

City of Biddeford
Downtown Development Commission
October 02, 2017 6:30 PM City Hall
Conference Room 2nd Floor

- 1. Roll Call**
- 2. Welcome Guests**
 - 2.1. Greg Tansley, City Planner - Update on Downtown Projects
- 3. Approval of Minutes**
 - 3.1. September 11, 2017 Downtown Development Commission Meeting Minutes
[9-11-2017 DDC Meeting Minutes.doc](#)
- 4. Budget Report**
 - 4.1. FY17 Budget Balance: waiting for update from City Manager on RiverWalk Tables
- 5. Chairman Follow-ups/Updates**
 - 5.1. Mayor's Notes on Downtown
[10-02-2017 Notes from the Mayor Update of Sept 2017.doc](#)
 - 5.2. Courier DDC Article
[10-02-2017 Newspaper Article-Sept 2017.doc](#)
- 6. Old Business**
 - 6.1. City Staff Update: Brad Favreau, Economic Development Coordinator
WiFi - Sept. data; next hotspot sponsors; "ribbon ceremony"
Gateways
Façade Ordinance
- 7. New Business**
 - 7.1. Commissioners' Initiatives
- 8. Next Meeting**
 - 8.1. November 6, 2017
- 9. Adjourn**



Commissioners Present: Droggitis, Durkin, Dubois, Edwards, Eon, Foley, Nielson
[QUORUM]

Commissioners Absent: Kelliher, Shlaver

City Representative: Favreau

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I • Motion to Accept Minutes for August:

[Moved: Foley, Second: Droggitis, Vote: Unanimous]

II • Chairperson's Remarks (Durkin)

• Budget Discussion

FY17 Budget balance \$3600: \$50 for two signs for WIFI hotspots and ~\$500 for last clean team. Remainder \$3000 pending for tables in Laconia Plaza (design submitted and approved by Doug Sanford, public works, and planning; waiting on City Manager/Council)

• Façade Ordinance Violations

Advertising violations: Durkin reported Pawn Shop on Main and Dirigo to city code enforcement for violation of advertising ordinance (flashing lights, display on MERC tower/city property)

• WIFI

First month complete with City Hall Hotspot, ~850 sessions (translates to roughly 400-500 unique users). Ribbon cutting for WIFI will be scheduled (Durkin and Foley)

Plan of action to secure other hotspot agreements: Favreau will follow up in meetings with identified and interested parties. Commission members have/will reach out to: Biddeford Savings (Favreau), 140/299 Main St (Favreau), 265 Main St (Edwards), Doug Sanford (Dubois), Hospital (Favreau/Eon), UNE (Droggitis), Jimmy Albert/Cowbell (Foley), Chamber of Commerce (Dubois)

III • Reports and Other Business

City Gateway discussion from DOWTOWN Task Force draft report and mapping: Commissioners will visit proposed sites and research other cities gateway markers to report back at next meeting. Also send comments on DTF report to Favreau.



Planter Survey being completed by HoB, Favreau and DDC HoB members (Foley, Droggitis) will see if DDC can/should play a role, at least get results for consideration

Façade Improvement Grants

Favreau: Three applicants were granted maximum allowed \$15K, a fourth for \$12K (with full matching funds from applicant) for façade and building improvements in downtown. Grantees are: 15K: Harkins/299 Main (new windows), Ebling/old record store (refacing store front), Seth/Alfred St (refacing building front); 12K: McClain/Twin City Café (siding). Seth/Alfred St is complete, others have one year to complete work. Request to replenish fund will occur in 2018.

Large Construction/Infrastructure Updates and Discussion

- Dubois volunteered to research and reinvigorate discussion on new highway Exit 36
- Favreau and Durkin will find research on moving train station to Biddeford
- Planning on Water St and Main St intersection revamp has begun
- Lincoln Mill project announced, Phase 1 to be completed by end of 2019

Downtown Improvement District

No updates known to DDC, Edwards will follow up with City Manager

IV • Meeting Adjourned (7:36p)

[Moved: Dubois, Second: Foley, Vote: Unanimous]

Notes from the Mayor's "Biddeford Update" letter
A number of important things to note this week.

1. Bangor Savings Bank is the new owner of the old First National Bank/Bank of America building at the intersection of Main and Lincoln. They are planning to invest a significant roughly a million dollars in that building and make it, once more, attractive to the eye. The city has agreed to lease the abutting park to the bank. They will maintain the area and will enhance it to make it more accessible to residents. This plan has been in the works for a number of months, so it is good to see that it is coming to fruition.

2. The city has signed an Joint Development agreement with Tim Harrington and Eric Chinburg to redevelop the Lincoln Street Mill. As you may recall, plans for this redevelopment began a number of years ago, but the project was slowed because of a complicated permitting process, financing issues and other concerns, especially the magnitude of the plans. Phase I is expected to be in excess of \$40 million, while Phase II will be in excess of \$10 million. This certainly ranks as the biggest project in this city in many years. The mill building itself will house market rate apartments, and will also include restaurants, a gym, and a pool. Phase II of this project would be the construction of a stand alone boutique hotel next door. It is my opinion that because this is such a historic, visible building, the redevelopment of the space will redefine the Biddeford downtown. There continues to be solid development in that area: check out the renovation done by Seth Harkness, on Alfred Street, next to Suger. The old courthouse, which was recently purchased by Jim Brady, is currently being gutted in order to create office space, and that too, is a significant investment. Doug Sanford continues to expand and renovate his mill complex, and in doing so, he keeps adding more and more interesting businesses and shops.

There has been some commentary regarding the city's decision to give the developers a five year TIF (tax increment financing) on this project. Because of the high cost of redeveloping mills, all mill projects in Biddeford and Saco have necessitated some form of assistance. A number of TIFs have been granted during my administration, and 3 were granted in the previous administration. In this particular situation the developers will receive a five year credit enhancement of \$150,000 per year. While some argue that such practices give tax breaks to developers, important details are too often conveniently omitted in the discussion. a) without such TIF financing, such redevelopment

would most probably not get done and the mills would remain empty and deteriorating. 2) the city actually benefits from creating such a TIF. This is because TIF invested dollars are sheltered from state and county formulas that determine our aid to education, revenue sharing, and county tax. Without sheltering the increase in valuation that is triggered by new construction, Biddeford would lose state funding and see an increase in the county tax. In fact, it is estimated that almost half of every non-sheltered valuation dollar leaves the city IF there is no TIF district in place. So while the developers are indeed getting help with their taxes, the city, if there was no TIF in place, would lose essentially that same amount of money because of state reductions in revenue sharing and aid to education. Of course, the other intangible that is so important is the ripple effect created by a project of this magnitude in terms of other future downtown investments. This development shouts loud and clear that Biddeford is not only open to business, but that it has entered a new era in terms of its history and its economy.

As a result of this development, the city will be receiving approximately \$400,000 in permit fees. Additionally, taxes from the building (which currently is around \$43,000) will exceed \$400,000, though for the first five years, after completion, the city will reduce that figure by the credit enhancement payment of \$150,000. Once the 5 years have expired, the city will receive full valuation.

This is an exciting time for this city, as the transformation continues. Wherever I go, I hear people praising what is happening in our community. Listening to residents, I sense a great pride in our city. Most people love the new downtown. They are eagerly curious about all potential new developments. They love the creativity and the community spirit that is growing.

3. I just loved the Fringe Fest and the River Jam events of last week. Fringe Fest was Friday night, and Main Street was closed between Alfred Street and City Square. Tables were set up in the middle of Main, and vendors lined the street with food, crafts, and wares. In Shevenell Park, Dirigo and Banded Horn Brewers showcased their beverages, and music was played on Main Street. People loved it. The restaurants were busy; people conversed and enjoyed each other's company; art adorned the area. There was a great sense of community pride everywhere, and it made me think of what possibilities could come from this particular event, in terms of more pedestrian friendly closures

of streets, more regular community events, more showcasing of talent, etc.. It is something that I want to explore.

Of course, River Jam itself, which was held on Saco Island on Saturday night, was a huge hit! It was preceded by numerous family events in Mechanics Park during the day, and again, people who attended were thrilled by all that occurred. Community pride and a sense of community are so important in the life of any city, so to see more and more energy and fun evolving through events and planning is thrilling for me.

A shout out to the volunteers who made this happen. Too often, we forget how much time and energy goes into creating an event. One has to also be persistent and creative. I encourage all of you to become volunteers in such doings. More help is always needed for La Kermesse, Winterfest, River Jam, the Artwalks, etc., and help is always needed at Waterhouse Field! I would love to see you lending a helping hand.

4. The 2nd Mayors' Gala will be held on October 20, Friday, from 8 to 11 in the Pepperell Center.....

5. City Gateways are a topic of conversation in City Hall. Because of all the changes that are happening, we think it important to upgrade and update the various entrances into the city. The southerly Route 1 corridor is leading the pack of discussion, because of the eventual new courthouse that will be constructed on the Pate property. A meeting was held with some Route 1 residents, who expressed concerns such as traffic. Another meeting, with court officials, will take place with residents whose homes abut the property. It is the city's hope to make the entrance more appealing to the eye, and also upgrade some of the zoning issues, as that stretch of Route 1 has not been reviewed in years, and it contains an illogical web of zoning boundary lines and zones.

DDC continues without direction from council

By Grant McPherson
Staff Writer

BIDDEFORD The Downtown Development Commission will continue to identify possible WI-FI hotspot locations downtown and secure sponsors for the equipment.

The first wireless hotspot was placed on top of city hall and has been active for a month. Activity logged from the hotspot shows almost 900 users have accessed the wireless internet available downtown and between half and two-thirds of those are unique logins. The commission, which last met Sept. 11, also plans to post two signs for the wireless hotspot, one in front of the entrance to city hall and another across from 208 Main St., the future site of Bangor Savings Bank. Economic Development Coordinator Brad Favreau met with a member of Biddeford Savings Bank to discuss sponsoring a hotspot somewhere downtown. The cost of a sponsorship is \$5,000 for three years, as long as GWI continues to provide broadband, which is yet to be finalized. Favreau said Biddeford Savings Bank sounded interested but the discussion was inconclusive.

"I think we maybe should start putting out feelers for other sponsors," Favreau said.

Suggested locations for future hotspots included 140 Main St. owned by Steve Ebling, 299 Main St. owned by John Harkins and 265 Main St., the site of Elements. Stephanie Edwards, commission member and Elements employee, said the owners of the building might be interested because residents around the café have been using the business's wireless internet throughout the night, forcing employees to unplug their router at the end of each day.

Aside from more wireless hotspots, the commission also discussed the report and map compiled by the Downtown Task Force, which meets weekly at 8 a.m. Thursdays in the mayor's office. The map was published in the Aug. 31 edition of the *Courier* and highlights possible locations for downtown gateways. The gateways are intended to denote entrances into downtown Biddeford and provide

a consistency in the area. Favreau, who attends the weekly task force meetings, brought the copies of the map to the commission to allow members a chance to review and provide their input. Favreau said the Downtown Task Force, established about a year ago, will be disbanded within the next four to six weeks and felt the commission had an opportunity to continue the work of the task force. The Downtown Development Commission has been active since at least 1975. "We could investigate what other municipalities are doing in terms of gateways and what might be appropriate for Biddeford, given our constraints. Then we could write up a proposal to present to council," Favreau said.

Commission Chairman Bill Durkin recalled a gateway design created by Engine Director Tammy Ackerman a few years ago that had a large ornate arch over the street marking the entrance to downtown. Durkin identified the intersection of Route 1 and Main Street as a possible location.

"Totally depends on the layout of the gateway but that would be a prime place," Durkin said.

The Downtown Development Commission placed four gateway signs in the past, three downtown and one by Five- Points. They used the waterfall logo of the city with the slogan, "A proud city rising where the water falls." There are no definite plans yet as to what the new gateways would look like.

"The gateway could be a subtle transition. It doesn't have to be grand, maybe even barely noticeable," Favreau said.

Without a budget, Durkin hopes the commission can play an advisory role in the city. The city council chose not to fund the Downtown Development Commission for fiscal year 2018. He'd like to update the façade ordinance to help establish continuity among downtown businesses. Other policy recommendations could include input on the RiverWalk and pedestrian safety. Durkin is also happy to receive direction from the city council on what the commission's evolving role could be, but so far has not received any communication.

"We are an extension of city government, not too many cities or towns have that. It's pretty unique," he said.

Commission members were also curious what the status of the Downtown Improvement District will be and how that might affect the look and placement of downtown gateways. Edwards said she's wondering how long it will take to get the board formed and hadn't heard anything yet. Ward 5 Councilor Victoria Foley said she's spoken with several business owners who are waiting for more information from the city.

"There are a lot of people with questions and not a lot of answers yet," Foley said.