

BETTER HOMETOWN BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Meeting minutes: February 16, 2011

Directors Present: Cullen Chambers, Stephen Palmer, Monty Parks, Dick Smith, Peggy Stone, Shirley Sessions, Patricia Miller Wann, John Yarbrough

Directors Absent: Judy Malins

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm by Cullen Chambers.

Welcome

Chantel welcomed everyone.

Approval of Minutes

Monty made the motion to approve the January 19 Better Hometown Board of Directors minutes. The motion was seconded by Stephen. The motion passed unanimously.

Committee Work Plans/Updates

Design

Trash/Recycling Containers: Chantel has applied for a DNR – Coastal Incentives Grant for trash/recycling containers. The Design committee approved the same containers with a different opening for recycling to be picked up by City. The Historical Society has committed to purchasing two. They are \$1,100 to \$1,300 per 36 gallon container. Patricia made the motion to purchase of the containers if the Grant is approved and to inform the City Manager. Peggy seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Façade Improvement Assistance Concept: Chantel and Cullen have discussed this with the Mayor and Cullen has discussed it with the Board of the Historical Society. The Historical Society Board said that they would match any funds put forth by the City up to a certain amount. The Historical Society would actually be giving a grant to entice property owners to improve their façade(s). The Board of Directors need to set up a criteria to make sure the funds are used properly to enhance the façade and keep with the quality of the Island. There are a lot of art deco details that could be enhanced rather than embellished. Cullen asked Chantel to talk about this. Chantel said we do not have an Downtown Development Authority and we would have to have a fundraising project, as we could not use City funds for 100% of the funding. Darien has a grant for \$500 and Forsyth has a grant for \$1,000. People have to fill out a form and then it goes to the Design Committee for approval. Chantel said this has to be local money. Cullen said with BHT Board approval he would go back to his Board to try to re-start this program and we could formalize the process and get it started. He thinks we could get others to donate to the program after we show how the program works. He needs to see if the Historical Society is still interested. Dick asked if someone from the City would go and make sure that the work was done properly. Cullen said that we would need a maintenance agreement and that this is where it can get complicated. Chantel said several Cities have criteria and it is not just putting a coat of paint on the

building. There are provisions where a tenant might be able to apply with the property owner's permission. Defining characteristics of the building, taking off other facades to reveal the original, and color provisions are key requirements for most criteria. Cullen said that the key is to try to secure subsequent levels of funding to make this worthwhile. Chantel said we might limit it to one or two applications per year. There may be no applications, but Cullen said we must base it on historic principles and compatibility with the image of what Tybee is and has historically been. Chantel said that the City of Forsyth is updating their streetscapes and have taken advantage of façade improvements while the streetscape work is underway. Monty asked if this covered interior work. Cullen and Chantel confirmed it does not. Cullen said we need to stress that this is a practical approach. Dick said this funding cannot move forward without a grant. Cullen said this is not a grant. The Historical Society has to be asked again to see if they are still interested. The next step would be to set up the criteria and then introduce it to property owners in the Southend business district. Dick made the motion that the board proceed with the process. Chantel said we would work with the permitting department. Stephen seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Monty asked if it is typical for the Historical Society to be a funding arm of Better Hometown. Cullen said that in terms of the façade improvement, it is part of the mission of the Historical Society and that it would be an outstanding partnership. Chantel said that every city funds the program and additional funding is done differently. Public/private partnerships are extremely important. Cullen has been extremely supportive with the Historical Society.

The Board discussed hotel / motel tax percentages. Cullen confirmed Hotel / Motel tax is divided three ways. The Tourism Council receives approximately \$500,000 from Hotel / Motel tax. The Hutchison Island Convention Center gets a percentage of the tax and the money could do a lot for Tybee. Cullen emphasized that the Tourism Council must only spend money on marketing and promotion. Dick confirmed this is only posters, traditional print media, radio, social media, and internet. Dick said the contract with the Trade Center is a ten year contract and the city is in their fifth year.

Economic Restructuring

Locals Appreciation Card Update: Chantel reported that 68 people have signed up so far.

Business Meeting: Chantel reported that there will be a meeting for businesses February 22 with presentations by The Savannah Bank, Accountants on Tybee and the Small Business Assistance Center in the Auditorium at City Hall. She hopes that Board members will attend.

Surveying: Chantel sent out a link to a survey about perceptions of the Corridor in the last newsletter. Thus far, only one reply has been received. If there is a low response she will send it out again.

Organization

2011 Board Appointment updates: Chantel said that Cullen has expressed an interest in stepping down as Chair. John and Judy have been reappointed and Dick Smith has agreed to serve as a representative of the Friends of Tybee Theatre. Patricia said she knows someone who is interested in serving on the Board. Peggy said she knew two people.

Chair Appointment: Cullen said we need someone who loves this Island and is willing to show their passion and step up to the plate. Cullen said it is not the workload, but he needs to focus on other things that need to be done. This is a fine community and great place to live. Cullen asked if the By-Laws support the Board vote someone in. Stephen said he cannot do it. Dick said he has to make up some from his loss last year. John is unavailable because of family and running the business. Monty commented that he has a full plate. We need someone with an astute business sense and can show a real vision. Chantel said that if there is no decision tonight the discussion will continue at the next meeting.

TIIP program: Chantel reported that the program will begin at the end of March. Diane Kaufman suggested the volunteers be introduced to the business owners. Some volunteers felt that might not be a good idea because volunteers should have an overall view of businesses already and know what is going on.

Promotions

Tybrisa Wall Art: Stephen said Greg at the Desoto Hotel is considering a wall on their property. John said that it was brought up to him that he should get in touch with SCAD. Patricia talked about Colquitt and showed examples of their wall art. Cullen asked about SCAD's sidewalk chalk art in Forsyth Park and if that was a way of getting people interested. Dick said properties do not have to be on Butler or Tybrisa. They could be other places, such as the Tybee Market. Cullen said the long wall on Tybrisa is a perfect location due to its visibility. We need to know who owns the wall. Chantel shared an article about a fresco artist in New Mexico.

Tybee for the Holidays / Third Thursdays on Tybee updates:

- a. Tybee Island Tourism Council (TITC) ad assistance review: Tourism Council asked Chantel to not attend today's meeting because they were considering the BHT request. Cullen said based on the criteria set by the TITC, the majority felt that Third Thursdays on Tybee (TTT) did not meet their criteria. Cullen lobbied for TTT at their meeting about what it provides for residents and visitors. They will provide \$500 for TTT to print posters and \$1,500 of web design and print design for Tybee for the Holidays. Cullen said that it was very disappointing, but their bottom line is to put heads in beds. Stephen said this could be an opportunity to look for other arts grants. They helped out the first year and we expected that they would help again, but Cullen said it came down to the interpretation of the law. Discussion ensued regarding additional support from the City for TTT if they decide not to waive parking fees in December. The Tourism Council is very supportive of Tybee for the Holidays. Cullen told them that this is a growing effort. Stephen asked if we will still have control over website design and content. Cullen said they want input, not control. Chantel said that design decisions are made by the BHT BOD. Tybee for the Holidays needs some branding work. Stephen said he proposed that we prioritize funding for TTT. Chantel said we are okay for the spring, but in the fall there will be no money to promote unless Council approves the proposed budget. Stephen talked about

their internet advertising and explained that BHT has a target audience that is not necessary computer savvy. The Tourism Council questions the locations of the concerts. They want documentation that particular businesses have benefited. Patricia said that John benefited last February. John said that he definitely benefited and that he thought the businesses could participate. Chantel reported that she has received positive comments verbally from businesses owners. Cullen said that even the worst critic of TTT had to admit that the image of Tybee had improved due to TTT and Tybee being more cultural and family friendly.

Clean up at Jaycee Park request: Stephen said the shuffle board needs paint. Stephen asked for a commitment from the Board to participate two days; one day to survey and get a list of what is needed and the second day a week later to do the physical work prior to the next Board meeting. Peggy said that when the playground was put together, it was a community project.

Stephen commented that Old Town Trolley has agreed to donate a trolley for both upcoming parades for nursing home residents to ride. Dick said he will get banners if he receives the specifications. Stephen said we need a 6' x 3' banner. Cullen said he would like for us to donate the banner and get credit. Dick and Stephen will decide on wording. Cullen asked if he needs donations for hats that residents riding on the Trolley can wear during for Mardi Gras and Irish Heritage Celebration Parades.

New Business:

No new business

Adjourn

John made the motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:05pm. Stephen seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.