

Niwot Local Improvement District Advisory Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, May 5, 2020

Virtual Meeting

Present: Laura Skaggs, Mary Coonce, Lisa Rivard, Cornelia Sawle, Biff Warren, Jim Eastman, Scott Firle, Eric Bergeson

Guests: Kathy Koehler, Jocelyn Rowley

Staff: Summer Laws, Mark Ruzzin

Call to Order:

Laura called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

There were no meeting minutes for the committee to consider.

The committee began the meeting with updates from the community organizations that had submitted funding requests for consideration by the committee on how their plans have changed in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Biff reported that the Niwot Cultural Arts Association is in a holding pattern as it attempts to determine if it will be possible to hold Rock and Rails this summer. As a result, it has put its liquor license and insurance applications on hold for the time being. A start of the concert series in June seems remote, and even July or August may not be possible. The NCAA can utilize Whistlestop Park through September, so it may consider extending the series deeper into the fall. Given all this, they have decided to pull the Rock and Rails funding request from the May meeting agenda. The NCAA may bring the request back to a future meeting, and it will reduce the request accordingly if it turns out that Rock and Rails can still be held, just with a shorter schedule. Biff also noted that the NCAA has decided to postpone both the Family Art Walk events and the First Fridays Music events, until its known if the events can move forward safely. As with Rock and Rails, if it is possible to hold these events later in the summer or fall, the NCAA will bring the funding requests back to the LID, likely with a reduced funding amount to match the shorter schedule.

Eric reported that the NBA will move forward with the Second Avenue flowers program for the summer, as the flowers are important to Old Town ambience. The NBA will be looking for ways to reduce the cost of the program. Similar to the NCAA, the NBA is planning for reduced revenue to its businesses and the LID, so it is looking to scale back some of its initiatives, like the caboose painting project. Rather than

doing extensive repairs of the caboose at this time, the project will be scaled back to include a fresh coat of paint and minor repairs. Biff noted that it may be possible to pay for the caboose painting project from the park concession building project, so it may not be necessary to come to the LID for funding.

Laura noted that it is incumbent on the committee, as an arm of the county, to follow the county's public health orders in respect to events and the like. The committee agreed. Eric mentioned that there may be some areas in respect to the public health order where guidance from the county will be necessary; e.g., there is interest within the business community in holding sidewalk or street sales on Second Avenue, so assistance from the county in interpreting the public health orders to be sure they are properly followed will be important. Summer noted that Boulder County Public Health staff are easily accessible to assist with these kinds of efforts.

Treasurer's Report:

Mark provided the Treasurer's Report as Bruce was unable to attend the meeting. Mark noted that the February 2020 revenue report was strong as was January, with 2020 collections through two months trending ahead of 2019. That said, it is likely that with the March report the district will start to see reduced revenues as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. To date, no 2020 reimbursement requests have been submitted, but there are several that are expected in the weeks ahead. Mark noted that in response to COVID the state has extended various sales tax remittance deadlines, which will eventually impact the timing of the LID's monthly revenue reports. Finally, Mark noted that the LID's reserve amount coming into 2020 is approximately \$220,000.

Discussion of Boulder County Small Business Emergency Relief Grant Program:

Summer Laws of the Boulder County Commissioners' Office provided details on this new county program to assist local businesses with the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the Emergency Response Center remains open, the county is quickly shifting its focus to pandemic recovery. As part of those efforts, the county commissioners have approved a Small Business Emergency Relief Grant Program to assist businesses in the unincorporated county, Nederland, Jamestown, and Ward. The program will be announced on Friday.

Summer explained the focus of the program, including:

- County commissioners approved \$200,000 for the program.
- Grants will range from \$2,500-7,500.
- Grants will be applied for online, the online application system will be available in Spanish, and a call center will be available to assist business owners and representatives with the application process.
- Businesses must have 50 or fewer employees.
- The program is primarily focused on supporting brick and mortar businesses, and is designed to assist local businesses that did not receive federal support.

- The program aligns with the business support efforts being implemented in the county municipalities.
- Grant awards can be applied to a broad range of business expenses such as rent and mortgage payments, utilities, personal protective equipment purchases, sanitation supplies, payroll, marketing, communications, internet and other utility charges, licensing fees, etc.
- Businesses that receives grants will be asked to complete a survey to help county staff understand the program's effectiveness.
- An advisory board will be seated to support the county staff in the application evaluation process.

Summer asked for feedback from advisory committee members about the program, and asked if the committee is considering developing its own local business support program.

Laura thanked Summer for the presentation and noted for the committee that she has been thinking about the prospects of the LID giving some funds back to the Niwot business community as a gesture of support, and expressed her gratitude for the county's work in developing the grant program.

The committee had a robust and lengthy conversation about the county program and its interest in creating a program and/or contributing revenue to the county effort, to be dedicated to businesses located with the LID. Members discussed the following points:

- Directing LID funding to Catherine McHale to provide county grant program application assistance and assistance for other state and federal business assistance programs.
- Other strategies that the NBA is pursuing to support local business, such as increasing social media presence.
- Opportunities for local businesses to access resources from the Small Business Development Center.
- The NBA's recent survey of its membership to gauge the need for assistance.
- The NBA's gift card program to support local business.
- The number of local businesses located within the LID and located within the broader Niwot community.
- Contributing to the county program after the application program closes and the number of Niwot LID-based businesses who have applied is known.
- The proprietary nature of the sales tax data collected by the state and the challenges lack of data is presenting to developing a local business assistance program.
- Research is being done on the question of the LID having statutory authority to provide cash assistance to businesses; it's likely a case can be made that the statutory authority provided to the LID to spend money on marketing activities provides the justification to use LID revenues for direct cash assistance to local businesses.
- Data collected by the NBA suggests that there may be about 40 sales tax-contributing businesses in the LID; the county is researching this question now.

- Suggestions for steps to take to quantify the number of businesses located within the LID and how they are handling the COVID-19 pandemic, the kind of assistance they need, etc.
- Concerns of providing LID revenues to a business assistance program without knowing with certainty that the businesses receiving the funds are contributing to LID revenues.
- How information such as awardees and amount received will be shared.

After discussing a variety of options for moving forward, the committee decided to wait for the county program to go through its process and then reassess the need to supplement the county program once it is known how many Niwot businesses apply and receive assistance and it is better understood if there remains a need for additional support.

Funding Requests:

1. Niwot Community Association: Fourth of July Parade - \$1,970.00

Kathy Koehler presented the funding request for the NCA. The NCA is asking the advisory committee to consider this request now so that it can stay on track with its permitting and other application timelines. While it doesn't seem likely that the parade will be able to be held, the NCA would like to have the request approved in hopes that an event can be held later in the year. Kathy noted that the NCA has no intention of spending any money on an event until there is certainty that it can be held.

The advisory committee discussed limiting the approval to direct costs and pushing consideration of the request to the June meeting. Ultimately the committee decided to move forward with the request.

ACTION: On a motion from Jim, seconded by Lisa, the committee voted unanimously to APPROVE the funding request of \$1,970.00.

The committee clarified that if the NCA cannot hold the Fourth of July Parade and would like to hold a different type of event, it will need to come back to the LID advisory committee with a modified funding request.

New Business:

A stakeholder group, including the Boulder County Transportation Department, is looking at options for connecting residents along the Diagonal Highway to the bus rapid transit service that is being developed to better link Boulder and Longmont. A working group of businesses and residents located along the corridor is being created to assist with the planning effort; Mark asked any committee members who may be interested in serving on the working group to email him.

Old Business:

Laura mentioned conversations the committee had earlier in the spring about revisiting its strategic plan in light of the banner year the LID had in 2019. She suggested that additional information is now needed

to help the committee understand the impacts of COVID-19 on the LID's revenue stream, and that until that information is available, it may not make sense for the committee to spend time on a strategic planning effort. The other members of the committee agreed.

Biff provided a short update on the parking lot. Murray Street residents have asked for a sidewalk to be added on the east side of the parking lot, which the NBA supports; conversations have been opened up with the new owners of the Excel Electric building in hopes of sharing common entry and exit points with their parking lot; and Chuck Klueber is pursuing various state and Xcel Energy grant opportunities to cover the costs of the electric vehicle charging station infrastructure. The NBA has received an estimate that the 14-space parking lot will cost approximately \$65,000.

Mark noted that Catherine McHale will be attending the June meeting to present the 2020 Second Half Marketing Plan to the committee.

Public Comment:

No members of the public were present for public comment.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:55 p.m.