



**Town of Camden
Minutes of the Meeting of the
Downtown Network Board**

**July 8, 2013
3:30pm**

PRESENT: Co-Chair Oscar Verest, Co-Chair Peter Gross, Pete Brown, Martin Cates, Ellis Cohn, Deb Dodge, Samantha Hill, Cindy Lampley, Dave Jackson, Robin McIntosh, Barrie Pribyl, Meg Quijano, Lowrie Sargent, Town Manager Pat Finnigan, Code Enforcement Officer Stephen Wilson and Development Director Brian Hodges.

Liaisons: Don White, Camden Select Board, Geoff Scott, Pathways Committee

Guests: Kerry Hadley, Jane Lafleur, Nancy Laite, Jeff Kobrock, Jennifer Gunderman – King

ABSENT: Erick Anderson, Bernice Berger, Staci Coomer, Jill Lang, Liz Valente, Jennifer Temple, Flint Decker, Amy Rollins, and Kipp Wright.

1. Call to Order

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

2. Approval of Board Minutes

Pete Brown made a motion to accept the minutes of the May 13, 2013 meeting. The motion was seconded by Peter Gross. It was unanimously approved.

Pete Brown made a motion to accept the minutes of the June 10, 2013 meeting. The motion was seconded by Meg Quijano. It was unanimously approved.

3. Active Community Environment (ACE) Teams

The Board heard a presentation by Jennifer Gunderman-King who serves as the Midcoast Community Transformation Grant Coordinator. King described the Community Transformation Grant which functions as a trust fund to support preventative care initiatives. She said that the grant provides \$1.3 million per year to Mainers distributed across 29 public-health districts over five years. The Midcoast district which King works with receives \$90,000 per year over the five years to support initiatives in schools, day cares and head start programs.

King told the group that one of the initiatives that has grown out of this grant is the Active Community Environment (ACE) program. ACE teams encourage local efforts to develop opportunities for citizens to participate in activities such as walking and bicycling. The development of accessible recreation facilities also works into the program, she said, as would any local initiative that supports the goal of increasing levels of physical activity to improve public health. Functions of ACE teams may include advising regional planning organizations, providing guidance to policymakers, and conducting community assessments among others.

King said that Camden has an opportunity to join this effort by designating the Downtown Network Board as a local ACE Team. She explained that the designation provides access to Community Transformation Grant resources and provides a free rural active living assessment by the Healthy Maine Partnership. Ongoing technical assistance and support is provided by King's office, she said.

Members of the Board asked what would be required from Camden's end in order to establish and maintain the relationship. King responded that there are no reporting requirements with this program. The next step would be to sign off on the official documentation which will create a connection between the organizations. The Board expressed their interest in participating.

Rural Active Living Assessment (RALA)

Nancy Laite gave a presentation on the Rural Active Living Assessment program. She said that RALA is a tool to help collect data on features and amenities available in a community that encourage residents to participate in physical activity. Activities such as walking and biking, and access to recreational facilities, are measured and scaled as part of this free assessment, she said.

Oscar Verest made a motion, seconded by Pete Brown, that the Downtown Network Board recommend participation in the Active Community Environment Team initiative and the RALA assessment. The motion was passed unanimously.

Priorities for TIF funding

Next the Board discussed priorities for the \$30,000 in TIF funding that is currently available. Hodges reviewed the three projects that had been discussed by the Board in recent months: repair of the dam that controls the waterfall, town-wide Wi-Fi, and improvements to the Camden Opera House.

Hodges noted that the new Downtown Master Plan grant will require a \$123,000 local match. Sufficient TIF funds will be available to fund the local match by 2016, and potentially earlier if state bond issues pass. Camden would go to the head of the line quickly if we let MDOT know we had the match available now, Hodges told the group.

Because town-wide Wi-Fi was not on the original list of projects submitted when the Town applied to establish the TIF district, Hodges said, it would be difficult to use the funds for that purpose. Additionally, the price tag for putting town-wide Wi-Fi in place had turned out to be quite high.

There was discussion among Board members on the pros and cons of the dam repair and Opera House improvements. Peter Gross said that completing the repair of the downtown dam would be something concrete that the public could see as evidence for what the Town spent the TIF funds on. He felt that the overall impact of repairing the waterfall would be significant, while \$30,000 spent on cosmetic improvements like the proposed exterior lighting and signage at the Opera House may not make as much of a visible impact. Barrie Pribyl noted that the waterfall repair ties directly into the Riverwalk project that is currently underway.

Deb Dodge expressed her support for giving the \$30,000 currently available to help seed the campaign to raise funds for Opera House renovations. Dave Jackson agreed with this idea.

Kerry Hadley, Opera House Manager, described the proposed improvements, saying that lights added to the façade of the building would show activity so that people would see from the street that the facility is open. She said that the box office idea received favorable responses from the Historic Resources Committee, Pop!Tech, and the Camden International Film Festival. Hodges asked about timing of when the lighting and box office construction might take place, and Hadley responded that the improvements would most likely be made during the month of January.

Meg Quijano noted that the Opera House gets a great deal of support from the community and that funds will be raised privately, while this is not happening for the dam.

Martin Cates said that the Opera House Committee will be conducting an overall needs assessment to determine feasibility and potential use of the facility, and for this reason it might not be wise to put the cart before the horse prior to the time when the needs assessment was completed. Cates suggested that CEDAC may participate in putting numbers together for the Opera House needs assessment.

Hodges said that ultimately CEDAC will be the committee that makes the recommendation to the Select Board, but that the Downtown Network Board could suggest that the dam be repaired this fall and improvements made to the Opera House in January. He said that it is possible that during November a new TIF district will be created at the Knox Mill.

Barrie Pribyl made a motion to recommend that both the dam project and the Opera House project move forward with the dam repair being funded first, and that a budget adjustment be made to meet the funding obligation of the Opera House. Peter Brown seconded the motion. It was unanimously approved.

7. Public Comments/Questions

There were no public comments.

8. Next Meeting

Hodges suggested that the next meeting could be held in September unless one is needed prior to that time.

Peter Gross made a motion to postpone the next meeting in till September. Deb Dodge seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

The Board adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Brace
Recording Secretary