



When our businesses succeed so does our community

The Strasburg Business Alliance will foster economic growth and prosperity in the Strasburg community. The Alliance will positively and actively promote local businesses and community interests through networking, advocacy, events and education.

Meeting Notes

June 18, 2020

Virtual Meeting 6:00

Participants: Kyle Slonecker, Chair, Siblings' Rivalry Brewery
Sharon Baroncelli, CEO, Shenandoah County Chamber of Commerce
Abby Walters, Sager Realty
Doreen Ricard, One Stop Studio Shop
Kathryn Kanter, HL Borden Lumber and Hardware
Alice Muellerweiss, Anytime Fitness, Hopewell Bed & Bike
Dan Feldbusch, Shenandoah Film Collaborative
Sue Haynes, Clementine Vintage, Skyline Paintball & Laser Tag
Michele Bixler, Town of Strasburg
Marybeth Price, Box Office Brewery
Crystal Hollar, Edward Jones
Kath Stanley, Secretary, Lydia's Clothes Closet

Comments from our Chairperson, Kyle Slonecker: Kyle welcomed everyone to the virtual meeting. He noted we were all waiting for the Governor to give approval for the start of Phase Three. He asked Sharon Baroncelli to comment on the Specialized Grant being contemplated to support small businesses within Shenandoah County.

Potential Grants: Both Sharon Baroncelli and Michele Bixler talked about the specialized grant. The Shenandoah County Tourism & Economic Development is applying for a \$500,000 Community Development Block Grant through the state's Department of Housing & Community Development. If awarded, this grant will enable the County to establish a Small Business Grant program through which local, small businesses will be able to apply for up to \$10,000 in rent/mortgage relief and possibly costs expended to re-open after COVID-related closures.

The application process will require 2 public hearings currently scheduled for 7:00 pm on Tuesday, June 23 and Tuesday, July 28. Businesses with an interest in applying for these Small Business Grants are encouraged to speak at the public hearing or reach out to County staff as part of the application requires us to list interested businesses. The County Chamber has provided a sample letter that can be used to support this funding grant.

Sharon also mentioned the County Board of Supervisors established a Task Force to consider how the \$3.8 million received through the CARES Act will be distributed. The Chamber has advocated that 12%, or \$465,000 be used to help with small business recovery efforts. This too will be discussed at the June 23, Board of Supervisors meeting. Sharon noted non-profit organizations will be eligible to apply for grants contemplated from these funding sources, if approved.

Michele Bixler, Town of Strasburg: Michelle said three businesses had approached the Town inquiring if there was a possibility for additional seating spaces that could be put out in Strasburg Square and possibly Hometown Park. The three businesses making the inquiries included Nancy's Coffee, The Doggery and Sugar Creek. The Town plans to add a few tables in Strasburg Square, taking them from the pool. They were considering adding two café tables with chairs in Hometown Park, but would be reaching out to volunteers who built the park to get their thoughts. Michelle asked for input from Alliance members. Both Doreen Ricard and Sue Haynes said they were concerned about trash. Doreen mentioned that most evenings she goes to Strasburg Square to pick up trash left behind by folks eating at the square. Mary Beth Price suggested signage, with strong verbiage asking folks to take care of their own trash. Michelle thanked everyone for their input.

Phase Three Guidelines: Michelle also mentioned she had received a copy of Phase Three guidelines. Sharon sent this out electronically after the meeting. There is no date for when Phase Three will start, but having the guidelines will be useful. Major changes include more leniency on occupancy and crowd size has been increased from 50 to 250. Physical distancing and face coverings will still be in effect.

How to let folks know businesses are open in Strasburg: There was some discussion on how to let people know businesses in town were open. One suggestion was to put a banner on the bridge crossing over Massanutten Street that used to be used by the railroad. Michelle mentioned the Town had reached out to Norfolk Southern who owns the rails and bridge, but had no response.

The Town will eventually have the ability to put a banner up across King Street by the Pavilion, but this will not happen until the next phase of the Street Scape Project. Michelle did not have a time frame, but did say "soon."

Around the Table

Mary Beth Price, Box Office Brewery: The Box Office Brewery has been able to stay within the 50% occupancy mandated by the Governor for Phase Two. They have done this by removing chairs from the floor of the brewery. Marybeth noted the Brewery's chef would be doing something special for Father's Day and they would also be selling their Whiskey Barrel Stout. The whisky being used for this stout comes from the local distillery, Filibuster. Robbie Limen will be on stage June 19 and June 20. Finally, the brewery will be selling wine from local wineries, North Mountain and Star in the Valley.

Alice Muellerweiss, Anytime Fitness, Hopewell Bed & Bike: The gym opened up in Phase Two, with a limit of 30% capacity. They are offering small classes and have ensured their equipment is spaced according to the 10 foot requirements. The Hopewell Bed and Bike has been doing well.

Dan Feldbusch, Shenandoah Film Collaborative: Dan asked for feedback on branding for films being shown. The Shenandoah Film Collaborative is a lot to put on a marketing product, such as a cup, so he was thinking Strasburg Films, but thought this may limit interest. Sue suggested Shen Films or even Shenandoah Films. Dan appreciated the suggestions and may be using Shenandoah Films. Doreen also thought it could be useful to add a few words on the non-profit's mission.

Dan mentioned there would be no International Film Festival this year, but was thinking of having a festival of Short Films. Entry for submitting a film would be \$5 and this would be a fund raiser. Marybeth said if Dan put his brand on glasses, this could be something they could sell at the Brewery as a fund raiser too.

Dan will be showing the first outdoor movie of the season on July 11. It will be Labyrinth.

Sue Haynes, Clementine Vintage, Skyline Paintball & Laser Tag: Skyline Paintball and Laser Tag has been open for two weeks. They are re-building their group bookings but walk ins have been doing well.

Sue mentioned T-Shirt Thursday and asked if the Town could give out T-Shirts every so often. Some thought the concept could be expanded to include Town T-shirts to be eligible for the 10% discount.

Abby Walters, Sager Realty: Abby said that real estate sales continued to do well.

Kath Stanley, Lydia's Clothes Closet: Lydia's has been opened for two weeks and has posted safety procedures put into place. Foot traffic and sales are low compared to

same time last year. Donations were up even with limits on the amount that can be donated by a person daily.

Other Information

Kyle mentioned that he had learned the Paycheck Protection Program would be shut down June 22.

The County Chamber is still discussing whether to sponsor the Yard Crawl. Sharon said a decision would need to be made by July 1 and would be guided by Phase Three guidelines

There was a suggestion to invite the new Mayor to the next meeting. The Mayor Elect may be interested in doing something similar to Mayfest.

The Town is discussing whether to celebrate public safety within the town. The initial target for this celebration would be July 11, and would have emergency vehicles driving around the town.

Alice was interested in adding an agenda item to the next meeting to discuss increasing participation in the Alliance. She was also interested in discussing ways to bring new businesses into the Alliance.

Mary Beth congratulated Kath Stanley on the purchase of the former Holliday House. Kath said she and her husband were planning to operate the property as an Airbnb. Alice said she was more than willing to work with Kath and Tom on overflows at either property.

The next meeting will be July 16th and possibly at the Box Office Brewery. The challenge will be maintaining physical distance requirements.