



Town of Camden
Minutes of the Meeting of the
Downtown Network Board
September 10, 2012
3:30pm

PRESENT: Co-Chair Oscar Verest, Co-Chair Peter Gross, Rick Bates, Pete Brown, Martin Cates, Samantha Hill, Robin McIntosh, Barrie Pribyl, Meg Quijano, Lowrie Sargent, Town Manager Pat Finnigan, Code Enforcement Officer Stephen Wilson and Development Director Brian Hodges. Also present was the Chair of the Pathways Committee, Geoff Scott.

ABSENT: Erick Anderson, Bernice Berger, Ellis Cohn, Deb Dodge, Janis Kay, Jill Lang, Sue Michaud, Liz Valente and Kipp Wright.

1. **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 3:30pm.

2. **Approval of Board Minutes of July 23rd**

Pete Brown made a motion that the minutes of the July 23, 2012 meeting be accepted. Rick Bates seconded the motion. It was unanimously approved.

3. **Maine Downtown Center Site Visit August 6th**

Brian Hodges recapped the August 6th visit from the leadership team of the Maine Downtown Center. Hodges said that while town government does not often have a direct connection with the committee overseeing the local Network Community process, in the case of Camden the state leadership team seemed happy with the structure and the role of the Development Director. Members of the committee agreed that the August 6th site visit had been successful and that the relationship with the Maine Downtown Center was off to a very good start.

4. **Prioritizing Projects within the Downtown Master Plan**

Oscar Verest asked the board for ideas for prioritizing the projects within the Downtown Master Plan. Barrie Pribyl suggested that the group look at projects that could be started now for a minimal amount of money, since the Town may not hear the results of grant funding until the spring. Signage was discussed, and CEO Steve Wilson told the group that revisions to the sign ordinance which had been recommended by the Planning Board would be going to voters in November. Downtown merchants reported the new signs to help visitors find parking have been effective, as have the signs indicating town districts. Building a branding strategy for signage will most likely be a project that the Network Board will take on with the goal of giving the area a coherent look. The group decided that comprehensive branding should be addressed after the November vote, since that vote will indicate the inclinations of the public with regard to signage.

Other topics that arose during discussion were: making more progress on the sale of the tannery; assigning a TIFF district for the Knox Mill; improving the attractiveness of the town's buildings as viewed from the harbor; trying to correct the problem of a lack of water coming down the waterfall during the months of July and August; continuing work on sidewalks; and constructing bumpouts.

Hodges reviewed the initial Downtown Master Plan projects that had been included in the recently submitted MDOT grants related to enhanced pedestrian safety, connectivity, walkability and access.

Verest noted that the Downtown Network Board will need to go to the Select Board during the coming months with a report on its recommendations along with the projects' associated costs. Geoff Scott suggested that the group sort recommended projects into A, B and C categories so that priorities and potential timelines will be clear for the Select Board.

Regarding possible projects to start with that would not cost a lot, Rick Bates offered that the current parking policies could be revisited and historic districts could be looked at for possible expansion. Barrie Pribyl suggested that the group consider which town policies must be reviewed and changed before the design stage of the projects begin; this way improvements can be implemented when the time comes. Lowrie Sargent noted that it would be worth looking at how to utilize the second floors of downtown buildings and accommodate possible uses into zoning regulations. Other initial ideas presented for the priority list included continuing with signage design and production, looking at high speed internet options, and examining additional shared parking opportunities.

Pete Brown suggested that our parking progress thus far be publicized so that the public could see that the master plan is being implemented, that it's a "live" plan -- not put on a shelf, and that its improvements are making a true impact.

Hodges reviewed two grant funding opportunities that would support design and planning work: one to study the best uses for the public landing, and the second to look at possible next steps for a River to Harbor Walk. He said that the match on these grants is 25%. Cost for a public landing study would be \$20,000, so the application would be for \$15,000 in funding with a \$5,000 match from the Town. The grant for the River Walk study could be up to \$50,000, he said, so the maximum Town match would be \$12,500. However, Verest suggested that in order to keep this study in line with the cost of the Master Plan, it would be more appropriate to anticipate a total project cost of \$20,000 for each of the studies involving \$5,000 Town matches.

Peter Gross made a motion that the Downtown Network Board support the proposed grant applications for planning and design studies for the public landing and the River to Harbor Walk, at the level of \$20,000 each. Meg Quijano seconded the motion. It was unanimously approved.

Hodges said that it would be helpful to have letters of support from the public to accompany the grant applications. Members of the Board offered their assistance with talking to citizens and requesting letters.

Lastly, the group discussed collating project information into a grid format so that it could

be looked at across a timeline of what is possible now and what should be planned for later. Steve Wilson offered to work on this grid and Peter Gross said he would help place projects from the Master Plan into lists of A / B / C priorities.

5. Public Comments and Questions

There were no public comments or questions.

6. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Downtown Network Board will be Monday, October 15th at 3:30pm at the Lord Camden Inn Conference Room.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Brace
Recording Secretary