North Brookfield Downtown Development Committee (DDC) Meeting Minutes

April 6, 2020

Due to the current Massachusetts recommendations of social distancing and gathering limitations due to the COVID-19 pandemic, meetings are not able to be held in person. This meeting was help online via the zoom.com video conferencing interface.

**In Attendance:** Sheila Orsi, Ethan Melad, John McClintock, Marilynn Borst, Sharon Donovan,
Absent:
Guests: Sue Lyons from Planning Board, Glenna Stocks from NBHelps

**Meeting Opened**: 6:42pm

**Approval of Minutes**: Minutes were not available for approval.

**Old Business:**1. The March 16th meeting was chaired by the BOS as a closed meeting to discuss the town park area located at the intersection of North Main Street and School Street across from the Town House. The BOS invited the DDC and NBHelps committees to attend. The BOS stated they would take the minutes for this meeting.
This meeting was held online at the Zoom.com video conferencing tool.

Overall: This meeting was collaboratively held as it had recently and surprisingly come to the attention of the DDC and NBHelps committee that a local resident had plans to redevelop the park area including benches and pathways. Dale had recently obtained the layout from the resident and submitted them to the DDC and NBHelps via email the day of the meeting. During the meeting Dale charged the DDC to submit plans to the BOS within 3 weeks. The DDC explained that they would do their best but this was a very short window as the pandemic was making meetings difficult. He also reassured the committees that the residents plans were not permanent. Benches would be moveable and that the BOS understood that the DDC was working on a more global plan for the downtown area that allowed for the park to be a more ADA, pedestrian friendly park that would be versatile for many kinds of functions and events in the downtown district area. It was understood that the plans are a temporary fix and that the resident had secured donated products and services to make the area respectable during the time that the DDC secured plans and funding that encompassed the entire intersection. As these plans may take a year or more to develop, it was implied that the resident’s layout was not the ultimate goal for the park. This was reassuring to the committees as they have been working with several other entities to ensure a versatile and collaborative area for all residents and visitors of North Brookfield.

2. March 13, 2020 3pm – Tour of the Adams Block 181 North Main St
Sharon Donovan reached out to the new owner of the Adams Block properties, Mr. Nader Djafari of MaxMia Properties, for a tour of the building. Sharon reported that the meeting was successful. Many members of the DDC and NBHelps welcomed Nader and asked how we could help him. He stated he planned on refacing the building to attract new businesses as many of the storefronts were empty. We are excited to see his plans develop.

We mentioned that we had heard of a façade program grant that may be able to help him with funding. We planned to look into that for him.

**New Business**1. Sharon mentioned that we might be able to help Nader with a restaurant in the old bank area of the Adams Block building with popups. It was mentioned that the USDA might have the information we were looking for with regards to the façade program. Further research must be made. Nader had mentioned at the meeting that he was moving forward with or without grant funding, but he would love to see if we could apply. The DDC is not sure that we can get an application in on time before he has the work completed.

2. Ethan reported on the Park area as he has been working on layouts, funds and grants to redevelop the park. He showcased his 3 sketches, which we have submitted to Dale for the BOS via email within the 3-week time frame. We had drone aerial shots done by Ryan Daley but we have not seen them as of this meeting. Ethan plans to talk to TechnoBloc, a local business in town, to ask for donations. Sheila plans to reach out the to resident that Dale had mentioned to discuss their plans further. Ethan discussed grants and crowd funding opportunities. Kerrie Salwa from CMRPC has mentioned 2 other sources in the past, we will reach out to her.

Ethan was concerned that he didn’t want to overlap any grants that the Playground committee might be working on for the Common Project. Ethan spoke with a landscaper for a down and dirty estimate of about $20 a sq foot for the project, at 7,000 sqft that is about $140,000. Glenna mentioned she had heard of a reimbursable grant – she will look further into this.

4. Glenna mentioned that she was having Arnie Arsenault meet her at the park on April 8th, 2020 at 1pm if any one wanted to join her. She is discussing the layout of the park and placement of the Evergreen tree for access to have the tree professionally lit during the winter holiday season.

**Next Meeting:** Scheduled for April 20, 2020

**Close of Meeting:** Motion to close meeting made by Sheila Orsi at 7:52pm, Seconded by Ethan Melad.

Meeting minutes submitted by Sheila Orsi

April 7, 2019