

Better Hometown Board Meeting Minutes
February 16, 2010

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

Directors Absent: Judy Malins, Peggy Stone

Guests Present: Lindsey Fruchtl, Tybee Island Tourism Council

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 9:06am.

Approval of Minutes:

John made a motion to approve the January 19, 2010 Board of Directors minutes. Monty seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

Board of Directors Update

Chantel introduced and welcomed new Board members Monty Parks with All Points Café and Stephen Palmer with Tybee Island Wedding, Inc.

Erin Sheldon has moved and is no longer on the Board and therefore no longer Vice Chair. Cullen explained that the Vice Chair runs the Board Meetings in his absence. Monty agreed to take the Vice Chair position and the Board Members approved of this appointment.

The Promotions Liaison position is vacant due to Maureen no longer serving on the Board of Directors. Stephen Palmer agreed to be the Promotions Liaison and the Board Members approved this appointment.

Chantel said that Peggy Stone is trying to work out her work schedule so that she can attend Board Meetings.

Community Visit

Darien was the third site visit to see how other Better Hometown communities approach the program. On January 27, Patricia, Cullen, Councilman Bill Garbett, and Chantel met with Frank Fields, Darien's Director of Community Development. Frank is the Executive Director for the Downtown Development Authority and is in charge of their Historic nonprofit. Darien has designed long term plans and has put a great deal of emphasis on streetscape projects, including boat ramps. A few businesses left downtown and moved to the outlet mall where the Chamber of Commerce is located. There has been some conflict between the Chamber and Downtown. The different groups Frank heads up work in tandem and are now working for façade improvements and on a nature trail and kayak ramps. It is hoped that the nature trail and kayak ramps will pull in more eco-tourists. Frank said they are trying to bridge the differences with the Chamber of Commerce.

Cullen noted that the Darien Better Hometown is having a disconnect with the State Historic Preservation group in Atlanta. They have a significant historic building that is falling into ruin. The owner is asking \$3 M for the site and it will need a lot of money for restoration. Cullen said it was "demolition by neglect."

Shirley asked if Frank was working with other entities. Cullen said the group appears to be working well with other groups and seems stable, but he believes that work can be more effective. Cullen also cautioned us in regards to the Darien Chamber leaving downtown. He said we need to be careful and avoid groups parallel duplication of efforts because that can lead to a breakaway among groups instead of working together as evidenced by the divide between the Darien Better Hometown program and the Darien Chamber of Commerce.

Main Street Conference

The Main Street Conference is March 17 – 19 and 1/3 of the Board must attend. Last year the DCA made an exception for Tybee, but only two out of the three Board Members attended. It was a real setback for Tybee. Stephen has it on his calendar and doesn't know if he will be staying or driving daily. It is a two hour drive and Stephen offered to drive. Cullen said he will be at the Conference, but not staying overnight. Patricia said she would be going. Patricia expressed a desire to drive back to Tybee on Thursday afternoon for the Third Thursday on Tybee concert. She said she would drive back to St. Mary's Friday morning for the completion of the Conference. Shirley can go the first day to show the support of Tybee's City Government. Stephen said we have three days to represent Tybee at the Conference. Lindsey offered to have the Tybee Island Tourism Council help with the set up of the Third Thursday Concert if necessary. John said he will be at the Conference if his business is covered. Cullen asked everyone to please let Chantel know as soon as possible about attending the Conference. Chantel said that it is \$100 per person for the Conference. Shirley reiterated that she would attend on Wednesday, but said she would have to be in Savannah on the other days because this is the busiest time for out of state college students who come to work.

Cullen said that we have to get over this hurdle.

Committee Updates

Design – Cullen / Chantel

February 4 Committee Meeting update:

Parking – Chantel said she has laminated the Parking Paradigm in Paradise information and is distributing to lodging establishments with lobbies. The information was emailed out so companies can post the information on their websites. Cullen said that the accommodations industry has a responsibility in getting this information to their guests. Complaints come from the accommodation industry about their guests getting parking tickets, but it is the responsibility of the hotels and rental property managers to get the word out. Cullen said that Chantel has filled a lot of the “information holes.” Chantel said that every community has parking issues and everyone has to work together. Cullen said that we need to be on the same page and finally we are seeing people working together. He said Councilwoman Wanda Doyle advocates a Parking Committee and noted that this issue has been going on forever. Shirley said that since 2005, over 100 spots have been added for parking, but asked how many have been added since we started meeting. Shirley said that the City is trying to encourage people who want to have people park in their yard. Cullen said that the committee has discussed increasing the fines for people parking in non-designated places. He said renting or purchasing land has also been discussed. We have a core group of dedicated people trying to resolve issues. Cullen said we also need to protect our residents as well as our businesses regarding quality of life.

Stephen wanted to know if there is anything in the works for the north end of Butler. Cullen said we are looking at rental/lease possibilities and identifying problem zones. Stephen said that with the Chapel going in parking is needed.

Trash receptacles – Shirley said that people want to hear back on the trashcan and restroom issues. She said we need to keep the public abreast, particularly those heading up the Business Alliance group, of what progress is being made. Chantel spoke at the last Business Alliance meeting and tries to cover this information in the columns she writes. We need to continue making efforts that produce results instead of producing rhetoric. Chantel said she thought we needed to have a public forum. Shirley said we should have media present at the public forum.

Cullen said his is working with a local business that is willing to reproduce the trashcans at a lower price. Chantel will resend him the specs. We have received funding for five additional trashcans. Chantel said that we need to spread the cans out more and check on the status of the other cans that had to be returned.

Cullen said that we have slides taken in 1994 that show what the area used to look like. John said that back then it was called “the combat zone.” Chantel has sent Michael Bodine historic photos in hopes that they can rotate on the City’s homepage. She has added pictures to the BHT Initiative webpage.

He suggested that we need a motto to reiterate keep the beaches clean and to also include it on trashcans. Cullen said we should use stencils rather than stickers. Stephen suggested “Keep Tybee Tidy.”

Smoke out Art -- Councilman Bill Garbett has come up with a Tybee idea to paint the “butts” container like a cigarette. His idea is that it will draw more attention and encourage more use that the black container. It will be more fun and hopefully people will use it more. Cullen asked if we are planning another “clean-up.” Chantel said Beautification wants to do some pruning for the plants that look dead so they come back nicely this season. She said that TBA wants to get more involved. Cullen noted that some real progress has been made.

Door Cover at Tybrisa/Butler -- There is a meeting with Alan Jones to talk about doing it. The Permit is approved and there is a list of materials for DPW to pick up. Shirley asked why DPW was not doing the work. Chantel confirmed they have other projects they are working on. Stephen asked about signage and advertising space. Chantel said we have talked about a kiosk. We need to look at the budget. We could put parking information there. Stephen said that a designated meeting place is a place people could meet and exchange information. Cullen asked if there were any updates on alleyways. John said that there was an update on the Strand. They are looking at re-painting. There is a meeting with the GA Trust Historic Preservation regarding traffic calming on North end and crosswalks, landscaping and traffic flow. Jonathon will be giving a report. Once GTHP gets the specs they can design something.

The Sea & Breeze Hotel façade was discussed. Mel & Natalie are now managing the motel and want to change the look. The design team is coming up with ideas for them. Cullen said the Sea & Breeze is no easy fix. It has bad signage. They have come up with some quick fixes, but the building has been a problem building for a long time. Chantel said that hopefully, they will come up with some new ideas sooner rather than later.

Christy’s wants to replace their rooftop and GTHP is working on a concept for them.

Community Garden -- If the group wants this to be a BHT project, they need to bring it before the Board. They are having a meeting today at 6:30pm.

Economic Restructuring – Judy / Chantel

Chantel gave the Committee update in Judy's absence. The Tybee Business 411 (Resources) Guide has gone to Department Heads for approval. This guide is an overview to help existing businesses and new businesses with effectiveness and efficiency when operating a business on Tybee. The brochure was passed around for board review.

Organization – John / Chantel

Newsletters – Chantel asked the board for direction on listing events on the BHT Newsletter. Many are asking for their events to be listed under the Happenings section. If they are non-profit she directs them to the City Calendar where items can be posted for free. Cullen said we don't need to include special events that have not gone through the application process. Patricia said that she didn't think Chantel needed to add to her already heavy work load. Stephen said that there are many places for listings, like Facebook. Cullen said that Michael provides this service for the City. He said that since the BHT is still in its infancy we need to keep pursuing clarification. We do not need to replicate a service already being provided by the City. We can refine our efforts as we move along. We need to stay on Mission. Shirley said we can't be all things to all people.

Promotions – Chantel

1. Island Wide Sidewalk Sale follow-up -- It rained the day of the Sidewalk Sale. Some people said it was great. It was the last one for the year.
2. Susan Kelleher has done a Shop & Stroll which involved putting coconuts in stores and prize drawings near her store at the end of the day. She wants BHT to take over the event in April & December. Monty said we do not need a bar/alcohol event. Stephen said that someone should sit down with Susan and then meet with us later. Cullen said that we will grow as an organization. Chantel has been pulled in many different directions by individual requests. There has to be a benefit to the Island as a whole, not just to individuals.
3. Chantel said that the City is working to become more bike friendly. Perhaps businesses want to offer something during "Bike to Work Week." The City is working to pave the Memorial Park bike trail. We need more bike racks on the Northend. Cullen asked if we could get the City to fund it. Stephen said that we need better bike racks at the Lighthouse. Cullen asked what we can do to urge the City to buy more. Chantel said that the Design Committee should be involved. Stephen said this is a way to alleviate some of the parking problems. Cullen suggested that we identify potential locations for bike racks in other areas. Stephen said parking lots and beach crossovers. Cullen said encouraging biking will help with parking problems. We need to be more bike friendly. Stephen said we need more signage. There is a safety problem. Cullen said that we need Stephen to participate in planning.
4. Third Thursdays on Tybee – Patricia commented that the second Third Thursdays on Tybee with Lauren LaPointe at Tybee Oaks was wonderful. Once again, the demographics were diverse and we are looking forward to April 15 with Lacey.
5. Seafood Festival update -- There is a meeting today at 2pm at City Hall. Sandy Major made a presentation to the Board about a Festival. Chatham County is moving forward with this event. Lindsey said that Tourism is waiting to see how this pans out. John said that last week they said there were 12 restaurants committed. Chantel said that she is helping facilitate the meetings. Cullen said that he wanted to see more planning, advertising, etc.

Monty said this is a vendor driven event and that it is refreshing that the businesses are taking ownership. This is a first no charge event. John said there would be more information at the second meeting. He said that what Dean has done in a short time is impressive. Shirley said she really wants to see it work and Chatham County take ownership of it. It is a great idea, but promotion is critical. Monty said the cost of getting involved with Pirate Fest is high and he said if only 20 people come, I'll make more money with this than with Pirate Fest. Lindsey said that Tourism is supportive, but that things were on the calendar months before this came up. Cullen said this whole thing really came about because of the fake seafood festival in the movie. John said that Coke is really involved.

6. Tybee for the Holidays – We are working to get control of the web domain name and the site updated.

Other Business

Chantel asked the Board members to add new information to our binders.

Stephen thinks BHT Board Members, Tourism and City Council ought to take one day and go out and talk to businesses. He also said we should do a beach walk and talk to people and also talk to residents. Chantel said that was a great idea. She hears from businesses and residents on a daily basis and it is important for others to understand. People are not used to being approached and asked for their ideas. Cullen said he loved that approach. It is about the three legs of our stool -- business, visitors & residents. We may need a survey form. Lindsey asked if we could tape people. Shirley said that some weekends are a different configuration of people.

Adjourn

Patricia made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:30am. Monty seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.