

Business Development Commission (BDC)
MEETING MINUTES
APPROVED

MEETING DATE: Thursday, May 25, 2023
 LOCATION: City Hall
 CALLED TO ORDER: 8:03 AM
 MEETING ADJOURNED: 9:13 AM
 NEXT REGULAR MEETING: Thursday, June 22, 2023

Name	Present	Absent
Mike Pincus, Chair (Citizen at Large)	X	
Tim Delanty, Vice Chair (Old Webster Rep)	X	
Stephanie Skees (Old Orchard Rep)	X	
Julia Leenig (Crossroads Rep)	X	
Bud Bellomo (Chamber of Commerce)	X	
Tammy Behm (Commercial Business Owner)		X
Stacie Swederska (Commercial Business Owner)	X	
Ceci Bartels (Home-Based Business Owner)	X	
Eric Bowring (Citizen at Large)	X	
Pam Bliss, Council Liaison	X	
Eric Peterson, Staff Liaison	X	

Also in Attendance:
 Ree Hamlin – Neighbors of Webster Groves Publication
 Officer Ahmar Rasool – Webster Groves Police Department
 Fran Sudekum – Administrative Support

Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the April minutes was made by Eric Bowring, seconded by Bud Bellomo, and unanimously approved.

Visitor Comments

Ree Hamlin, Neighbors of Webster Groves community publication, introduced herself; she is interested in learning about the Business Development Commission.

Business Coffee

Commission Members reviewed and discussed comments made during the Coffee at each of the various stations (see Appendix A). Members were not able to review the entire list due to time constraints. The list will be whittled down to common threads and the discussion will continue at the next BDC meeting. Members made the decision to have a Business Coffees twice a year; beginning of August and beginning February of next year.

Some of the discussion included:

- The QR Code/Interactive Map idea garnered much discussion. It was determined the next step forward is to put together a Scope of Work for the project.
- Most comments at the Business Summit Station seemed to focus on the community collaboration aspect of a Summit more than the educational aspect of the idea.
- Comments were expressed at multiple stations wanting business community collaboration on a Webster-wide basis versus by business districts/business neighborhoods/trade associations. The rub however is how to accomplish that goal considering the roadblocks of geography, different taxes, lack of common infrastructure knowledge, legal concerns, willingness to put forth human resources, and what would the BDC’s role be in that objective.

- Many comments do not fall within the BDC's purview.

BDC Letter of Support

The City is applying for the Federal Government's Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Discretionary Grant for electric vehicle charging stations. The first round will include the City's parking garage in Old Webster, the Alma Parking Lot in Crossroads, and more. The second round includes the parking area on Dutton by Maypop and other areas around the city. The City is asking the BDC for a letter of support if willing. All Commission Members agree to a letter of support.

Business District/City Updates

- City Council continues their work on the budget. Several budget amendments were added at the recent Council meeting. The BDC's Special Initiative Funds will contain \$50K, \$25K earmarked for the Green Dining Micro Grant program (the Sustainability Commission will kick in \$25K to the micro grant program as well), and \$15K to expand Work in Webster Groves, while remaining are available for new initiatives the BDC may determine.
- City Council has started conversations about an Economic Development Plan down the road.

Next Meeting – June 22, 2023 at 8:00 AM

Adjournment – Meeting adjourned at 9:13 AM.

APPENDIX A

BDC Business Coffee Feedback Comments May 17, 2023

STATION: QR Code/Interactive Map

COMPILER: Ceci Bartels

- Cater to Webster folk and folds from wider STL area, even tourists!
- Like it but would make sure Old Orchard businesses are included.
- Include walking and driving times between districts-we're all so close.
- Like sign idea and QR code.
- Have links to each business website.
- Sometimes shoppers don't know about other districts and where to grab lunch.
- Physical Maps (way finders) @ benches on Lockwood/Big Bend. Includes all business districts.
- Add a bike route and bike racks on maps for cyclists. Need more bike racks!
- Maps of all business districts including QR codes to each business website would be great. Love window decal idea.
- This is a great idea.
- As a non-profit, this could help us with visibility! Or when we have the Art Fair/Paint Webster each year, to have a map of parking, restaurants, parks, etc. for people coming to Webster.
- Needs to be utilized in a way for people to access without coming to the city so they can plan beforehand. Also, how would this be different than using Google Maps which everyone currently does. Are there incentives, coupons or others that would make someone use this map over Google?
- Add in businesses that participate in Webster Bucks program.
- Many people still don't know how to access a QR code. Great idea!

STATION: Give us your thoughts and ideas

COMPILER: Mike Pincus

- Add a boutique hotel to Old Webster
- Turn Old Webster Trade Association into Webster Groves Trade Association
- Release boundaries on applicants so that all small businesses in all business districts can join together
- Lindsay Thomas @ Webster Window & Door is interested in joining the BDC (Cell 314-719-9290 lsylvia@loewenstl.com)
- Commence a study on how the vibrant business community increases property values – it would be good to see and could be a selling point for the community
- On Pacific – can we clean up the city building/lot that looks bad? Is there any way to improve the sidewalks/curbs/landscaping – it looks bad
- Diversity and Inclusion goals – see what we could do better about supporting diverse businesses so that we represent the webster community better – possibly microgrants?
- Face lift Microgrants for business owners to help make their façade look better
- Big Bend and Elm – better pedestrian crossing
- Reach out to landlords that don't have any interest in leasing properties (problem vacancies) and see if they could be used for pop-up events

STATION: Business Summit

COMPILER: Julia Leenig

Do you see value in a business summit?

- Great way to bring together service providers and entrepreneurs
- Love the idea of bringing businesses together
- Would be great to get together
- Great to bring all districts together and the chamber - we need a unified front "one webster"
- Yes - we are all just focused on our specialties
- 8 blank tally post-its voting "I'd like to see this"

What would you like training on?

- DEI education
- Education on the other business districts/businesses
- Employee management
- Marketing/social media
- Canva seminar
- Graphic design/visual marketing
- Getting capital
- Social media/web

Other feedback:

1. BDC focus should be to improve/beautify infrastructure around all business districts
2. More city-wide events
3. We need "one webster" not split
4. beautification

STATION: Work in Webster Groves Job Board

COMPILER: Eric Peterson

What Could We Improve or Change to Make www.WorkInWebsterGroves.com Meet Your Needs?

- No comments

What Marketing and Communication Mediums/Types Have You Used Successfully for Posting Open Jobs?

- Instagram :)
- Industry Job Boards

What Challenges Do You Have Filling Workforce Needs?

- Qualified Individuals
- Employing/retaining "trade" industry positions
- Paying a Living Wage = \$15/hour
- Diversity of Workforce
- Paying Living Wage to Workers

How Else Can the City Help You with Filling Your Workforce Needs?

- No Comments

STATION: Changes & Updates

COMPILER: Eric Peterson

What functions and interactions with the City could we improve to better our service to you?

- More noticeable public parking signs

What functions and interactions with the City could we improve to better our service to you?

- Stop Sign (!) and Crosswalk at Summit and Lockwood. Many "near misses" both pedestrian and vehicle
- Trash cans near crosswalks and parking lots
- We love the staff!
- We appreciate the landscaping and overall beautification of the Old Orchard area. Would love to see more trash cans.
- A dedicated point of contact/liaison
- Webster is very segmented. Old Orchard, Crossroads, Old Webster, etc. It would be nice to get our arms around ALL areas and work as a group. Lots of times one group has an event and the others don't know about it. Cross Marketing could improve.

What Challenges or burdens does your business face that the City could help you overcome?

- Trash - We Could use more receptacles along streets and corners
- Love the online business license renewal
- Ladies in the City office were helpful and friendly
- More crosswalks and stop signs
- Improve sidewalks/pedestrian areas in ALL business districts if you are trying to promote walkability.
- Add specialty streetlights and planters to Marshall Ave district (Zeta Dell)
- There are so many non-profits in Webster – Would love a non-profit group or arm of the Chamber
- Missing sign from corner of Moody and Elm that had businesses on it. Green Door Art Gallery, Llewelyn's, etc.
- Stop Sign/Crosswalk at Summit and Lockwood. Westbound traffic passing Rogers and Cyrano's is very fast, especially the bus. Employees must cross Lockwood to reach their cars and its dangerous
- Crosswalk on N Gore leading to Parking Garage
- Agree with above comment "Crosswalk on N Gore leading to Parking Garage"

- Safer pedestrian crosswalks for busier intersections specifically on Big Bend and Elm
- North Webster Business District infrastructure being actively ignored/let go
 - Union Pacific Ignoring Responsibilities
 - Crumbling Sidewalks/Roads
 - Inadequate Street Lights
 - Lost Parking Opportunities Along Pacific because of infrastructure
- There are 5 schools along the 1.5-mile Big Bend corridor during the school year. Traffic can get so backed up during drop off/pick up that it prevents access to businesses. Somehow if that could be smoothed out it would improve revenue and make it safer.

STATION: Business Liaison

COMPILER: Eric Bowring

- Excellent opportunity for a mentorship program.
- Shared workspace for business owners to use. The Business Liaison could work out of this office.
- Make Business license renewal process online
- I would prefer funds be spent to help smaller businesses vs. larger corporations
- Does this replace the economic development commission of years past?
- We've been needing this for years!
- Small business insurance group?
- It would be nice to have a map with all commercial property vacancies for the public to see
- Include nonprofits! They add to the awesomeness of the city and local businesses are our greatest supporters

STATION: Green Dining District

COMPILER: Jamie Hasemeier, Sustainability Commission

We talked to folks about developing the Green Dining District, solar panels, and other related sustainability issues. I feel like the event was helpful to create a sense of community and collaboration. Well done! Thank you for allowing us to be a part of it. We hope to begin reaching out to restaurants directly soon!

STATION: Shop Local Marketing

COMPILER: Tammy Behm

Not received