

City of Biddeford
Downtown Development Commission
September 11, 2017 6:30 PM City Hall
Conference Room 2nd Floor

- 1. Roll Call**
- 2. Welcome Guests**
- 3. Approval of Minutes**
 - 3.1. August 7, 2017 Downtown Development Commission Meeting Minutes
[8-07-2017 DDC Meeting Minutes.doc](#)
- 4. Budget Report**
 - 4.1. FY17 Budget Balance
- 5. Chairman Follow-ups/Updates**
- 6. Old Business**
 - 6.1. City Staff Update - Brad Favreau, Economic Development Coordinator
 - 1) WiFi - data and next hotspot
 - 2) RiverWalk Tables
- 7. New Business**
 - 7.1. Downtown Task Force - Gateways and future report to Council
[9-11-2017 Task force creates unofficial downtown boundaries-ARTICLE.doc](#)
 - 7.2. RiverJam Weekend - September 15th & 16th
 - 7.3. Façade Ordinance
 - 7.4. Commissioners' Initiatives
- 8. Next Meeting**
 - 8.1. October 2, 2017
- 9. Adjourn**

Minutes | DDC
August 7th 2017

- **Roll Call** (Dubois, Durkin, Eon, Schlaver, Droggitis, Nielson, Foley, Edwards, Kelleher)
Commissioners Present: Dubois, Durkin, Eon, Schlaver, Droggitis, Nielson, Foley
Commissioners Absent: Edwards, Kelleher
- **Guests | Public** Mark Ouellette + Grant McPherson
- **Guest's Remarks** (Ouellette)

Installation of first public wifi hotspot took place two days prior – already has had 20 users even though un-advertised. 2 signs are still to be installed in sidewalk area.

Bangor Savings is the key sponsor donating 3k for the equipment and 2k in maintenance contracts. For the next 3 years,

GWI has donated the internet at a value of \$100/mo for 36 months.

The DDC has not seen contracts for above mentioned services but are told they exist.

Future hotspots require additional sponsors 2 additional sponsors are being sought – total sponsorship per hotspot = 5K for three years or \$138/mo

Discussion of potential sponsors, locations and community benefits

Discussion of other Maine communities and the highlights of their wifi programs

Consider putting together event acknowledging the contributions for this hotspot and to promote the improvement + need for additional sponsors. Utilize initial usage data and Marketing materials provided by Axiom to solicit sponsorships for additional hotspots.

- **Motion to Accept Minutes:** Nielson, 2nd Droggitis – Unanimous as amended to correct Riverwalk table location.

- **Riverwalk Tables / Budget**

June 26th DDC Voted to spend funds on outdoor seating/tables for the Riverwalk overlook. City officials were involved in selection process as were local property owners. Purchase was put on hold and DDC is still awaiting rationale despite follow-ups from Chair.

Next Steps – Additional Follow up on tables – Request that city planner and city staff attend Sept meeting to provide update on Riverwalk and coordinate subsequent actions.

- **Reports and Business**

Update on Ad Hoc Committee + initial Downtown Improvement District meetings.

Items for future action:

- Benches

- Commissioners would like to see bus stops better identified

- Bike Rack Installation

- Stop Signs and key Main Street intersections

Meeting Adjourned

Task force creates unofficial downtown boundaries

By Grant McPherson
Staff Writer



The Downtown Task Force Committee worked for the past year identifying locations throughout Biddeford that it believes serve as key transition areas into the downtown. The committee will make a recommendation to city council in September that will include this map as well as a broad vision for the downtown and steps council can take toward achieving that goal. A unified and pedestrian friendly downtown are highlights of the groups' proposal. Orange squares mark the locations of the proposed downtown gateways on the map. (Courtesy image) BIDDEFORD Plans for downtown are being finalized by community members who want to emphasize the importance of pedestrian activity along Main Street.

The Downtown Task Force voted unanimously to adopt a final draft of a map that details locations for several gateways throughout downtown Biddeford. The gateways serve as aesthetic or cultural markers of the downtown and will not serve as official boundaries for the Downtown Improvement District. City Manager Jim Bennett said, as of now, the district will tax property owners in existing MSRD 1 and 2 zones, which were last updated in 2008.

The seven recommended gateways are main entry ways into downtown that include Elm Street and South Street, Hill Street and Main Street and the Elm Street bridge between Biddeford and Saco. Committee members hope it will tie into and further beautification projects already in place downtown.

The map adopted by the task force is one part of a larger report the committee will make to the city council sometime in September. The report includes a series of recommendations for the city council to discuss and act on if they choose. The task force hopes to paint a broad picture of the downtown and provide concrete actionable items for council to implement.

Committee Chairman Bruce Benway's first suggestion is to urge the council to reconsider a public vote for repairs to the dome at city hall. Biddeford residents have voted three times in the past 10 years against borrowing money for repairs to city hall. Benway is most concerned with the appearance of the dome, and less with the clock tower and other identified fixes to the more than 120-year-old building.

"I think it's a significant symbol of what is downtown," Benway said. "It doesn't speak well for the city not to be taking care of that."

Committee member Bill Southwick wants to expand on Wi-Fi now available downtown by adding charging stations in parks. He suggested tapping local businesses for sponsorship opportunities.

“Every place I go now I find public spaces to charge phones and devices,” Southwick said. “We don’t have that here.”

He added that painting the clock tower would illustrate the city’s commitment to downtown.

Continuing with the goal of a more pedestrian friendly downtown, committee member Mark Robinson emphasized the lack of parking. He said Friday nights in Biddeford have been very busy this summer and the Foss Street parking lot has often been full. However he’s found footing in that parking lot to be slippery during winter and difficult to navigate.

“Foss Street parking lot was built for cars, not people,” he said.

Parking limits are not enforced downtown Friday nights and on weekends, therefore people who live downtown often don’t move their vehicles.

The Downtown Task Force identified space between Lincoln Mill and Pepperrell Building 10 as a primary location for a parking structure, according to a *Courier* article published Feb. 9. Economic Development Coordinator Brad Favreau said in an email the city council hired Desman Design Management of Boston to conduct a review of where a parking garage could be built downtown. Work is underway but the design team has not yet determined a specific location. Former city councilor and committee member Pete Lamontagne noticed the north half of Main Street is typically the busier section, while most of downtown’s trash cans are located on the south side.

“If we’re talking about things that could be taken care of, that could be done today,” he said.

Robinson used the example of Biddeford resident Jim Godbout as a resident who took it upon himself to fix an issue in the community. Godbout has been involved in renovations of Waterhouse Field, which was closed last spring after bleachers were deemed unsafe. A complete overhaul of the field is now being completed in time for football season.

Since April, Godbout estimates he’s spent 400 volunteer hours working on Waterhouse field between completing repairs, attending meetings and organizing volunteers. He and about 300 volunteers tore down the old bleachers on a Saturday in May. The second phase of work involved rebuilding the infrastructure for the new bleachers, lights, press box and scoreboard. Godbout imagines if he had to bill for all his time it would cost a few hundred thousand dollars.

To ground the committee’s recommendations in a broader vision, member Julian Schlaver introduced four questions that can serve as headings of the overall plan. Schlaver asked why people come to Biddeford, how they get here, what Biddeford is like and what it looks like in the future. He emphasized the importance of the pedestrian experience as it relates to the answer of each question.

“For the council to hear our argument would be powerful,” Schlaver said.

Heart of Biddeford Executive Director Delilah Poupore cited the organization's 2011 Downtown Master Plan as a list of items that was created but left unaccomplished. She said headings and organization are important, but ultimately more work is required to complete projects.

"It takes people and money," she said.

Ward 5 Councilor and Downtown Development Commission member Victoria Foley is glad to see energy being spent on downtown revitalization and believes pedestrian access is a key issue in driving economic activity. Foley, 34, grew up in Portland and remembers a healthy mix of commercial and residential use that allowed for a flourishing downtown. She believes Biddeford can learn from communities across New England that transformed their own mill districts to continue attracting people to the area.

"Having a vibrant downtown encourages other people to come here," she said.

Foley is an advocate for downtown on the city council, as her ward encompasses a large portion of it. While the council has an array of concerns in the community, it can facilitate zoning ordinances, building height and tax incentives for businesses to attract developers. Foley wants a larger tax base for the city and sees a busy Main Street as an effective catalyst for change.

Since early June the council has not discussed affordable housing projects in downtown Foley said, adding that it is a major concern of hers. She said it is a conversation the council and the public will have to have as more people move to Biddeford. She believes a balance can be struck between an expanding tax base and respecting the people who have historically lived downtown.

Along with housing, Foley identified parking as a major issue in downtown that will demand attention. Foley has to deal with parking bans during winter and understands the need for a permanent solution. She said Bennett and city staff have heard concerns and are considering solutions.

"City staff is on top of these issues and council is listening to them as well," she said.

An open government is important to Foley and she encourages members of the public to attend meetings and contact their councilors anytime. She sees the potential for Biddeford to continue to grow as a community and input from the people living there is critical. Foley wants the council to always be open to hearing new information.

"Downtown will never be perfect, there's always an opportunity for improvement," she said.

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