North Brookfield Downtown Development Committee (DDC) Meeting Minutes

April 20, 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, Sharon Donovan
Absent: John McClintock, Marilynn Borst
Guests: Sue Lyons from Planning Board, Glenna Stocks from NBHelps

**Meeting Opened**: 6:41pm

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

**Old Business:**1. Sharon updated The DDC on the Historical Commissions projects. They are currently working on taking note of the buildings in town that are historical and trying to get them on a historical listing.

2. Glenna updated the team on the April 8th meeting at the park. In attendance was Glenna, Artie Arsenault, Sheila Orsi, Marilynn Borst and Nader Djafari. They looked at several sites for placement of the Evergreen tree. The park area, the police station front lawn and even discussed talking to the NB Congregational church about placing it on their lot on the School St side. Sheila said she was going to try to get in touch with Jack Sweeney about the possibility. The police station lawn was immediately removed as there is a large sewer grate in the front lawn on the left side. Arnie mentioned that timing of the planting of the tree was imperative to ensure that the tree takes root before the next winter. If the tree was to be planted after mid-May, there was a high chance of it not surviving. The DDC plans to reach out to see when it might be available to plant due to Covid-19 restrictions and non-essential businesses being closed.
Sharon thought that the placement of the tree in the park was a more appropriate location than the church grounds. Ethan mentioned that if the Evergreen was planted for Christmas purposes only that it could potentially be viewed as embracing only one part of our diverse culture in North Brookfield. It was mentioned that the tree lighting is well attended function and that the residents would be disappointed if it was removed as an event. We all agreed that the holiday event is important to the town.

3. Sheila mentioned that she met with Jason Benoit the Highway superintendent on Friday, April 17th to discuss the sidewalk in front of the Adams Block. They generally spoke about the Complete Streets projects in the area.

4. Sheila met with the resident of the town who is working on the park on Monday April 20, 2020. He told her about his plans to possibly use some of the bricks from the top portion of the Bates Observatory that are being removed due to disrepair, and that he plans to incorporate them in the layout of the park calling them “Bates Blocks” and placing a plaque at the park to reflect the significance. The resident also discussed having spoken to the owner of TechnoBloc for pathways and his possible donation of materials to his layout as well as other ideas the resident was incorporating.

With the understanding that the park development by the resident was not regarded by the BOS at the March 16th meeting as permanent, some of these items were concerning.

**New Business**1. Spring/Summer DDC meetings dates were approved. They are slated for May 4 & 18, June 1 & 15, July 6th no meeting for summer vacation, July 20 and August3, 2020. These meetings are planned to be held online until the Police Station conference room is re-opened. Find the link online the day of the meeting on the NBDDC Facebook page or The North Brookfield website on the DDC calendar.

2. Glenna Stocks has been at several meetings. The DDC invited her to join the committee. Glenna stated she planned to submit her letter of membership to the BOS. We are excited to have Glenna on the team.

3. The DDC team discussed the meeting Sheila had with Jason Benoit and the resident that has individually taken on the park project. The DDC team understands that the resident is a “get-it-done” type of personality and appreciates the efforts to make NB better and stronger. The concern the DDC has with the layout is that the resident has not consulted with the BOS, the DDC, NB Helps or any committees in town that are vested in the area. Sheila stated she reviewed all the minutes and agenda of the BOS meetings. The park sign and tree removal have been mentioned at BOS meetings 5 times over the last 6 months but the layout and redesign have never been taken to the BOS for discussion or approval. This is very concerning to the DDC. We plan to discuss this with the BOS as the indication was that this residents park layout is supposed to be a temporary fix as there has been no collaboration with any authorized entities in North Brookfield for any permanent features.

Ethan mentioned that he did receive an email from Claire regarding having a budget to use from another project she had done with another park similar to this one.

4. The DDC discussed the idea of giving a monthly report to the BOS from the DDC to ensure that there is open communication on town projects such as the Complete Street and Strategic Plan. The DDC has many projects that the BOS and DDC will need to be up-to-date with for the future.

**Next Meeting:** Scheduled for May 4, 2020

**Close of Meeting:** Motion to close meeting made by Sheila Orsi at 7:53pm, Seconded by Ethan Melad.

Meeting minutes submitted by Sheila Orsi

April 21, 2019