

BID plans closer oversight of Main Street

Written by KRISTYN HALBIG ZIEHM
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Business district agrees to provide \$55,000 for downtown group but wants to know how annual funds will be spent

The Port Washington Business Improvement District board last week approved a 2014 operating plan that continues funding for Port Main Street Inc, but with closer oversight by the BID.

“Our budget is Main Street’s budget,” President Neil Tiziani said, noting the plan calls for the BID to provide \$55,000 for Main Street. “We’re not trying to meddle in your affairs. We’re not trying to dictate how you use the funds. We want to understand where the funds are going.

“We would like to play a supporting role. This, in fact, is a partnership. We’re all part of the same district. I think we can help each other. ”

But the money doesn’t come without conditions that Main Street must meet to receive the money, which will be dispersed in quarterly installments, the board agreed.

First and foremost, Main Street must maintain its agreement with the state and remain a Main Street community, members said.

“That state program is something we believe is important,” Tiziani said, especially the four subcommittees that direct much of Main Street’s actions and the volunteers who comprise them. “There are great things coming from those subcommittees.”

BID board member Brian Barber concurred, saying, “There’s no way we could replicate the amazing job Main Street has done with all the events.”

State Main Street officials agree that Port has a good program and has done great things for the community, he added.

Main Street needs to create an annual budget and strategic plan to be reviewed by the BID board by Dec. 1, the board agreed, and it must have a plan to make up for its \$5,000 deficit in that budget.

“We want to make sure by the end of 2014 there is no more deficit,” Tiziani said. “I think we can do that without much difficulty. There are a lot of ways for us to get \$5,000.”

Main Street must have a recruitment committee to recruit a new director in place by Dec. 1 — something Main Street officers said has already been done— and give the BID board a copy of the job description and compensation package.

BID members will be able to ask questions about the position and provide feedback, but will not play an active role in the selection or hiring process, the board agreed.

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“That’s going to be the most important thing you do in the next year,” BID board member Ross Leinweber said.

The Main Street board is expected to play an active role in the group’s committees during the job search and continue this role after the new director is hired, the BID board agreed. At least one board member should serve on each subcommittee.

Each quarter, a member of one of the four subcommittees will give a report to the BID board on the group’s actions and plans.

One member of the Main Street board — it can be Scott Huebner, who is a BID board member — and the new director should present current and accurate financial statements to the BID board each month, along with progress reports, updates on volunteers and fundraising efforts, compliance with state Main Street requirements and reports on the committees and their efforts.

They will also present any funding requests, complete with information on how the money will be used and the expected benefit.

Each quarter, the BID and Main Street board should meet to discuss performance, expectations and other matters.

Huebner, who was instrumental in starting the Main Street program five years ago, said these are basic rules that should have been put in place back then.

“I think this would have been great to have from the start,” he said, adding it would have prevented some of the distrust and problems that exist between the groups.

“The intent is communication,” added BID board member Gertjan van den Broek. “Many minds are better than fewer.”

Tiziani said the BID board will serve as a bridge between the city and Main Street, providing a line of communication that will help the downtown district grow and bring the city’s annual funding contribution back.

The city’s 2014 budget does not include the annual \$25,000 contribution to Main Street. Instead, the money was earmarked for economic development. That doesn’t mean the funds won’t be available if there is an initiative both groups agree on, city officials said.

The intent of the operating plan is to move past the problems that have plagued Main Street this year, BID board members said.

“One thing we have to do is move on, and this will help with that,” BID board member Wayne Chrusciel said, adding the terms of the agreement are not unusual.

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Main Street is important to the entire community, Huebner added.

“Main Street is bigger than downtown,” he said. “It affects the entire city.”

The Main Street operating plan, which will be considered by the Common Council Dec. 3, was approved 6-2, with Chrusciel and Mark Schowalter dissenting.