



CHURCH STREET MARKETPLACE

Church Street Marketplace District Commission Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 16, 2025

ATTENDANCE:

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

Absent: Romeo von Hermann

Staff: Kara Alnasrawi - Executive Director, Stephanie Shoheit - Administrative Assistant, Andrew Bacher - Church Street Marketplace Coordinator, Jessica Dudley - Marketing Manager, Aida Washburn - Projects & Event Specialist, City Attorney Emmet Wood

APPROVE AGENDA

- Chris makes the motion to approve, Erik seconds, and approval is unanimous.

APPROVE MINUTES

- Linda makes the motion to approve, Becky seconds, and approval is unanimous.

PUBLIC FORUM – GENERAL none

FY 26 COMMON AREA FEES

- PUBLIC FORUM ON ITEM
- VOTE ANTICIPATED

- Kara recommends keeping common area rates unchanged for FY26.
- The City Assessor's office has audited some historical spaces and has notified property managers. This audit will result in an additional \$34,000 in common area fees.
- Linda makes the motion to leave the fees unchanged, and Sam seconds this.
- After a brief discussion about costs going up and the fact that the Marketplace will soon need to find additional sources of income, the motion is unanimously approved.

FY26 BUDGET

- PUBLIC FORUM ON ITEM
- VOTE ANTICIPATED

- Kara shares her budget presentation for FY26 (which was included in the agenda packet).

- Kara confirms that the additional \$200,000 from the City to help cover maintenance costs will be included yearly going forward.
- She highlights a few changes such as the need for a new plow, but that she is expecting to provide less private security.
- Kara also explains that we will need to raise fees eventually because we can not keep up with inflation, and the budget is unsustainable.
- Discussion follows about possible ways to get donations from visitors.
- Erik makes the motion to approve the budget, Becky seconds this, and approval is unanimous.

IMPACT OF POTENTIAL LOST TOURISM

- a. DISCUSSION ITEM
- b. NO VOTE ANTICIPATED

- Kara explains that Vermont tourism organizations are no longer reaching out to Canadians for various reasons related to the current political climate.
- She points out that campgrounds and marinas are suffering as well and that we need to try to attract visitors from other New England states instead.
- Discussion follows about how to attract younger visitors and how we target our advertising based on the audience that engages in our social media.
- Further discussion ensues regarding the loss of office workers downtown, the need for a larger event venue, and problems with construction traffic and parking.

TREASURER'S REPORT

- Sam says that Kara's presentation about the FY26 budget covers everything that he had planned to present.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- Kara reports about a very successful Maple Madness event and updates the group on upcoming April and May events.
- She mentions that while construction is still challenging, the Main Street project is on time overall. Construction will close in November and remain closed until spring 2026.
- Kara explains the new temporary parking program.
- She updates the group on the City Place hotel and apartments opening this summer.
- Discussion follows about new businesses opening soon and storefronts that are under contract as well as possible ways to market to UVM and Champlain students as well as to veterans.

CHAIR'S REPORT

- Mark notes that warmer weather has been bringing out more visitors downtown.
- He mentions that commission should start discussing the governance of the Marketplace.
- Discussion follows about encouraging people to use Front Porch Forum, Reddit, etc. to tell of positive experiences downtown.

Regular meeting is adjourned.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

- a. DISCUSSION OF DIRECTOR'S PERFORMANCE