

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

City of Germantown

March 18, 2021

Meeting Minutes

PRESENT: Tom Winning, Mayor Steve Boeder, Mark Heistand, Mike Kuhn

ABSENT: Jeff Fannin

ALSO, PRESENT: Kelli Novak, Clerk of Council and Pat Higgins, ED Consultant/City Grant Writer

The Zoom meeting was called to order by Tom Winning at 9:06am

Approval of the Minutes

Tom asked for a motion to approve the February minutes. Mark had one correction which Kelli corrected prior to the meeting. Mark made a motion to approve the minutes, Mike Kuhn seconded the motion, the minutes were approved.

Business

Tom asked Pat Higgins to begin the discussion:

Canoe/Kayak Livery Discussion

Pat reported that staff is working with Kile Gensinger regarding his business plans for 2021. Kile has filed the required Business Permit and Zoning Permit application for the location at 1365 West Market. Previously he was planning to share the space with the existing tenant Branding Fire Outfitters however that has not worked out. The existing tenant is moving out and they will have the entire storefront. He is planning a tent on the site and Porta Potties in the back of the building. He is working with the owner of the Shell Station for additional parking; however, it has not been finalized. The Shell Station has also started a U-Haul business and the location of the U-Haul trucks and the parking needs for both businesses has not been finalized.

Review of Germantown Strengths and Opportunities

Tom began the discussion by asking the members what are Germantown's Strengths and Opportunities. Mayor Boeder began the discussion by asking "Are We Business Friendly?" Tom responded from his experiences with current businesses, he feels we are not a business-friendly community. Small businesses have a hard time with the building and zoning permit requirements, not sure if they are unexpected requirements with costs. Tom also mentioned he hears about Miami'sburg often with regard to their business incubator space and assistance offered to help them get started. Also, Miami'sburg offers financial assistance for renovation needs for a building space someone is considering to lease. The discussion continued regarding Miami'sburg's full-time staff and focus on their central business district.

Tom also offered some suggestions: re-energize the Chamber of Commerce to help businesses, review the various rules/hoops to determine if they be changed during these hard times, and work to eliminate the perception that we have more hoops to jump through than other communities.

Mark highlighted the need to connect the residents in Germantown with the businesses in the city. The businesses need the people and the people need the businesses, however, many residents go outside of Germantown for shopping. Foot traffic downtown is so needed.

Tom also mentioned that over the years he has worked on events in the downtown area. The leadership role takes time and consumes the leader when an event is planned. Often people do one event and learn how difficult it is.

Mike stated so many of the points mentioned today have been hashed out before. Things have improved over the last five years but there is the perception in the community, the city is difficult to work with even if things have changed. Mike also agreed with Tom, leading an event is very time consuming. Mike organized the Saturday Night Out event for several years and it took a lot of time.

With regard to sign or business permits, every community has them. Maybe business owners think if they move to a smaller community, the requirements will be less. Discussion continued with how do we tow the line but change the perception. Several members mentioned to start a business takes time and money. Property owners such as the Kuhns have helped numerous storefronts to be filled by working with the business owners on rent or other expenses.

With regard to opportunities, the parks were discussed and the need to continue to develop them and take advantage of new opportunities when they come up. Tom mentioned an owner of property near Weber Park decided to sell his land, there is a contract on the property. The city needs to have funds to take advantage of opportunities that come up. Questions came up regarding the planned Federal Stimulus money and how the Germantown funds would be used. Mayor Boeder indicated the city will be working on a plan as more details are known.

Mark asked if the Main Street Program we discussed several years ago should be revisited. Instead of seeking full Main Street status, explore the affiliate level program. The program might provide insight into how to organize and make progress downtown. Pat offered to gather updated information for the next meeting. Tom suggested Pat and he could meet to review the Main Street material.

Mark stated with the new Stimulus Funding, townships will not receive funds. However, cities will have until 2024 to spend the money. Maybe the Germantown funding could address staffing for downtown.

Mayor Boeder also mentioned Germantown's history is rich in whiskey and tobacco, maybe we should work to highlight our past. Mike asked if anyone has or knows the Mudlick recipe. No one was aware of the recipe.

Tom indicated events downtown are very important. Mark reported the following events are planned for 2021 by various groups:

Memorial Day - Lions Club

Founders Day – Historical Society

Pretzel Festival – Festival Committee

No decision has been made on the 5-k race during the Pretzel Festival. Everyone agreed having the programs are a good thing for Germantown.

With no other business the meeting was adjourned at 10:06am.

