

**Minutes of Neenah Central City Business Improvement District Board – SPECIAL MEETING**  
**April 3, 2020 – 9:00 am**  
**ZOOM GO TO MEETING**

**PRESENT:** Board Members: Sandy White, LeeAnn Wasinger, Umer Sheikh, George Brownell, Michelle Bauer, Jane Lang, Joe Ziemba and Grant Birtch. Also present: Sara Hanneman (Future Neenah, Inc.), Nikki Hessel (Future Neenah, Inc.), Brad Schmidt (City of Neenah Community Development and Samantha Jefferson (City of Neenah Community Development).

- 1) Call to Order: Executive Director Hessel thanked the BID Board members for logging into the meeting.
- 2) Public Appearances: None.
- 3) Discuss Corona Virus Response Options and & Budgeting

Executive Director Hessel began the meeting by discussing a loan option being evaluated by the County. The Fox Cities Regional Partnership, Go EDC and the Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce approached Winnebago County IDB to discuss a loan option for small businesses. They are forming a committee to review this loan process and to evaluate applicants. This will be for the entire county. Member Bauer volunteered to be a part of this as will John Skyrms, former BID member and President. More information regarding this should be live within the next couple of days. Executive Director Hessel explained that one the the purposes of this meeting was to determine what the BID could do with decided less much lesser funds.

Deputy Director Schmidt said that the City of Neenah was awarded an additional \$125,000 in CDBG funds. The City is still waiting to hear how this could be distributed in the community. Deputy Director Schmidt, Director Haese and Executive Director Hessel are working on a Small Business page on Future Neenah’s website that would be a hub of information for small business owners during this time.

Assistant Executive Director Hanneman detailed the \$11,000 the BID has to help with what is happening. Tina Palmer (Red Door) had suggested that a virtual Small Business Saturday to encourage gift cards purchases. Future Neenah also discussed the creation of a marketing grant which would allow businesses to receive funds to market their business how they best see fit. Member Wasinger pointed out that some may be wary to purchase gift cards in case businesses are no longer open after all this is over.

Future Neenah sent a survey to small businesses asking for information relative to the crisis. Member Brownell said he was surprised at the survey results showing that most businesses in the Downtown are not applying for the federal programs that have been instated. Member Bauer echoed this and also said she was surprised that only a small amount of retail was showing an online presence. Executive Director Hessel believes that one of the problems is the large amount of information being thrown at business owners – it may be hard to prioritize and process.

Member Wasinger explained that she has had no time for an online sales presence. The Tailored Hide is utilizing curbside pick-up but still has people saying that something like that is adding to the problem. Member White is also utilizing curbside pick-up with several precautions. The Natural Boutique is only taking phone orders and accepting only credit card payments. Patrons call when they are at the store and the store employee leaves the package outside the door.

Member Sheikh said he is hearing from several of his tenants that the new federal loan and grant programs have many strings attached and they may end up costing the businesses more than if they didn’t take them. Also, many are afraid to take the loans knowing that no income is coming in. In particular, the paycheck assistance program requires that all employees must be hired back in June. They are concerned if that will not be possible. Member Shiekh also pointed out that there was nothing in the new federal package for property owners.

Executive Director Hessel is continuing to try to get more information to make all of this clearer. Unfortunately, she keeps getting information back with only the language sent out by the federal government but no real explanations of what it means. If possible, she will try to find someone who may be able to discuss this with the

board. Member Sheikh requested she search for more information regarding the inventory management portion as well.

Assistant Executive Director Hanneman said that member Gillespie has discussed the new information with his accountant and it seems like the loans may end up being pardoned and act more as grants. Member Wasinger said she was reading a blog by an attorney and the concern was if you couldn't hire your employees back by June. She asked if anyone had insight into whether or not it should be applied for now or later. Member Ziemba said he spoke with his attorney and it was suggested that he apply now. When it is going to be awarded, you can refuse it at that time.

Member Birtch suggested there be a page on Future Neenah's website that could list what businesses are open and any special hours. There is a page that Future Neenah posted when all this began that can be found from a link on the front page of their website. At this time, Future Neenah is trying to figure out if they can list/promote businesses that are defined as "non-essential." They are still looking into this. They will also continue to tweak this page and information as they receive/find it.

Member Sheikh suggested that maybe patrons could purchase Future Neenah giftcards instead of giftcards for particular businesses to help with what Member Wasinger had mentioned regarding businesses maybe not being open after the crisis subsides. Assistant Executive Director Hanneman discussed that that wouldn't necessarily help with the infusion of cash into businesses that is needed right now. Another idea was that patrons could call Future Neenah who could then take a tally of what giftcards are being purchased from which businesses and distribute the money from there.

Member Brownell asked how many businesses support the BID district and what it would look like if the \$11,000 was distributed equally to them. Assistant Director Hanneman explained that this would allow less than \$100 to go to each business.

It was decided by the group to have Future Neenah spend \$1,500 to \$2,000 on working with their webpage developer to continue to market the businesses Downtown. Member Lang also suggested they share anything available to the City of Neenah Facebook page. Executive Director Hessel will continue to look for clarifying information and Member Birtch will funnel any information he receives to the BID. A marketing grant fund will be created to add to the ease of each business creating their own marketing campaigns in the way that they see fit.

The board expressed their appreciation for Executive Director Hessel and Assistant Executive Director Hanneman for their work during this time.

4) Adjourn: The Board adjourned at 10:11 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Samantha Jefferson  
Office Manager, Community Development