

MEETING MINUTES

DOWNTOWN STRONG

September 17, 2019 @ 6:30 PM

Thomasville Parks & Recreation Administration Office

1 East Main Street

1. Welcome/Agenda Additions

At 6:30 Michael Brandt, Assistant City Manager, opened and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Updates from City and other Organizations

M. Brandt provided the following updates to the committee:

- 1) David Gall has begun work on the Downtown Toolbox, you may see him around town taking pictures of buildings.
- 2) M. Brandt reported that the Palace Theater was not chosen as a project by the UNC-Chapel Hill students this semester, but would be in the mix for next semester.
- 3) M. Brandt reported that Downtown Strong was chosen as a project by the UNC-Greensboro MPA students to help study and support our efforts to develop the downtown organization. The UNC-G team was introduced to everyone.
- 4) Martha Lawson reported that the Small Business Center is working with downtown area businesses to develop a shopping event that would involve both Thomasville and Lexington downtown businesses. For more information contact Martha at mlarson8181@davidsonccc.edu.

3. Roundtable Discussion of Main Street Organizations with representatives from NC Dept. of Commerce, Eden Main Street, and Lexington Uptown Inc.

M. Brandt introduced the guests as Darrin Rhodes, NC Dept. of Commerce; Randy Hunt, director of the Eden Main Street program; and Rebekah McGee director of Uptown Lexington Inc.

D. Rhodes presented information about the organizational structure of Main Street programs throughout NC. There are 64 NC Main Street Programs- 23 are Quasi-Public-Private; 22 are City Departments; 13 are 501 (c)3; 4 are 501 (c) 4; and 4 are 501 (c)6 organizations. About half of all organizations are in cities/towns that have a Municipal Service District that has a separate property tax that generates funds for the organizations.

R. Hunt explained that Eden's structure is a hybrid. He is a paid city employee assigned to the city's economic development department. In his role he is the designated Main Street staff person, meeting the requirements of the NC Main Street program. He does all of the reporting and management of the day-to-day activities. There is also a 501 (c)3 organization that he is a member that provides volunteer support and also is able to fundraise, and buy and sell property easier and quicker than the city can act.

Eden is unusual in that that there are three historic downtowns (Eden was formed in the late 1960s from three small towns). This makes management of the Main Street program a little more difficult because each downtown has its own volunteer group and funding sources. Eden does have at least one Municipal Service District with a local tax to support their efforts.

R. McGee of Uptown Lexington explained that their organization is a 501 (c)3, so she is not a city employee and does not get the benefits of city employees. Lexington does have a Municipal Service District Tax that does fund their organization, but is not guaranteed, the city has reduced their funding in the past. Fund raising is required to fund some of their downtown efforts.

Uptown Lexington has a volunteer board with subcommittees, which at times run into issues of attendance and volunteer hours. However, those volunteers that do participate are hard-working and dedicated to their downtown.

Both R. Hunt and R. McGee stressed that each community needs to determine what will work best for their downtown and there is no one “right” way to accomplish the mission of Main Street.

After the visitors finished, a short discussion revolved around next steps. M. Brandt has requested that PACE consider becoming the lead organization for downtown. PACE meets at the end of September and will follow-up with M. Brandt.

4. Next Meeting Date

M. Brandt has a conflict with the next scheduled meeting date of October 15. The committee agreed that Thursday, October 17 would be the next meeting, to be confirmed later.

NOTE: The next meeting will be Thursday, October 24, 6:30 PM at P&R Recreation Office.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm