



Town of Camden
Minutes of the Meeting of the
Downtown Network Board
November 13, 2012
3:30pm

PRESENT: Co-Chair Oscar Verest, Co-Chair Peter Gross, Rick Bates, Pete Brown, Martin Cates, Staci Coomer, Deb Dodge, Dave Jackson, Robin McIntosh, Meg Quijano, Lowrie Sargent, Town Manager Pat Finnigan, Code Enforcement Officer Stephen Wilson and Development Director Brian Hodges.

ABSENT: Erick Anderson, Bernice Berger, Ellis Cohn, Samantha Hill, Janis Kay, Jill Lang, Sue Michaud, Barrie Pribyl, Liz Valente 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 October 15th meeting. The motion was seconded by Deb Dodge. It was unanimously approved.

3. **Updates on grant applications**

a. **Public Landing**

Hodges said there had been no word as of yet on the outcome of the application for a planning and design grant for the public landing and that we should hear soon.

b. **River to Harbor Walk**

Hodges reported that the Town had received the grant award for planning and design of the River to Harbor Walk. He said that the next step would be to form a work group with one representative from CEDAC and one from the CDBG to create the language for the RFP and collect bids. He said the work group would also score the bids when they came in and help put together recommendations for the Select Board. In addition to someone from CEDAC and the CDBG, Hodges suggested that the third person on the work group be a person who is connected to Parks and Recreation, Pathways, and/or the Conservation Commission.

Pete Brown offered to represent CEDAC on the work group, and Barrie Pribyl was suggested as a representative to serve on behalf of the CDBG. Geoff Scott was mentioned as a possible third person on the work group.

4. **Roster of names added to website**

Hodges confirmed that names of those comprising the Downtown Network Board had been placed on the Town of Camden website.

5. **Prioritizing projects within the Downtown Master Plan**

Hodges distributed the results of the survey that committee members had completed to rate projects from the Downtown Master Plan. Members had graded the projects by categorizing them as top, high, medium or low priority. From these ratings, Hodges said he had assigned points (40, 30, 20, 10) and then added up the results, breaking the list into thirds while keeping the quantity in each section about the same.

The top ten list included:

Marketing/Advertising/Branding strategy and campaign
Town-wide signage design and installation
Camden Opera House 3rd floor
Streetscapes and amenities
Waterfall repair
TIF for Knox Mill
Public Landing; view from water
Enhance (make "free") high speed internet access in downtown
Upgrade alley to Public Landing next to Lily Lupine and Fern
Camden Opera House 2nd floor

The River to Harbor Walk, even though it was 11th on the list, was included in the top ten as well. The renovations to the second and third floors of the Camden Opera House were combined into one project to be addressed at the same time, rather than being listed as two separate items.

Committee members talked about the process of rating their projects and the factors that had gone into their decisions. Martin Cates noted that several of the projects will impact each other, as in the example of the public landing and streetscapes and amenities.

Peter Gross noted that the priority list is a living document that can remain flexible according to what happens along the way, such as grant money becoming available, etc. Gross pointed out that two of the projects in the top ten list are being pursued by CEDAC: the view of town from the water (since this is technically outside the downtown area), and the TIF for the Knox Mill, which falls into the realm of economic development.

Dave Jackson suggested that it might be best to start with a visible "anchor project" that the whole town can share in, one that would motivate citizens to offer their support and get behind it. He cited examples from Camden's history where one improvement project started the ball rolling and other town improvements and major gifts followed. There was discussion on how the River to Harbor Walk could work as this type of anchor project, as it expands Camden beyond the immediate downtown and serves both residents and visitors.

High speed internet covering Camden Harbor was discussed in some detail as an economic driver that could attract people to the harbor and encourage them to stay longer. Hodges noted that this is also a business development tool that would benefit small businesses moving into the area and help foster new ones. The potential for town-wide branding was also discussed.

Lowrie Sargent said that by expanding the capabilities of the Opera House to host more conferences, our exposure to talented young people who might be interested in moving to Camden would be increased. In this way events and conferences could help build the tax base, he said, in addition to strengthening our shoulder seasons.

Next the group talked about the parking lot at the corner on Mechanic Street behind French and

Brawn. It was generally felt that there are better uses for this land other than parking, and that eventually a building belongs there. Rick Bates said that the lot doesn't encourage people to continue up the street beyond the immediate downtown area.

Town Manager Pat Finnigan told the board that establishing these priorities will help indicate to staff how they should allocate their time. She said that while the list of projects will grow and change, having a living document offers valuable input on where they should focus their energies during the upcoming 3-6 months.

Hodges said that subcommittees may be formed around the categories aligned with the Maine Downtown Center: Design, Promotions, and Economic Restructuring, to help guide the projects that fall within those categories.

Robin McIntosh reported that the Midcoast Leadership Academy students will be studying how to get residents involved with downtown projects in Belfast, Rockland and Camden. Pete Brown noted that it would be great to get residents to serve on the subcommittees of the Downtown Network Board as these projects move along. Lorrain Frances of the Rockland Main Street group may attend a subsequent meeting of the DNB to discuss how the process has gone for the City of Rockland.

Verest and Gross told the group that a presentation to the Select Board would be scheduled soon. The format of the presentation was discussed. It was decided that the date of the presentation would be November 27th and that only the items that had risen to the top ten on the list would be presented. Sargent noted that presenting now will help to get ahead of the budget curve. It was suggested that the two TIFs be combined and that the Mechanic Street parking lot should be moved up on the priority list. Verest, Hodges and Gross said they would get together to hammer out the presentation and finalize the items on the list.

6. **Public Comments/Questions**

There were no public comments.

7. **Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Downtown Network Board will be held on December 3rd, 2012.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Brace
Recording Secretary