



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

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

ABSENT: Erick Anderson, Samantha Hill, Janis Kay, 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

Pete Brown made a motion to accept the minutes of the November 13, 2012 meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Deb Dodge and was unanimously approved.

3. Updates on grant applications

a) Public Landing

Brian Hodges said that a \$20,000 grant had been approved for a study of the best uses and design of the Public Landing. The amount includes a \$5000 match from the town. The next step, he said, will be for a team to finalize the language of the RFP, to distribute it and collect bids.

b) Project Canopy Downtown Tree Planting

Hodges told the group that there was no word yet on the Project Canopy grant.

4. Prioritizing Projects within the Downtown Master Plan – Select Board Results

Peter Gross reported that at the most recent meeting of the Select Board he and Oscar Verest had presented the list of priorities from the Downtown Master Plan that had been assembled by the Downtown Network Board. Gross reported that the Select Board had voted unanimously to support the priorities as recommended. Verest added that there had been a few members of the Select Board who said they didn't like everything on the list but were willing to support it because they recognized the hard work by a number of volunteers that had gone into assembling the list.

5. Branding/Marketing/Advertising for Camden – What does that mean?

--- Nancy Marshall, President, Nancy Marshall Communications

Hodges introduced Nancy Marshall, who works with the Office of Tourism as well as other clients around the state, including towns such as Camden that are interested in establishing a stronger marketing presence. Marshall told the group that "place-branding" has become more

common around the country, citing examples such as Napa Valley, the Adirondacks and the Poconos which are known for distinct features of their area. She defined the process of building public awareness as creating a “branding manifesto.” Marshall said the process is similar to writing a story about a place that will be internalized by others so that it becomes an emotion they feel when that place comes to mind.

Marshall talked about the “three M’s” that make up the branding process. The first strategy for Camden, she said, would be to determine what we want the world to think of us [our *messages*]. Secondly, we would decide who we want to reach with the story (our *markets*). The third step, she said, would be to identify tactics that would help us communicate the story to our markets [*mediums*]. In defining our markets, she added that it’s helpful to put a face on people within a target audience by giving them a name, describing their family and friends, their lifestyle, and figuring out their media habits. Tactics will emerge from this, she said. For example, social media might be a tactic that will help Camden connect with its target audiences once those markets had been defined.

Marshall described the branding process that the Town of Sanford had recently been through, where they had ultimately put possible branding options out for a public vote. She said that Sanford had used focus groups to define features and attributes of their area, and then had held discovery sessions based on the information gathered in the focus groups. Her company had developed ten possible logos, Marshall said, which had been narrowed down to two. These had been put out through Survey Monkey so the public could vote online on which logo they thought worked best for their town. Marshall said she had also done work with the town of Madison on a similar but longer-term process.

Peter Gross asked if brands, once established, can be modified as things change over time. Marshall said that the brand should be thought of as something that will last 5 years or more, noting that just when local residents begin to feel like a brand is getting old, this is the time when people in the outside world are just catching on to it.

Verest asked how long it takes for a town to go through a branding process. Marshall said Sanford’s process had taken about eight months: it had begun in July, focus groups were held through the summer, discovery groups in September and then the first round of logos had been presented in November, she said.

Hodges asked if we could build our slogan, “*Where the Mountains Meet the Sea*” into a brand. Marshall answered that research would have to be done to determine the public’s level of awareness of the phrase. She said that research could measure its brand equity: i.e., the more people who recognize the slogan, the more brand equity it holds.

Lowrie Sargent asked how we would be able to measure what we had accomplished if Camden were to undertake a branding process. Marshall said a “measurement dashboard” can be set up to demonstrate metrics of success, utilizing elements such as website traffic or how many calls come into a unique 800-number. Likewise, the number of inquiries received by the Development Office from businesses interested in relocating would be an important measurement, she said.

In the Town of Sanford’s case, Marshall said that they had settled on the following phrase for their branding purposes: “Great for Business, Great for Life.” She suggested that lifestyle would be an aspect to emphasize if we are looking to attract independent business people to town and to impact our creative economy.

Regarding goals that would define our branding process, the group discussed how preserving Camden’s authenticity would be an important goal to maintain. Barrie Pribyl noted that

reinforcing a vital and vibrant year-round village is a goal of many of the business people in Camden. A measurement of attaining this goal would be how many small businesses are open year-round. Pribyl noted that she is concerned that retired people exploring places to relocate may come to Camden in the winter and see storefronts that are closed and dark.

Jill Lang said that we may want to take an inventory of how much space in terms of square footage is available for new businesses to fill. She also pointed out that once a brand is established, an advertising budget would have to back it up, with a commitment made to support the brand for at least five years. Robin McIntosh suggested that other partners can contribute to the budget so that it becomes a public/private partnership for purposes of advertising and promotion.

Town Manager Pat Finnigan said that Camden does have a brand in the minds of people who don't live in the area, and that it's tourism-focused. While our town is actually a great place to do business, the tagline of "*Where the Mountains Meet the Sea*" does not convey that, she noted. Our town has assets that people might not associate with Camden, such as infrastructure and space to support high-tech industry, in addition to its beautiful coastline. Finnigan talked about Camden's current priorities like connecting with young families as an appealing place to live and work, and with retirees to position Camden as an active town that will provide year-round services. Finnigan noted that we have always done a good job reaching tourists, and at this time in the town's development we need to emphasize a more well-rounded image for those who know little about Camden. Gross added that this approach is in line with CEDAC's interest in branding Camden as a place not just to visit but to live and work.

Rick Bates said that marketing our town's natural assets is a way to sell businesses on the lifestyle that our area provides. He said that our proximity to the mountains and sea attracts residents who are creative with potential to contribute to a vital economy.

Pete Brown asked Marshall if she could supply an outline of how the branding process works along with milestones that would mark progress along the way. Marshall said she could do that, noting that a longer-term process like the Town of Madison's would most likely be more effective for our town than a shorter term strategy such as Sanford's which is now meeting with some resistance. She gave the group her email address, nmarshall@marshallpr.com.

Gross asked Marshall what she might ask of a town just beginning this process. She said that it's important to have goals in mind from the start, to identify assets such as recreational opportunities, available space and land, and to categorize business clusters that may already exist such as retail and technology.

6. Next steps for Organization – Lorain Francis, Rockland Main Street

Next Hodges introduced Lorain Francis of Rockland Main Street, noting that Rockland has been designated as a Main Street Maine Community through the Maine Downtown Center. This would be the next step in the process beyond Camden's designation if we chose to go that route.

Lorain Francis said that in Maine there are ten Main Street Communities including Rockland and Belfast, and that there are twenty Downtown Network Communities of which Camden is one. She explained that both of these programs give towns increased access to resources. Francis reported that it had taken Rockland Main Street two years to set up their organization as a 501(c)3 so that it would be eligible to receive grants. In their organization, fundraising supports one paid staff person and covers operating expenses such as rent, utilities and collateral

materials. She explained that funds for their work come from three sources: one third is provided by the City of Rockland, one third is raised through events, and the final third comes from contributions made by businesses and the community.

Francis detailed the "Main Street Four Point Approach" where a Board oversees the organization and four committees direct its progress. The committees, she said, are titled Organization, Promotion, Design, and Economic Restructuring. She went through the roles of these committees, starting with the Organization Committee which handles fundraising, volunteers, and branding. She said that the Promotions Committee works on community-building activities that are not just for tourists but for residents and business owners as well, often focusing on the history and heritage of their city. She told the group that the Economic Restructuring Committee works on building a strong business community, promoting shoulder seasons, and keeping stores full and open year round. The Design, Heritage and Aesthetics Committee has a strong relationship with the City and works on lessening the burden of local government. Grants come through this committee as well, Francis said.

There was some talk regarding whether or not the Downtown Network Board could serve as the Organizational Committee under this structure. Francis expressed her opinion that a group of 21 is too large for that committee, saying that the Rockland Main Street Board consists of only 11 members.

Francis noted that Rockland Main Street is quite different from a downtown business group since it represents the whole community, including a cross-section of the city and is not fun by just the businesses. The group discussed the challenge of getting more residents involved and seeking their talents on committees.

7. Public Comments/Questions

There were no public comments.

8. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Downtown Network Board will be held on January 14, 2013.

Adjourn

___ made a motion to adjourn the meeting. ___ seconded this motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Brace
Recording Secretary