

Smithfield 2020

Notes from project team meeting of September 5, 2012

Present

Rick Bodson	Trey Gwaltney	Peter Stephenson
Lee Duncan	Mark Hall	Judy Winslow
John Edwards	Lori Leib	Brad Face – guest
Sheila Gwaltney	Randy Pack	

Admin

The team welcomed Lori Leib, Vice Chair of the Chamber of Commerce and Sales Director, Hampton Inns, to the team. Lori joins Connie in representing the Chamber on the 2020 team.

The team also welcomed guest Brad Face, Historic Smithfield board member.

The current financial report was reviewed. The \$1,000 allocation from Historic Smithfield for operating expenses has been transferred to the Smithfield 2020 account. Current account balance is \$12,126.

A sponsorship request from the Smithfield Little Theatre was reviewed. Funding of \$25 will be donated by Brad Face on behalf of Smithfield 2020.

Project and initiative updates

Peter reviewed the current status of the disposition of public buildings. The Request for Proposal for 224 Main Street (old Ham Shop) has been issued; bids are due next week and will be reviewed at the September 18 Town Council Public Buildings and Welfare Committee meeting. A proposal by Smithfield Winery, LLC, for the 117 N. Church Street property was accepted by Town Council on September 4; the new owners have an aggressive timeline to transform the space into a micro-winery. The unused building at 206 Main Street purchased by Smithfield Foods for conversion to public restrooms is on a timeline for a March 2013 completion.

The proposed changes from Connie and Lisa to the façade improvement matching grant program will be incorporated into a revision to the guidelines, sent to the team for review this month and proposed for adoption at the October meeting.

The leasing of the Firehouse of 1939 shops was discussed. While construction delays impacted the schedule by as much as one month, Mark forecasts receiving Certificates of Occupancy for the retail spaces within a month and the residential lofts within sixty days. Mark shared his evaluation process with prospective tenants, focusing on “what’s best for the building, for the block, for the Historic District...” and requiring a reasonable level of commitment for business hours, citing five days as a minimum. Prospective tenants include a salon – which will draw a local clientele, an art gallery and a home furnishings shop. A balanced commitment to the economic vitality of the District in selecting tenants was emphasized.

The “H4 Venue Visits” were reviewed. The objective of the exercise was providing 2020 team members current exposure to venues frequented by locals and guests with an eye to gauging how well we “delight all who visit here” with Hams, History, Hospitality and HeArt. An energetic exchange of impressions was shared and several creative initiatives were proposed for further evaluation of how effectively they can impact the economic vitality of the Historic District. Several action items were captured and will be put on the team’s agenda, including:

- Identifying public policy initiatives to be championed to Town Council;
- Compiling a composite profile from the venue visit feedback;
- Reaching out to similar sized communities for best practice sharing;
- Developing a creative approach to filling the gaps of Monday shop closures.

Next meeting: Wednesday, October 3rd, 8:30 am, Arts Center @ 319 classroom.

These meeting notes submitted by Rick Bodson.