



TOWN OF SMITHSBURG
Economic Development Commission
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, December 19, 2024
7:00 PM Virtual Meeting

Present: Liz Farmer Bedard, Chair; Jamie Fogle, Vice-Chair; Cathie McCormick, Secretary/Bookkeeper; Janet Gilmartin, Brenda Wolfe, and Holly Mohler

Also present: Mayor Donald Souders; Machel Dwyer, Washington County Business and Economic Development

Commissioners Absent: Amber Dwyer

Public in attendance: Kourtney Roman, Empire Photography

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. by Chair Farmer Bedard

Agenda: Farmer Bedard moved to amend the agenda to include a discussion of the promotional video with Kourtney Roman of Empire Photography under sub-committee reports. Gilmartin seconded. **Motion carried.**

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes: Fogle moved to accept the minutes of last month's meeting. Gilmartin seconded. **Motion carried.**

Chair's Report (Farmer Bedard)

- Farmer Bedard welcomed new Commissioner Holly Mohler to the team, and Mohler and other Commissioners introduced themselves.
- Farmer Bedard provided a recap of the *Shop With a Cop* event on the evening of Dec. 2. Several Commissioners participated in the shopping excursion with the families who received the assistance.
- Farmer Bedard reported that Council voted down our proposal for a part-time event coordinator at their last meeting. In trying to understand objections, she has had conversations with council members and business owners. She noted that gathering additional feedback from town businesses will be an important part of garnering support for the request in the future. It was agreed that a good place for this discussion would be the Business Leaders' Meet and Greet in March. One idea was a "survey" with big boards and sticky notes so business leaders can submit ideas/feedback anonymously.
- Until a new council liaison for the EDC is appointed, Mayor Souders will help coordinate communication between the EDC and town hall.

Bookkeeper's Report (McCormick)

- Tabled until new business

Sub-Committee Reports

1. Events & Promotions: tabled until “old business”

2. Public Relations:

- Gilmartin shared her progress on the gathering of information and design of the *Visit Smithsburg* trifold. The trifold should focus on *Third in the Burg* and other town events. Gilmartin plans to complete the design and printing in time for a mailing to town residents in March.
- Farmer Bedard is beginning the process of creating a town newsletter with the primary audience being town businesses. Mohler noted that many small businesses do not have a brick-and-mortar location. A discussion on the target audience for the newsletter led to an offer by Mabelle Dwyer to provide the list of Smithsburg businesses on record with the County. She noted that the list will not be 100% accurate or complete, but may help to gather information on small, non-brick and mortar, businesses. Farmer Bedard will add that information to the list she has and the list Sickmen and McCormick created last year.
- Kourtney Roman of Empire Photography shared the video footage she has gathered over the last five months in the creation of our promotional video. It is time to edit the footage to tell our story, and the Commissioners engaged in a discussion with Roman concerning the purpose and audience for the video (and possible segments). She will organize the footage into: Live, Work, Play. It was suggested that we use a local musician’s work as a soundtrack. Fogle will contact Mack Berry to determine his interest in providing a soundtrack. Roman will also research some stock music. Farmer Bedard provided a copy of an article she wrote about Smithsburg that will provide some language useful for graphics. A possible voice over is being considered.

3. Business Development: tabled until “new business”

4. Arts & Culture:

- McCormick provided a report on the art exhibit in collaboration with the library. The exhibit will be called *The Artists of 21783* and feature work by artists in the area. Jurors (both of whom live and work in Smithsburg) have been secured, and the call for artists has been sent to the Washington County Arts Council for publication. There will be an opening reception at the library on Tuesday, Feb. 4 from 5:30 to 7 p.m.
- Farmer Bedard, McCormick, and Fogle met with Jefferson Boyer and Joanie Gerber of the *Smithsburg Historical Society* on December 9. The conversation focused on things we could do together and ways the EDC could help promote their work since our mission includes tourism. Boyer and Gerber provided ample examples of things they already do or would like to do including lectures at the library; walking tours of the historical downtown; a staged reading based on local happenings of historical importance or interest; ghost tours, etc. They need assistants, and we discussed working to expand our collective volunteer rosters. It is hoped that we can include some of their work into our already existing schedule.

Old Business

1. Finalize preliminary *Third in the Burg* schedule.

- *Third in the Burg* events will begin in May and will take place downtown rather than on Railroad Lane. Water Street from Main Street to C&P Lane will be closed for the May, August, and October events. Both Water Street (as above) and Main Street from Water to Railroad Lane will be closed for the July car show. The current plan is not to close off streets in June.
- During past discussions it was decided that the Arts & Music Festival, the Car Show, and Ciderfest were the most successful/popular events, but that the June Grill and Chill and August Dog Days were somewhat less successful. Tonight, the Commissioners discussed possible changes to the June and August event themes and logistics.

- The June date falls on the same Saturday as Smithsburg Days so Farmer Bedard will reach out to the leaders of that organization to begin a discussion of collaboration/coordination with their event with activities that give participants a reason to visit downtown during the event. The August event will be branded as a Summer Block Party with water-related activities. Farmer Bedard will talk with the fire department about possibly including their grassy area as part of the event. Wolfe is considering having Mack Berry play inside the Den. Another idea was a water bottle with places for stickers from local businesses as a giveaway. The EDC members divided up the contacting of business owners so that work can begin on the event.

New Business

1. EDC Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) document

- Gilmartin has begun work on a Standard Operating Procedure document for *Third in the Burg* events based on the roles and responsibilities outlined for each EDC member. Farmer Bedard requested that each Commissioner go into the document on Google Drive to flesh out their areas of responsibility and/or add any insights they have on other areas they have handled in the past. The goal is to have this document complete by the end of January.
- Last year's Business Leader's Meet and Greet was well received. In order to plan this year's event, Farmer Bedard will contact the firehall to determine a date. McCormick will contact Norm of *Cluckin' Around BBQ* to see if they are going to be back in the area in time to cater the event. At last year's event we provided a document with EDC members' names, phone, and email address. Gilmartin noted that it is risky to publish three pieces of personal information. For now, the list will include only name and email address.

2. Preliminary budget discussion

- McCormick reported that after reviewing the current budget the EDC is in good shape to follow through with the remaining events and expenditures through the end of the fiscal year (June 30; FY25).
- In order to provide the Mayor and Council with a budget request for FY26, McCormick will compile a draft budget based on FY25 expenditures for review and revision by the end of the first week of January. Farmer Bedard requested a budget be ready for approval by the Commissioners at our January meeting.

McCormick moved to adjourn the meeting. Gilmartin seconded. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Next meeting is scheduled for 7 PM on Jan. 16 at Town Hall.