

**Better Hometown Board Meeting Minutes**  
**January 19, 2010**

**Directors Present:** Cullen Chambers, Maureen Grindstaff, Patricia Miller Wann, John Yarbrough; Mayor Pro Tem Shirley Sessions

**Directors Absent:** Judy Malins

**Guests Present:** Councilman Bill Garbett, Peter Berquist, Monty Parks

**Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order at 9:05am.

**Approve of Minutes:**

Maureen made a motion to approve the December 15 Board of Directors meeting minutes. John seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

**Board of Directors Update:**

Chantel told the Board that the Public Notice advertising the three Board openings has been posted and the deadline is January 21. Stephen Palmer with Tybee Island Wedding has expressed interest in serving on the Board. Peggy Stone, the manager of Doc's Bar, has also expressed interest, but the Board meeting time may not work for her. Maureen Grindstaff announced due to personal and business circumstances she cannot renew her term for another year.

Cullen said that the Board had hoped that Dick Smith would come on the Board, but with his current health challenges, it is unlikely that he will take on membership. Cullen mentioned that Harry Spirides might be interested. Cullen said that we need the new Board members well in advance of the March conference in St. Marys.

**Community Visit**

Darien is the next community visit. Chantel will check with Frank to see if he is available next Wednesday, January 27. Cullen offered to drive and it was agreed that all attending would meet at Cullen's house to leave.

Patricia asked that our guests introduce themselves. Bill Garbett, new City Councilman and Shirley Sessions, new Mayor Pro Tem, introduced themselves. Shirley is the new City Council liaison for the Better Hometown Board of Directors. Peter Berquist, introduced himself as a Tybee resident and musician. He came to the meeting because of his interest in Third Thursdays on Tybee. Monty Parks owns All Points Café.

Shirley suggested the Council receive an updated Better Hometown check list to the so that they can see how the Better Hometown Initiative is progressing in our quest to get designation as a Georgia Better Hometown Community.

Shirley suggested that it would be good for the Council committee liaisons to submit regular reports to Council.

## **Main Street Conference**

Chantel reported that the conference agenda is not yet available, but she has emailed last year's agenda to the Board as an example. Chantel will send the actual agenda as soon as it is available from DCA. Chantel reported that Martha, the City's BHT DCA liaison, said that we can count the two board members that attended the Main Street 101 course in the fall of 2009 towards the Main Street Conference requirement as long as they remain board members. The travel expenses for the Conference in St. Mary's may need to be an out of pocket expense for Board members. Cullen volunteered to transport people. He said that he is going to go before Council to urge Council to show their support by funding the Better Hometown Initiative through the budget. Chantel said that once we get Certification as a Georgia Better Hometown there will be additional opportunities for funding and continued educational opportunities. Patricia reminded the Board that the second Third Thursday on Tybee concert will be 3/18/2010 while the Conference in St. Mary's is ongoing. Patricia and or Chantel may have to come back to Tybee to oversee the concert. Chantel said the Conference sessions typically start around 9am and they go until 4 or 5pm. There are networking events and opportunities in the evenings. There was a discussion about how long it takes to get to St. Marys from Tybee.

## **Committee Updates**

*Design – Cullen / Chantel*

1. Parking – Cullen and Chantel are part of a parking committee with City officials and parking services. They have action plans that are being implemented. One plan is that Chantel is laminating the "Parking Paradigm on Paradise" information which was emailed to businesses and is provided on the City's website is underway. At a recent Tourism Council meeting, one of the rental agencies did not want to go to the expense of printing the information for handouts, therefore a laminated piece may be beneficial for lodging to have in their lobby. People do not seem to understand that meaning of the big "P". The Parking Services Division is working on stickers to be placed on the Pay & Display stations to help clarify "Pay to Park". In regards to additional parking on the Island, Pete with the Parking Division is surveying the corridor to find additional spaces. A discussion of the parking garage ensued. Cullen said that a parking garage is not an ideal solution and can have a negative impact. Cullen and Wanda are going to explore the possibility of a free trolley. Cullen reminded the Board that the Better Hometown Initiative must also protect the quality of life of city residents and use parking in residential neighborhoods and areas as a last resort. Increasing fines for parking in non-designated areas is being considered by the City Manager. Cullen said that the City needs to continue to consider vacant properties as possible parking resources. It was asked if the City could purchase or rent vacant lots. Chantel reminded the Board that Keith Gay had remarked dirt is inexpensive now and it is a good time to buy. Patricia said that this is an age-old problem on Tybee and that it is not a year round problem, but about a 40 day problem during the year. Monty Parks said that we need to get the information out to visitors and the rental companies need to help educate our visitors.

2. Trash Receptacle Update – The Trash Receptacle Donation program was implemented. The Historical Society has donated three trash containers. Jonathan Lynn was able to provide for two additional containers out of his budget in order to meet the necessary minimum order for bulk pricing. Discussion ensued regarding the need for uniformity and consistency in the design and style of the trash containers. A couple of individuals in the community have proposed the use of wooden covers, but there are questions about their durability and who would be responsible for their upkeep. It was decided that it is best to stay with the steel cans. The containers on the southern portion of the corridor have been returned to the manufacturer for additional weatherizing at no additional cost to the City. Three units are supposed to be back soon. It was brought up that the cost of over \$900 per container is very expensive. Cullen said that he and Mark Boswell are looking at local manufacturers. Savannah has similar trash containers and we may be able to partner with them. Chantel said that the sea-foam color for the Tybee trash containers increased the cost. Cullen suggested that as we move away from Tybrisa, the color shouldn't have to be so exact. John said he has found less expensive containers on the internet. The salt air will always be a factor and weatherproofing claims are not a guarantee with the island climate.
3. Sign Ordinance Meeting – Cullen said that the City and Jonathon have gone out of their way to make people aware of the meetings. The meeting at the All Points Café brought good input and some changes were made. An additional meeting was held at City Hall on January 13. Freda and Perb helped get the word out to their email lists. Cullen said that Jim Boyle from the Planning Commission, two business owners, City officials and staff attended. Chantel was told that a business owner did not know about the meeting even though he was on her e-blast. Shirley said she had heard about it from Susan Kelleher at Seaside Sisters. Cullen said that this ordinance is a very lenient ordinance and that most signs are proposed to be grandfathered in. Maureen said that people in her area seem fine about it and maybe the low turnout indicates acceptance and realization that the sign ordinance is not going to have a negative effect on business. She suggested that the fact that people were able to vent ahead of time was a good thing in the long run. John said he received the e-mail which laid out the old and new ordinances side by side. He said this is not a big issue. Cullen said that we will see at tonight's Planning Commission meeting. He quoted Freda as saying it best when she said "You can be quirky without being tacky." Cullen said if we can improve on the ordinance the whole community benefits.

*Economic Restructuring* – Judy / Chantel

1. SBAC loan update – Chantel has not received an update from Judy to date.

*Organization* – John / Chantel

1. Newsletters -- Chantel said that the e-newsletters continue to be sent on a regular basis. Cullen remarked that he likes the Newsletters and thinks they are effective. Chantel said that she would like updates from the various committee liaisons once a month. Chantel is writing regular columns for the Tybee Breeze and Tybee Times.

*Promotions – Maureen / Chantel*

1. Third Thursdays on Tybee – Patricia talked about the submission process and explained that a Panel will choose the artists. Hank Weisman, Cyndi Kinkle, Jim Wann and Richard Adams were asked to serve on the Panel. Shirley said she was excited about TTT. Chantel said that WRHQ is interested in being a sponsor and mentioned that WTOC, WJCL, WSAV, Connect Savannah, and the Savannah Morning News are all interested in and like to cover what goes happens on Tybee. Cullen said that “feet on the street will benefit the businesses.” He said we need to get the music outside and accessible for families and highlight our local talent. Peter Berquist said that after listening to everything, he thought he might submit a music sample for his Trio to be considered. Shirley said it was great to encourage people to listen to music/arts outdoors in a friendly environment.
2. Island Wide Sidewalk Sale – The Sidewalk Sale is scheduled for January 30<sup>th</sup>. The intent is to pull in residents who want to get rid of household items in one central location and businesses that need to clear out inventory in anticipation of spring merchandise arriving. Chantel said that there is one location for the Resident sale this year. It is in the Strand parking lot. Last year’s two locations spread things out too much and added confusion. Any money received from residents will go to help supplement the BHT budget for promoting the event. She said that she has reserved the Daily board on President Street and there is no charge because she has a credit from last year. We will have ads in Connect Savannah, Savannah Morning News and the Savannah Pennysaver. Cullen asked if the Sales were successful last year. Chantel said that last January’s Sale was extremely successful, but that the October Sale was not so successful due to too many other sales throughout the area. There are no other Sales planned as of right now.

Chantel mentioned Susan Kelleher emailed her about BHT taking over the Shop & Strolls. This will need to be a Board decision. Cullen said that we need to look at time constraints and our Mission to ensure we are doing what is best.

**Other Business**

Shirley asked if we do surveys with our businesses. Chantel said there have been Q & A verbally and will look into further surveys through Constant Contact. Shirley suggested that we come up with three critical questions, ask what we are missing and encourage participation. She will work with Chantel to develop these questions. Cullen said that was an excellent idea. Some businesses feel that they are under-served and that the City is anti-business. It is important to make sure they are well represented and know their input is respected.

Chantel said that Martha is reviewing our BHT start up information she took to her in December. The Budget may be an issue. The public / private partnership is vital. Martha is the person that will recommend Tybee for designation as a Georgia Better Hometown Community. Cullen explained to Shirley and Bill that the last Council removed a large portion of the BHT budget from the City Budget. He said that we need continued support from the City and reminded everyone that this was the third attempt by Tybee to become a Georgia Better Hometown Community. He said he was afraid that this is our last chance for

designation. Chantel said that the DCA is facing budget constraints and the entire program could be affected and go away. Shirley said that she is a huge fan of the Tybee BHT Initiative. Cullen said that Chantel has moved this forward through her tremendous hard work and leadership. He reminded the Board that it has been less than a year since we were formed and we have come farther in this third attempt to get designation than either of the other attempts. Chantel reminded the Board and visitors that Better Hometown is an ongoing philosophy and not a quick fix. It takes time for significant change to happen.

**Adjourn**

Patricia made a motion to adjourn. Maureen seconded the motion. All approved the motion and the meeting was adjourned at 10:15am.