

Parksley Downtown Revitalization: Get On Board!

Parksley Downtown Revitalization Project Management Team Meeting Minutes
February 7, 2019
Town Office, Parksley, VA

Management Team Members Present:

Paul Muhly, Accomack County Supervisor
Ellen Johnson, ES Railway Museum
Letitia Greer, Town Staff
Frank Russell, Town Council
Harrison Phillips, Business Owner/Acc. Co. Supervisor
Dan Matthews, Town Council

Management Team Members Absent:

Wayne Marshall Jr., Mayor
Cara Burton, ES Public Library
Tim Valentine, Business Owner
Billy Graham, Business Owner
Mark Bowden, Accomack County
Dana Bundick, Resident
Elaine Meil, A-NPDC
John Aigner, A-NPDC

Other Attendees Present:

Doug Ellis, DHCD
Julie Nash, Town Council
Kitty Hall, Library Foundation
Janice Hart, Business Owner
Tom Cardaci, Business Owner
Betty Farley
James Linton, Business Owner
Debbie Russell, Business Owner
Jeff Stauffer, Business Owner
Ray B., Resident
Curt Smith, A-NPDC
Clara Vaughn, A-NPDC

The meeting was called to order at 5:33 pm.

Minutes of January 3, 2019

No edits were suggested to the meeting minutes.

Staff Update

Project Management Committee Update—

Smith reported he and Councilmember Matthews will present the draft Project Management Plan to Parksley Town Council for adoption. Completion of the plan prior to the grant application deadline provides bonus points to the Town's application.

Call for Letters of Support—

Smith reported eight letters have been received to date from businesses, residents, NGOs, and Accomack County. All Letters of Support must be received by March 1.

Public Hearing #2—

The second public hearing for the Downtown Revitalization Plan will be held on March 11 at 7 p.m. during the Parksley Town Council meeting. Staff will present the downtown revitalization plan, with focus on the final CDBG activities and budget. If any changes are required following the meeting, the committee must coordinate quickly to meet the grant application deadline.

Community Improvement Grant Application Next Steps—

Smith will continue to work with the consultant to refine and reduce the budget. He will submit the finalized budget to Committee members. The Committee plans to host one more meeting prior to the March 11 public hearing.

Committee Attendance Record—

The attendance record was presented. No edits were suggested.

Action Items

- All committee members should assist in soliciting Letters of Support by the March 1 deadline.
- Smith will follow up with DHCD to clarify the guidelines and requirements designed to ensure that Town employees, agents, consultants, officers, or elected or appointed officials do not receive preferential treatment through the Façade Improvement Program. He will report findings to the Committee.
- Smith or Vaughn will request from VDOT information on whether Transportation Alternative Program funding can be used to improve existing sidewalks.
- Smith will contact FIP participants to determine the amount of matching funds each intends to spend to refine the CDBG budget.
- FIP participants should submit as much information as possible to Smith regarding what improvements they plan execute their properties and proposed budgets for these improvements.
- Johnson will submit in writing to Smith specific budget items regarding the Railway Museum's FIP needs, to be passed on to the consultant to further refine the CBDG budget.
 - Smith will update the budget to include \$10,000 for the Railway Museum.
- Smith will inquire from the consultant:
 - Can earth be added on top of existing pavement in the amphitheater area, rather than demolition? What cost savings would result?
 - In the budget, sod is approximately \$3 more per square foot than real pricing in the area. Can the budget estimate be reduced to reflect this?
 - Smith will discuss lowering the cost of the bandstand with the consultant.
- Smith will discuss with the owner of the Club Care Café whether he is will to cover additional costs in the Four Seasons alleyway budget.
- Smith will remove all volunteer hours from the draft CBDG budget, per Ellis's suggestion.
- Smith will update the budget to reflect a maximum contingency of 10 percent, per DHCD guidelines.

- Vaughn will discuss with STAR Transit the possibility of using a bus stop for additional purposes.

Economic Restructuring Plan (ERP)

Presentation of Draft ERP—

Smith has incorporated several new items into the ERP. The plan was not presented in consideration of time, but staff planned to share the draft via email for Committee review.

Updates on ERP Project Progress –

The following activities were reported as progress towards implementation of the ERP since the January meeting. These activities will be reported to DHCD to demonstrate that the group is working diligently to implement the ERP:

- The art gallery has opened.
- Façade work on the Parksley Art Gallery has been completed.

Physical Improvement Plan

Blight Identification and Removal/Remediation Plan Report—

The plan has been updated based on improvements already achieved to date. The plan was not presented in consideration of time, but staff planned to share the draft via email for Committee review.

Façade Improvement Program Report—

Following the January Management Team Meeting, staff consulted with DHCD, resulting in several changes in eligibility for the Façade Improvement Program:

- All town-owned properties were removed from the list of buildings eligible for the FIP. This includes the Parksley Town Hall, Farmers Market, Police Department, and the Railway Museum's guard shed and tool shed. In light of this, the Railway Museum requested grant funds be allocated for façade improvements to its structures.
- The American Legion was removed from the list of buildings qualifying for the FIP as it does not provide a public service.
- The Shake Shop's south-facing wall was not deemed an immediate public safety issue, but instead, an aesthetic issue eligible for FIP funds. However, the owner declined to commit to providing matching funds.
- The former ABC store/Caribbean Market was deemed structurally sound and therefore eligible for the FIP. The owner has completed a participation form for the program.

As a result of these changes, 27 properties remain eligible for the Façade Improvement Program. Eighteen have committed to matching façade improvement funds, including many along targeted areas on Dunn Avenue and the entrance to the Town of Parksley. Smith reported that DHCD was impressed with the level of participation.

Smith reported that the CDBG grant manual requires the Town to take specific steps to ensure that any Town employees, agents, consultants, officers, or elected or appointed officials do not receive preferential treatment through the FIP. These include Town Council and the Board of Supervisors members, but not necessarily the Parksley Working Group. Property owners falling under these categories must sign a waiver agreeing to be last priority, should any projects to not receive FIP funding. Doug Ellis, of DHCD, advised including contingency funds in the CDBG budget to avoid this scenario. Ellis further reported that those applying for and receiving façade improvement funds cannot appear to be receiving preferential treatment in the way the program is executed.

Smith presented two draft renderings of façade improvement projects for Jaxon’s Hardware and the Club Car Cafe, designed by consultants at Hill Studio.

Discussion ensued regarding the ES Railway Museum properties and it was determined that the Railcars, Tool Shed, and Guard Shed would each be included separately as participants in the FIP with the maximum CDBG funding level to be distributed amongst the three properties.

Physical Improvement Projects—

- a. **Bandshell Entertainment & Education Area—** The consultant updated the design using feedback from the January Committee meeting. Designs preserved existing parking spaces, as discussed during previous Management Team Meetings.

Staff has contacted the Library, which expressed interest in using the venue for educational events. Staff plan to contact the Railway Museum and Community Services Board to inquire about their interest in using the space for further activities. Any intended programming will be reported to DHCD as part of the grant application.

Nash suggested the roof for the bandshell be designed to match the color and material of the Railway Museum’s ticket office to create congruity in town. Muhly agreed, adding that the preferred design would include a gabled roof to match the station. Smith indicated that these details would be determined during the final engineering design process of the next phase of the grant.

Committee members approved of the structural design of the bandshell area, but requested Smith discuss opportunities to lower costs with the consultant.

- b. **Authentic Railcar (for small business)—** “Railcar Row” will serve as a pilot project for locating businesses in railcars in the farmers market area, with the goal of attracting visitors to the Downtown area and keeping them there. The Accomack-Northampton Transportation District Commission/Canonie Atlantic

Co. boards expressed conditional support for this development on the now inactive railroad track.

The consultant, A-NPDC, Railway Museum and Council Member Matthews are exploring a potential partnership between the Town/Eastern Shore Railway Museum and the Virginia Museum of Transportation. This has potential for the Eastern Shore Railway Museum to become a satellite of the Museum of Transportation and/or relocation of rolling stock from the Museum of Transportation to Parksley.

- c. **Railcar Kit(s) (for lodging or business)**—Same as the previous project.
- d. **Informational Kiosk**—No update.
- e. **Public Outdoor Art**— Nash presented a model of the “LOVE” sign that would be located in town and use Victorian and railroad themes.
- f. **Signature Alleyways**—Designs for the two alleyways have been finalized. Few changes were made since the January meeting, with the exception of replacing grills with a fireplace in the Harvest Table alleyway.
- g. **Build New Sidewalks**— This may be included under VDOT’s Transportation Alternatives Program, for which CDBG would provide matching funds.
- h. **Establish New Crosswalks**— This may be included under the TA Program.
- i. **Traffic Calming on Roads**— This may be included under the TA Program.
- j. **Wayfinding Signage**— Ellis, of DHCD, noted that, if the Transportation Alternatives grant application is not successful, this could leave an unmet need for signage on Route 13 directing traffic into Town. This will be considered in the grant funding prioritization process.
- k. **Historic Interpretive Signage**— This may be included under the TA Program.
- l. **Update Existing Street Lighting**— This may be included under the TA Program.
- m. **Electric Vehicle Charging Station**— This may be included under the TA Program.
- n. **Enhance Existing Sidewalks**— This may be included under the TA Program. Staff will reach out to VDOT to determine if this is possible.
- o. **New Landscaping**—The Eastern Shore of Virginia Master Gardeners have offered to provide support through volunteer work for landscaping, which will assist in

budget development. This includes the two alleyways and plantings along the bandshell area.

Staff plan to reach out to youth organizations such as local high schools and Boys and Girls Clubs to request commitment from volunteers to complete landscaping work.

- p. **Utility Bollards**—Bollards are expensive and the Committee may consider reducing the number from the five proposed as part of budget considerations. Committee members reported existing utilities may be repaired and made more attractive at a lower cost.

Downtown Revitalization Plan Budget

Finalization of Draft CBDG Budget—

Ellis noted that the application should rest heavily on driving economic development, rather than simply updating the appearance of the town. Using matching money this way will improve grant scoring. For Parksley, the principal asset driving economic development is the Railway Museum and rail cars. Ellis noted there are Virginia Tourism Corporation grants to promote towns via marketing.

Smith plans to work with each business owner individually to refine FIP budgets.

At Ellis's suggestion, all volunteer labor will be removed from the budget. A maximum of contingency of 10 percent is allowed by DHCD, and the budget will be updated to reflect this.

Façade Improvements Program—The Committee agreed that, if individual FIP budgets do not meet grant budget requirements, it would be acceptable to lower the match from \$15,000 per property to \$10,000. The Railway Museum agreed to budget \$10,000.

Bandshell & Entertainment Area— The house lighting and sound system was eliminated, as performers have historically brought their own, saving \$15,000. Wayfinding signage was eliminated, saving \$3,000.

Linton noted that sod's price is two-times inflated, and Smith will discuss with the consultant whether the amount budgeted can be lowered to reflect pricing in the area.

Signature Alleyways— Committee members agreed the fountain in the Four Seasons alleyway can be removed from the CBDG grant and funded via a naming opportunity in the future.

Committee members agreed to remove the concrete sidewalk from the Harvest Table alleyway, saving \$4,000.

Utility Bollards— Committee members agreed these will not be prioritized in grant budgeting, as they are costly and existing utilities may be updated and made more attractive at a lower cost.

TAP Grant— Vaughn will work with VDOT staff to develop a TA Program application incorporating a bus shelter, increased sidewalk connectivity in the Downtown area, and a possible multiuse path or bike or shared use lane connecting the Downtown area to Metompkin Elementary School. She will verify whether all suggested improvements—including wayfinding signage, historic interpretive signage, traffic calming measures, new crosswalks, updates to existing street lighting, improvements to existing sidewalks, and an electric vehicle charging station—can be funded through the TA Program.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm.