

DERRY DOWNTOWN COMMITTEE

MINUTES FROM JUNE 23, 2009 MEETING

Roll Call

Meeting called to order at 7:00 PM. In attendance were Diane Gavrish, James Browne, Jona Bostwick, Debbie Paul, Bill Coyne & Michael Gendron.

Opening Statements

It was suggested by Ms. Gavrish that meeting minutes be taken by this committee to keep a record of what would be discussed as well as to keep other "Community Profile" committees informed of the discussion and actions of this committee. It was also stated that keeping minutes was important in order to document the efforts and due diligence of a steering sub-committee that might ultimately present their collective vision and findings to the Derry Town Council. It was the hope of the Derry Downtown Committee that all other "Civic Profile" committees (that emerged from the Community Profile event) would follow suit and document the minutes of their respective meetings and subsequent action steps and email them to all other Civic Profile committees. By doing this, all committees would be aware of each other's discussion, action steps and findings and would, hopefully, avoid duplication of effort.

Appointment of Officers

It was also discussed that a committee or sub-committee of the town should be represented by officers to 1. provide a point of contact for that committee 2. record the minutes of any meetings and 3. act as moderator of any meetings. Ms. Bostwick nominated Ms. Gavrish to the office of Secretary of the Derry Downtown Committee and was unanimously elected. Mr. Gendron nominated Mr. Browne to the office of Chairperson of the Derry Downtown Committee and was unanimously elected. It was noted that these official roles were created specifically for the purpose of conducting this particular meeting and were very much subject to change at future meetings.

Open Discussion

Ms. Paul suggested that everyone may have a different vision for Downtown Derry and that we should begin verbalizing those visions so as to come to a collective compromise and present a unified vision to our town council. Hopefully, the council would then move to enact some or all of the suggestions derived from the Community Profile initiative. Ms. Paul suggested that we work towards setting achievable goals to help revitalize Derry's downtown. She commented on the idea of a "gateway" to the downtown with actual metal gateways at each end of the downtown area along Broadway and cited how this was done on the West Side of Manchester to promote a sense of community.

Mr. Gendron suggested that the use of banners hung across Broadway (which was done in the past) helped create a sense of community as well. He felt they helped keep the town informed of various events going on in town and gave Derry citizens a feeling of belonging to a community. He noted that recent attempts to install "banner poles" (after the practice of hanging them from telephone poles was banned) had failed as the poles that were installed were not sufficiently strong enough to support the banners. He suggested that we consider revisiting that idea. Mr. Gendron, who is a trustee at the Greater Derry Arts Council located at the Adams Memorial Opera House, suggested that acquiring the vacant lot property next to the Adams and converting it to parking would truly serve a great many people in the community. He felt that it would not only provide parking for those patrons that attend events at the Opera House, but would serve as "in plain sight" parking for patrons of downtown businesses.

Ms. Bostwick suggested that if a parking lot was built on the lot next to the Adams, it could also be used as a possible location for a "Farmer's Market" or other town events. She wondered if anyone knew the assessed value of the property.

Action step: Ms. Gavrish stated that she would attempt to discern the assessed value of the property

Action step: Mr. Brown stated that he was a civil engineer by vocation and indicated that he would attempt to gather GIS (Geographic Information System) on Downtown Derry. A geographic information system (GIS) integrates hardware, software, and data for capturing, managing, analyzing, and displaying all forms of geographically referenced information and helps you answer questions and solve problems by looking at your data in a way that is quickly understood and easily shared. Mr. Browne indicated that he also had access to Computer Aided Design (CAD) Software that could be used to develop a rendering of what our collective vision of Derry could look like. Mr. Browne indicated he would be willing to attempt to create such a rendering upon determination of a collective vision.

Mr. Coyne felt that having a CAD drawing of our vision for Downtown Derry could be very helpful in generating more interest among the citizens of Derry. If a CAD drawing could be published in the newspaper or on a small billboard somewhere in the downtown, it could serve to excite and motivate more people in the community into action.

Ms. Paul also made the committee aware of what were called "Brownfield" Grants which was federal money set aside to beautify blighted property within a community for the benefit of the entire community. She felt this grant money could be used to purchase and/or beautify the vacant lot next to the Adams Memorial Opera House.

Action step: Mr. Gendron indicated he would summarize the minutes for this particular meeting and distribute them to this committee as well as the other "Civic Profile" committees.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20pm. **The next meeting of the Derry Downtown Committee will be Tuesday, July 14, 2009 from 7pm-8:15pm in the downstairs meeting room at the Derry Public Library.** Minutes respectfully submitted by Michael Gendron.