

Coffee and Conversation notes June 25th, 2021

In Attendance – Meridith Mcfarland, Maura Donnelly, Taylor Welch, Rob Carter, Darla Senecal, Sally Burrell, Ashley and Grayson, Mark Gwen, John Kromer, Terry Grayson, Paulita Washburn, Janele Smith

- Updates to Executive Director Search
 - Members from the Board announced to those present that we had complete the search for a new Executive Director and we are excited to welcome Kate Bently to the Board as the ED. Board members expressed excitement about Kate’s qualifications and how we felt she was going to bring a lot of new energy to the board and offer a different perspective to support the downtown businesses. We touched on Ian’s shifting role and how he is still a part of CORE but just found he was running low on time with all of his commitments.
 - Some of the faces present were new so we briefly discussed the different events CORE is responsible for, specifically touching on Pocock, explaining the history of the event and what the community has to look forward to next summer (sans pandemic)

- Harvestfest
 - We transitioned from Pocock to talking about Harvest Fest. Rob Carter explained what harvest fest has been and what he hopes for in the future – specifically regarding engagement from local businesses and utilizing Harvest Fest as a means to increase traffic to the downtown businesses. He asked for feedback from business owners about what they think could be successful. Harvest Fest is expected to draw around 500 people this year.
 - John Kromer mentioned that he could promote the downtown businesses through his role as MC.
 - Maura brought up intentionally collaborating with visitor vendors on the green instead of operating in conflict i.e. she has a snow cone machine since there is often a snow cone vendor on the green she will choose not to put the machine out to try to increase traffic to her shop.
 - Taylor brought up that last year in lieu of a harvest fest CORE worked with the downtown shops to help them organize a sidewalk sale so there was still something happening in town around the time harvest fest typically takes place. Business owners generally seemed to agree that that was successful.
 - Ashley from Hermit Thrush Fiber Co. (previously Yarn and Yoga) suggested a sort of passport where folks can get it stamped as they visit stores and receive a prize at the green. Others mentioned how that is a good idea as we already have some of the infrastructures of that. Instead of 10 stamps making it 5, OR have different levels of prizes for 5 or 10 stamps.
 - Having a CORE table or Map on the green for folks to understand that there are more businesses just across the road to visit.

- No specific decision was made however folks seemed amenable to the sidewalk sale, having a map on the green indicating what and where things were downtown, and the passport idea.
- Discussion of promotions that worked this past year.
 - The 10 punch card was too many punches
 - 5 might be better
 - Different prizes for 5 or 10 punches
 - Business owners remarked that people don't seem to be COMING to Bristol for the promotions. Maybe we need to promote them more in Chittenden, or Middlebury. They did say that once people are here and aware of the promotions they will go into more shops or stick around to spend Bristol Bucks.
 - The collaborative work that encourages people to go to multiple stores is great and the owners really like it.
 - Terry from Art on Main expressed frustration that she did not receive emails about the sidewalk sale that was happening this weekend (two weekends ago) Other businesses owners expressed that they had received emails and were pleased with the amount of communication. Terry said she received other emails from CORE. Taylor told Terry we would look into it and confirm that she was on the correct lists. It was recommended that Terry check Spam and Trash, she said that it was possible someone else from the business was in her email and moved it.
- Discussion of the Sodbuster's New England Tournament
 - People discussed being willing to give discounts if folks showed their ID card indicating they were there for the tournament. (Art on Main mentioned 10%)
 - Similar ideas about the passports were echoed.
- Sally Burrell presented about Efficiency Vermont and about the Solar field buy-in options
 - On July 6th she would be walking around downtown with Rob from EV to check on businesses and see if they wanted an energy audit.
 - Business owners mentioned that they should reach out to landlords to connect about energy efficiency.
 - Bristol Solar is available for subscription.
 - Businesses could buy-in at the cost of their yearly energy bill. It was open for buy-in now and there were a few other businesses around the state interested so while there were spots open they could get snatched up at any time.
 - The window insert workshop will be happening this year again.
 - Neighbor Works is another nonprofit that does energy audits out of Rutland
- Businesses asked about mask requirements
 - Maura said that she is requiring everyone to wear masks in her store as many of her patrons are too young to be vaccinated.

- Meridith mentioned that if a store is requiring masks they should have some available to hand out to customers. (Maura does)
- Mark Gwen mentioned the old CORE website, we talked about some SEO problems. (I can't find it anymore though I have run into it before, I'm guessing that some cookies were bringing it up or it's been addressed. I'm only finding bristolcore.org and discover Bristol through my google search.)