

Main Street Hanover Minutes - March 2009

The March meeting at the Guthrie Memorial Library's Bare Center was an opportunity for the three Task groups (Organizational Development, Economic Restructuring, and Design) that have been meeting independently to meet together and do cross-team learning. Though the teams may network informally it was important to globally discuss progress in preparation for the upcoming Community Forum scheduled for April 30, 6:30 pm, at the Guthrie-Hanover Public Library's John D. Bare Center.

Gary Laird facilitated the meeting using the Agenda that included a summary of the task groups "Accomplishments" and "Work In Progress". These Minutes supplement the Agenda document and can be found toward the end of this document.

Julie Fitzpatrick started the discussions by suggesting that the Community Forum is a great opportunity for us to show that the work of the task groups has been building and developing a strong foundation and it is a good time to recruit additional members.

Julie introduced Erin Hammerstedt who is a Field Representative for Preservation PA, a program associated with the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Erin provided materials and described the assistance that Preservation PA can provide to our group. The group assists property owners and community groups without charge. She and Gary walked around the downtown area and she reported that she was "amazed" at the unique character and potential of the area. She is ready and able to help with seeking funding and doing feasibility studies.

Gary went through the items in the agenda and addressed any questions from those present. To highlight just a few items from the agenda, the Main Street Hanover (MSH) organization has chosen its name, collaboratively authored a Mission Statement, created a web site for Downtown Hanover at the Hanover Chamber of Commerce web site, and arranged for a banner advertisement of the project in the Evening Sun newspaper.

We are fortunate to have received two anonymous donations totaling \$10,250. Financial planning will be very important because we do not have start-up funding from the State. Team members realize that to have a significant impact we will need to mobilize the community and have a solid plan for ongoing funding. The Community Forum is just the beginning of additional forums to keep the community apprised and engaged in the effort.

We have selected about seven buildings as Anchor buildings that could fulfill MSH objectives. Anchor building grant funding is available as long as we follow the guidelines - as long as the building meets an economic need the funding evolves to a revolving loan opportunity in perpetuity to support expanded development projects.

A Business Owner Survey has been developed and students from Southwestern, Delone and Hanover High Schools have volunteered to help distribute and assist business owners to complete the surveys. They will get credit for their service hours on April 16 and 23 as well as two Saturdays. The Chamber will place an online version of the survey at the Chamber web site so that many of the business owners can complete the survey online and the students will have fewer establishments to visit. In addition to providing a needs assessment and inventory the survey is another method to engage merchants and to recruit and retain team members for the MSH effort.

Gary reviewed our successes with ordering Parking signs to better identify the seven parking lots around the downtown area. Dee Garber has accomplished a wonderful printed photo and CD/digital image project that captures all of the streets, businesses and streetscapes of downtown Hanover.

Bruce Rebert reported that signage has been completed to identify the Hanover Trolley Trail. The Rotary has donated six benches along the route. Signage for the extension of the trail from Moul to the downtown area and Library via Penn and Broadway (bike and walking routes specifically) will be done soon.

Members provided comments on formulating the Community Forum presentation and there was discussion about focusing to address possible concerns that may be raised based on prior experience and comments submitted to Evening Sun

newspaper articles in the past. Surely, based on the Accomplishments and Work In Progress items stated in the agenda, the presentation will show the community that the MSH organization is taking the right steps, sure and steady, to build a solid foundation and an incremental approach forward. Knowing that the accomplishments will continue will serve to sustain our growth and assure our funding. The consensus building in task groups will expand to the open forums to allow us to develop common themes and this will fuel ongoing exercises to develop a Vision that involves the public with the organization.

Meeting agenda below.

Main Street Hanover (MSH)
March 23, 2009
Agenda

Mission Statement: "Main Street Hanover brings together diverse community interests and resources to promote the economic vitality, architectural heritage, and cultural vibrancy of the downtown business district for the benefit of the greater Hanover area."

Thanks to the hard work, foresight and dedication of the three MSH task groups, we are ready to take the next step.

Over the course of the past three sessions, meeting an hour at a time, the Organization, Economic Restructuring and Design task groups have laid the ground work for better things to come. Representatives from the task groups provide a well-rounded sample of the Hanover area: residents, downtown merchants, financial institutions, Borough of Hanover, business owners, Hanover Chamber and PA Downtown Center.

I. Accomplishments

a. Overall

- i. Chamber launches new website to serve as an information source for MSH status reports.
- ii. Chamber arranged with The Evening Sun newspaper to run an ongoing banner advertisement for the Chamber and MSH.
- iii. Two anonymous donations totaling \$10,250 to help with any expenses.

b. Organizational Development

- i. Mission statement created and approved
- ii. "Main Street Hanover" decided as name of organization

c. Economic Restructuring

- i. Developed Anchor Building Feasibility Assessment to determine potential properties, determine the priorities for a project and the future use of the building.
- ii. Business Owner Survey was developed. Students trained.

d. Design

- i. Divided into three sub-groups to discuss, respectively, Façade Guidelines, Rail Trail and Parking.
- ii. Inventory and map of downtown Hanover public and private parking was presented. The group discussed signage to universally identify public parking around the area.
- iii. Photo inventory taken of downtown businesses. Photo results of a similar project in 1968 provided.
- iv. A map was reviewed of the proposed route for walking and bike riding the Hanover Trolley Rail Trail. The county trail ends at Moul Field, but our section of the route can bring travelers to the downtown area and the Library specifically.
- v. Mayor's Beautification Fund has been transferred to Hanover Revitalization jurisdiction and a Wirt Park Beautification Project has been submitted.

II. Work in Progress

a. Organizational Development

- i. Vision statement
- ii. Creating a 501(3) tax exempt non-profit organization
- iii. Prepare articles of incorporation, form a Board of Directors and elect officers, adopt by laws and budget and prepare/file the required IRS Form 1023.
- iv. SWOT analysis
- v. Financial plan

b. Economic Restructuring

- i. Identified about seven (7) sites that fit the profile to serve as anchor building(s) in the downtown area. Working with the Borough and will need additional workgroup members to visit sites and arrange meetings with building owners to develop potential plans.
- ii. The Chamber will put together an online survey that compliments the paper Business Owners Survey. Initial communication will encourage businesses to complete online survey. Students will follow-up with others mid- April.

c. Design

- i. Identify the best places to put signs in the downtown area
- ii. Creating a map that identifies downtown parking. A pdf document can be placed on the Chamber's website. Copies to be supplied to area businesses.
- iii. Mayor's Beautification Fund has been transferred to Hanover Revitalization jurisdiction and a Wirt Park Beautification Project has been submitted.
- iv. A document titled "Graphic Identity & Sign Guidelines Manual" from the Great Allegheny Passage trail program that could provide us with assistance. It includes a "Trail Towns Self-Assessment Checklist".
- v. 3%, 10-year term loans up to \$35,000 were available to businesses for façade and signage improvement. It was suggested that we make it known to area contractors that any excess building materials they may want to donate could be used to reduce cost in downtown building improvements.

III. Next Steps

- a. Continue current work plan
- b. Establish five-year strategy
- c. Schedule and promote April public forum
- d. Preservation PA