

Minutes of Neenah Central City Business Improvement District Board
May 20, 2025 – 8:00 am
Hauser Room – Neenah City Hall

PRESENT: Board Members: Ald. Mark Ellis, Tori Dorn, Bob Gillespie, Alex Noskowiak, George Brownell, Christine Rondeau, Robert Wedge, Alex Wenzel, Ben Ziemba, and Michelle Bauer Also present: Mayor Jane Lang, Executive Director Brent Bowman (FNI), Assistant Executive Director Sara Hanneman (FNI), Ald. Florence Bruno, John Houlihan (Owner of Wilmar Chocolates), Community Development Deputy Director Brad Schmidt (City of Neenah Community Development), Kelly Nieforth (City of Neenah Community Development Director), and Community Development Administrative Assistant Kayla Kubat (City of Neenah Community Development)

Approve minutes of April 15, 2025 meeting: MSC Ellis/Dorn, the BID Board to approve the minutes of the April 15, 2025 BID Board meeting. All voting aye. Motion passed.

Public Appearances:

John Houlihan (Wilmar Chocolates)- He discussed plans for Wilmar Chocolates, including a new tile floor and new awning. He states planning to start working in the building by June 1 and hoping to open in the fall. He explained there will be a health department approved kitchen in the new space for making chocolate.

Member Rondeau asked if there will be chocolate made on site. John Houlihan stated yes there will be chocolate made on site, however, no high heat items like caramel or toffee being made.

Recruitment and Retention Committee:

(ACTION) 220 W Wisconsin Sign and Awning, Ret & Recr, and Sandwich Board Sign Grant- Owner John Houlihan explained his grant application to the board. Since this is a new business, a new sign and awning are needed, updating the interior with custom flooring and plumbing for kitchen.

Member Gillespie brought up a discussion regarding grants that include flooring and that they did not want the money going towards temporary upgrades, such as carpet, but to go towards more permanent upgrades. The consensus was since the tile is a more permanent flooring type, this wouldn't be a problem.

MSC Ellis/Wenzel, the BID Board, to approve a Sign and Awning grant up to \$500. All voting aye. Motion passed

MSC Gillespie/Ellis, the BID Board, to approve a Retention and Recruitment grant for flooring and plumbing in the amount up to \$5,000. All voting aye. Motion passed.

MSC, Ellis/Bauer, the BID Board, to approve a sandwich board sign grant up to \$100. All voting aye. Motion passed.

Financials:

Bills for Approval: **MSC Ellis/Dorn, the BID Board to approve the bill packet for \$10,475.39. All voting aye. Motion passed.**

2024 Review Completed: Baker Tilly was used as the accounting firm. No findings were discovered during the review process.

Budget Status Report: The budget status report given to committee members is year-to-date through April 30th.

Member Wedge asked about the unused gift certificate amount and when that is recognized as revenue. Assistant Executive Director Hanneman stated she would look into this with the accounting firm and other organizations.

Member Wedge asked if the snow removal was better this season. Member Dorn stated it was better near her business with direct sunlight. On the opposite side of the street, there were still slick spots on the sidewalk. Assistant Executive Director Hanneman brought up the one thing not in the contract was ice melt. This could be looked into for next year.

Executive Committee:

Thank you for the month to Santiago Sanchez. He is a retired Kimberly-Clark employee and has taken on photography as a hobby. He comes to various events downtown and takes photos, which is especially helpful when the BID is helping with an event and unable to take on this task.

Placer AI Stats- Assistant Executive Director Hanneman shared statistics that were gathered from the Placer AI subscription. These statistics are from May 4, 2024 -April 30, 2025 timeframe. Using the subscription, a virtual perimeter was placed around the downtown area to gather these results. For this period, there were 1.7 million visits, 440,000 visitors, the average person visited 5.3 times and the dwell time per visit is about 114 minutes. There was discussion about how to use this information in the future to understand business trends and visitor behavior.

Assistant Executive Director Hanneman stated FNI will have an intern this summer and she will be helping to mine this data to get the most out of the Placer AI subscription.

Retention & Recruitment Committee:

No Meeting, No Report

Maintenance Committee:

Annual District Walk Through June 17

Assistant Executive Director Hanneman stated she will send out the starting point closer to meeting.

Public Relations and Marketing Committee:

Report from May 8 Meeting

Member Bauer gave an explanation about the Tiny Doors project. She provided an update on the alley next to Future Neenah that features oversized flowers. There is also construction on the corner of Church St and Wisconsin Ave, which should be done by early June. Evermore & Co is open and offer teas and vintage clothing. Also, Violet Maes recently opened with fresh flowers and gifts. Lastly, Coldwell Banker will be moving into the Downtown.

May 1-31 = Tiny Doors; May 26 Start Date = Log Your Loops Start Date; June 11 = Summer Kick Off Street Concert (Glam Band); June 14 = Gift Certificate Sale; June 14 = Farmers Market Opening Day

City of Neenah Updates:

Community Development discussed the grant received from the WEDC to revamp the former Bank Mutual Drive Thru Space. FNI will help fundraise this project and the grant will help offset some of the cost as well.

Member Gillespie brought up how this will be displacing the smokers who now use this space. Assistant Executive Director Hanneman there will be a fence at the rear of the alley to delineate the space.

Community Development discussed the revised street furniture ordinance and letters will be sent to all business owners going over the process.

Mayor Lang discussed the rescheduled WEDC visit due to weather. She also mentioned the construction on the corner of Church St and Wisconsin Avenue will not be a hinderance for the Memorial Day parade. She also gave an update on the activity at Arrowhead Park.

Round Table and Information Sharing:

Member Wedge announced a new tenant at 125 W Wisconsin Ave, which will be Union Star Cheese. They are planning to start building updates June 1, however, unsure on true opening date but hopefully before Labor Day. This will be Union Star Cheese's first retail space.

Members went around the table and discussed how the new tariffs are impacting their business. Some members noted buying more American inventory, others stated they took on more inventory prior to the tariffs being enacted in preparation.

Assistant Executive Director Hanneman brought up the Wooley Green Grazer sheep that will be located at Carpenter's Preserve. It is a more natural way to eliminate invasive species.

Future Neenah Updates:

Assistant Executive Director Hanneman discussed the FNI rebrand. There will be a new, more interactive website. Along with the rebrand, there will be an update to the logo, mission and identity. The first notice of change will be in the Future Neenah magazine.

Assistant Executive Director Hanneman brought up the Illuminate Neenah Light Projection Shows, which was on the backside of the FNI building and on the side of Greene's Pour House. They are now working with the Neenah Historical Society on some historical Neenah projections, which would animate old photos.

Assistant Executive Director Hanneman talked about the Pedestrian Alley located next to FNI. The flowers are from a Neenah High School project and will be up until June 30th.

Assistant Executive Director Hanneman stated they are working with the Rotary Club to help create an open-air holiday market with things such as food, shops, and other activities.

Announcements and future agenda items:

Annual District Walk Through June 17

The Board adjourned at 9:05 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kayla Kubat". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kayla Kubat
Administrative Assistant, Community Development