



CHURCH STREET MARKETPLACE

Church Street Marketplace District Commission Meeting Minutes Wednesday, November 20, 2024

ATTENDANCE:

Commissioners: Mark Bouchett, Becky Holt, Linda Magoon, Sam Tolstoi, Romeo von Hermann, Erik Monsen (zoom), Sarah Beal, Cara Tobin (zoom), Chris Haessly

Staff: Kara Alnasrawi – Executive Director, Samantha McGinnis - Project & Event Manager, Stephanie Shohet – Administrative Assistant, Andrew Bacher - Church Street Marketplace Coordinator, Jessica Dudley - Marketing Manager, Isa Parades - Marketing Coordinator

Public: Jeff Nick, Lara Heath Allen, Daniel Zeese, others online

*At start of meeting, commissioners agree to allow the mayor to jump in at whatever time she arrives.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- Motion to approve: Romeo. Second: Becky. Approval is unanimous.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Motion to approve: Chris. Second: Linda. Approval is unanimous.

PUBLIC FORUM – GENERAL

- Jeff Nick reports that the situation on the street is worse than ever, and although extra police presence during the holidays is appreciated, we need to hire private security.
- Lara Heath Allen, longtime owner of ECCO, expresses her agreement with Jeff and explains that she believes there is a disconnect between downtown businesses and City Hall. She and her employees can't do anything about the rampant theft, and they do not feel safe.
- Further discussion about safety follows, and we can't expect the public to come downtown to shop if we keep telling them how unsafe it is.

APPROVAL OF LEASE ASSIGNMENT TO NEW OWNER OF LEUNIGS/PETIT BIJOU

- Kara explains that the Marketplace owns the kiosk that is currently rented by the Petit Bijou. The business recently and abruptly transferred ownership, and we did not make them cease business operations.
- Staff, with assistance from the city attorney, signed a temporary lease to allow the vendor to continue operations
- The new lease to be signed has the same terms and end date as the original with the previous owner

- Linda makes the motion to approve the lease. Romeo seconds this, and approval is unanimous.

CANCELLATION OF DECEMBER MEETING

- Traditionally there has not been a December commission meeting because it is such a busy time of year.
- Becky makes the motion to cancel the December meeting. Romeo seconds.
- Linda asks if they would be allowed to have an emergency meeting if necessary.
- Kara reports that as long as they give 48 hours notice, this would be fine
- Chris opposes the cancellation, but the motion passes with 8 votes

TREASURER'S REPORT

- Sam reports that we are 37% through this fiscal year, and we have raised half of our budgeted revenue.
- Expenses are on track.
- Kara indicates that it is difficult to find sponsors due to the challenges in the downtown
- Mark asks if we will be ok without sponsors, and Kara explains that we have done extensive outreach to regular sponsors and all of them have cut their donations. Kara has escalated this to the mayor and CAO Katherine Schad.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- Kara and Sam present the plans for holiday season activations which will start on November 29 and last through the New Year.
- Jess describes all of the marketing that will be happening to promote the activities.
- Kara explains how well the WCAX commercials have been doing and details the "Behind the Counter" series which will involve interviews with business owners.

MAYOR MULVANEY-STANAK ARRIVES

- Mayor informs commission about the safety initiative proposal at Monday's City Council meeting. City resources would be used to hire more patrols downtown. They are hoping to roll it out this week.
- She explains that the city is trying to figure out if they can pivot the Main Street construction project so that businesses are not as affected during the holidays.
- Mayor lets commission know that Police Chief Murad will not seek reappointment, the two deputy chiefs will soon be retiring, and that recruitment for these positions is underway.
- Discussion follows about interim police leadership, the need for a state-of-the art police station, and the possibility of an integrated community safety facility.
- Sam reiterates the public safety concerns expressed during public forum and also tells about the struggles to open a business in Burlington.
- Discussion ensues about the recent gross receipts tax increase, trust-building that needs to happen between community members and city leadership, the rampant theft happening statewide, and the need for county government.

- Mark passes on some other concerns from business owners who could not attend the meeting including the lunch service in the parking garage, the need for public bathrooms downtown, and graffiti.
- The Mayor explains that she is to meet with the Food not Bombs group soon about finding a new location to distribute food.
- Discussion follows about possible ways to manage the bathroom and graffiti problems.
- Director Chapin Spencer from DPW speaks about the challenges involved in changing the Main Street construction project and assures commission that he continues to meet with downtown business owners and the contractor as they try to come up with a compromise.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT CONTINUES

- Kara reports that the team has started having quarterly marketing and event meetings with business owners.
- The brickwork is finished, and many trip hazards have been fixed.
- She explains the new holiday parking rate (.99/hour in zone 5803).
- Kara tells about the results of the recent Operational Efficiency study and her continued involvement in the weekly hot spot meetings.
- Discussion follows about the timeline for the opening of new businesses as well as the slow progress of the Main Street project.

CHAIR'S REPORT

- Mark expresses that there is still a ton of love for our city.
- We need to keep up our enthusiasm and give visitors the best experience possible.

Meeting is adjourned.