committee meeting.

Tony asked about whether there would be a brochure or other schedule of event produced for the event; Paul & John said yes. Chris noted that he knew a balloon guy and a DJ if the planning committee needed those.

There was some general discussion about ED outreach. Tony noted that we just need to find a date to launch, probably after Town Meeting (June?); Warren note the idea of a Downtown Award to help stimulate businesses improving/reinvesting.

Warren noted importance of advertising to attract a brewery; Tony noted that he was talking with Rapsallion to get them to look at Spencer.

There was discussion about the Celebrations Committee and the need to talk to Wendy Berthiaume to ID synergies with EDC. John asked Tony if he thought Celebrations would be a stand-alone committee? Tony replied that EDC germinates the ideas. Shirley noted that this was good opportunity to get other people involved.

John announced second annual Prouty student art opening and show for the walls outside of the Great Hall in Town Hall.

Tony noted that he and Paul have been trying to lock down a beer festival date for later September/October ("October fest") with the Spencer Ag Assoc at the Fairgrounds

Chris said he had heard that a Purchase & Sale agreement was being worked out for the former Spencer Furniture building. Apparently the purchaser wants to use the space for commercial kitchen equipment. There is also possibility for rental units and a garage possible on the site.

John raised the general issue of the need for retail space, as Dylan from West of Worcester is already looking for additional space.

Paul also asked the EDC's input on other towns we might like to emulate to help his discussion with Mass Development and the Mass Downtown Institute on a future ED entity for Spencer. Examples mentioned were Hudson (roadwork, walkability), Leominster, Amherst, Northampton, and Denville, NJ.

New Business

There was some discussion about hotels. Tony noted how the new hotel/casino in Springfield combined facades so that it blended better with the area. Paul noted weddings (Zukas) are drivers in Central Mass tourism.

Chris noted that he had a contact at Purgatory Beer for the potential fall beer fest. Paul would set up a meeting with Tony & Atlas Distributors once a day was set.

Warren noted that there should be some areas for seating and/or sculptures at the new parking area on Mechanic St.

John gave an update on banners & flowers; he will be doing a walk-through tomorrow...flowers will be on north side of road, banners on south, satisfying massing/concentration; Chris asked about water/maintenance of flowers and how to get merchants to step up... sponsoring a pole, e.g.; also Chris asks if flowers can be put around bases of poles? Shirley noted ADA requirements. Discussion of planters with CDBG funds discussed .

Warren discussed idea of 4th of July fireworks...there was some fallout from previous events in town due to past bad vendors, so how to ID funding and square up past issues?

Tony asked Paul the theoretical question about food trucks using the future expanded mechanic Street lot...is there a process? Paul would research and report. There was more general discussion about creating art & sculptural pads throughout downtown; Warren notes possibility of competitions.

Next meeting: tentatively set for Thursday, May 23

Motion to adjourn meeting made by Tony, second by Warren. Motion approved 5-0.

Meeting adjourned at 7:44 pm.

Notes compiled and submitted by Paul Dell'Aquila