

Niwot Local Improvement District Advisory Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 2, 2021

Virtual Meeting

Present: Laura Skaggs, Bruce Rabeler, Cornelia Sawle, Mary Coonce, Biff Warren, Scott Firle, Eric Bergeson, Heidi Storz

Guests: Jocelyn Rowley, Deb Fowler, Kathy Trauner, Carrie Wise, Leigh Suskin, Chuck Klueber

Staff: Mark Ruzzin

Call to Order:

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

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

The advisory committee considered the February 2, 2021 meeting minutes:

ACTION: By acclamation, the committee voted unanimously to approve the February 2, 2021 meeting minutes, incorporating grammatical edits proposed by Biff.

Treasurer's Report:

Bruce presented the monthly Treasurer's Report to the committee, walking through the various financial reports that he had prepared for the meeting.

Bruce noted for the committee that the LID now has the full revenue picture for 2020, with receipt of the December 2020 revenue report. At year end, the LID had collected just over \$213,000, a 1.8% increase over 2019 collections; 53% of total revenues were collected from the retail sector, and 22% from the food service and accommodations sector.

December 2020 revenues were down in comparison to December 2019, by about \$8,000. Bruce observed that it is unusual for December revenues to be down, so perhaps this is an indication that the over-remittance issue is being or has been corrected. Bruce also noted that, overall, in 2020 retail collections were up about 31%, while food service and accommodations collections were down about the same amount.

Regarding year-to-date funding requests and approvals, so far in 2021 the committee has approved just over \$58,000 in funding requests, or 39% of the annual budget, leaving about \$91,000 remaining in the 2021 budget. If the committee approves all of the funding requests that are on the March meeting agenda, about \$92,000 or 61% of the LID's 2021 budget will have been committed.

Bruce reminded the committee that the LID entered 2020 with a reserve amount of about \$220,600. Total expenditures for 2020, including the parking lot project, were about \$237,000 against revenues of \$213,000, meaning that entering 2021 the LID reserve will be reduced by about \$24,000, to \$196,000.

Bruce noted that approximately \$100,000 for the parking lot construction and \$4,000 for the Spear Lodge Man tree carving repairs will move forward into 2021 as expected expenses.

Bruce informed the committee that \$9,905 of approved 2020 expenses will need to be reimbursed from 2021 revenues, due to the challenges of processing reimbursement requests in January and February. Mark added that the flurry of LID activity at the end of 2020 in combination with the end-of-year closeout responsibilities faced by the county Finance team led to these specific reimbursement requests not getting processed in time to be paid with 2020 dollars. Mark reminded the committee that any revenues not spent by the LID in one calendar year roll into the next year – in this case, because these \$9,905 in reimbursements technically were not paid with 2020 dollars, the 2020 reserve will grow by \$9,905, with that money to then be paid out in 2021 to cover the 2020 reimbursements. While it is preferable to have expenses charged against the calendar year in which they were made, at the end of the day, there is no financial impact to the LID or its reserve.

Eric observed that in light of all that 2020 brought, it is impressive to note that despite the December decline, overall the LID ended up with an increase in revenues over the record year of 2019. He expressed his appreciation for all the work that was done in 2020 to support Niwot's local economy.

Mary thanked the county for the quick turnaround on many of the reimbursement requests for the multitude of events that were held in the fourth quarter of 2020.

With about 75% of LID revenues coming from the retail and food service and accommodations sectors, Heidi asked about the sources of the other 25% of LID revenues. Bruce replied there are a variety of other sectors – construction, rental and real estate, wholesale, manufacturing, for example – that contribute small amounts of revenue every month to make up the full amount collected in any given year by the LID. Bruce noted that it is LID practice to set its annual budget at 80% of the last full year of revenue collections.

Funding Requests:

Leigh Suskin provided the committee with a report on the Little Holiday Shops of Niwot effort that was supported by the committee in the 2020 holiday season. Leigh noted that the Little Holiday Shops ran from mid-October through the end of December, featured 35 different vendors, and saw total sales of over \$38,000. The LID invested \$4,554 dollars in the program, with \$1,400 being spend on advertising, marketing, and signage, and \$3,154 being spent on Ambassador hours. The effort received significant support from the Niwot community – nearly 2,200 patrons visited the shops, with nearly 600 making purchases. As a direct result of the effort, Little Shops has signed a lease for a permanent space in Cottonwood Square beginning March 2. Leigh walked through the lessons learned through the effort, speaking to changes that will be implemented in the new iteration of the Little Shops concept.

Eric noted that the “seed money” that the LID provided for Little Holiday Shops has resulted in the ongoing operation of the concept, which was one of the stated goals of Leigh and her team and one which the committee shared. He also observed that much was learned through the effort that will be applied in the future. Leigh noted that the team is thinking ahead about the 2021 holiday season and increasing the presence of Little Holiday Shops in comparison to the 2020 experience.

Laura expressed her appreciation to Leigh for the report and for her work in support of Little Holiday Shops.

The advisory committee considered the following funding requests:

1. Niwot Business Association: Flower Materials - \$8,905.00

Chuck Klueber presented the funding request for the NBA. Chuck noted that this is an annual request to cover the costs associated with the purchase, delivery, and removal of the materials necessary to provide flowers all season long on Second Avenue and in Cottonwood Square. This work is overseen by Carrie and Tim Wise. Material costs have increased 2.7% since last year, so the 2021 request is \$235 more than the 2020 request.

ACTION: Mary moved, seconded by Eric, to approve the funding request for \$8,905.00.
The advisory committee unanimously APPROVED the motion.

2. Niwot Business Association: Flower Maintenance - \$12,830.00

Chuck presented the funding request for the NBA. Chuck noted that the maintenance costs for 2021 as proposed are set at the same funding amount that the committee approved in 2020. Chuck pointed out that the same system (equipment, volunteers, etc.) will be used to water the landscaping associated with the parking lot; Chuck will bring a funding request in the near future to cover this expense.

ACTION: Scott moved, seconded by Cornelia, to approve the funding request for \$12,830.00.
The advisory committee unanimously APPROVED the motion.

3. Niwot Business Association: Niwot Around the World - \$2,000.00

Deb Fowler presented the funding request for the NBA. This request builds on the NBA strategy discussed at the February meeting of hosting one major event per month that is focused on bringing people to town; this event is for the month of May. Businesses that participate in the activity will be asked to decorate their store in the theme of a country, and during the month people will be able to view the storefronts and vote for best-decorated store. The event will culminate in a day-long event on Saturday, May 15, which will include food and drink from the various countries, music, dancing, and other activities. The funding request will cover marketing and advertising expenses and musicians. Deb noted that the idea has been pitched to several businesses and that to date it has been received enthusiastically.

ACTION: Eric moved, seconded by Mary, to approve the funding request for \$2,000.00.
The advisory committee unanimously APPROVED the motion.

4. Niwot Business Association: 2021 Sidewalk Sales - \$10,050.00

Kathy Trauner presented the funding request for the NBA. This funding request is to cover six sidewalk sale events, one-per-month beginning in April and running through September. The sponsors intend to take the same approach with the 2021 sidewalk sales as taken with the 2020 events that were funded by the NLIDAC.

Laura asked two questions of the sponsors: 1) Is the business community feeling that an additional boost will still be needed as we move into the summer and the local economy emerges from the pandemic? and 2) Will the repetition of sidewalk sales every month dilute the effectiveness of the events? Bruce replied that from his perspective, the Sidewalk Sales events will not be oversaturating the event calendar as they will be replacing Friday Art Walk, and the Sidewalk Sales have quickly become events that the businesses look forward to, as it provides another opportunity to reach out to customers with a message of "come on out to town." Cornelia added that as a daytime event, Sidewalk Sales lead to more sales than Friday Art Walk, which took place during the evening. Deb added that the Sidewalk Sales events are more family oriented.

Eric underlined the notion that the Sidewalk Sales are more business-oriented, in that they have been driving more sales than Friday Art Walk, which tends to be more of a social event. He also suggested that while they haven't seen any "staleness" yet to the Sidewalk Sales formula, as people are still looking for opportunities to get out and come to town, this is an important issue to track. Bruce suggested that as the event matures, you may see people coming down for the "fun" – music, etc. – and less for the shopping. Eric suggested that the NBA can do some measuring of the impact of the Sidewalk Sales on sales tax revenues. Laura expressed interest in seeing this data.

Laura asked for an update on Rock and Rails, and also mentioned that she has heard that there may be interest in resurrecting Jazz on Second Avenue. Eric noted that several new events are being discussed, including a Fun Run to take place before the traditional Fourth of July parade, and a Honey Bee Harvest Festival in the fall. It is not clear at this time if these events will happen, and if so, if they will require LID funding. He also noted that there have been some initial discussions on bringing jazz back to Niwot, perhaps with an event that would take place in Cottonwood Square.

Biff noted that the NCAA is likely to again host the Friday Art Walk, but not until the COVID restrictions have relaxed to some degree, as it is primarily an indoor event. Friday Art Walk can be a nice complement to the Sidewalk Sales, as the event attracts a different kind of clientele. Biff informed the committee that the Rock and Rails planning committee has begun meeting, and will continue to do so into the summer. Like the Friday Art Walk, much of the ability for Rock and Rails to return is dependent on the easing of the COVID restrictions. He does believe that the event will be back at some point in 2021, but it is not possible at this point to know when or at what scale.

ACTION: Eric moved, seconded by Cornelia, to approve the funding request for \$10,050.00.
The advisory committee unanimously APPROVED the motion.

New Business:

Mark informed the committee that in February the County Commissioners did agree to extend Biff's NLIDAC term six months, in addition to reappointing Mary and appointing Heidi to the committee. The county will conduct a mid-year board and commission recruitment process in the summer, so Biff can expect to serve through the August meeting, with a new appointee beginning service in September.

NLIDAC Strategic Plan and Committee Leadership Elections

Laura reminded the committee that its current strategic plan runs from 2016-2021, which means the task of updating the plan is on the committee's near-term agenda. That said, updating the plan through virtual meetings doesn't seem practical. Laura proposed delaying the update process to the late summer or early fall, when it may be possible for the committee to meet in-person, even socially distanced, as the preferred option for reviewing and updating the plan.

Laura noted for the committee that March is the typical time for county boards and commissions, including the NLIDAC, to hold leadership elections. Laura also informed the committee that she intends to resign her seat one year early, in February 2022 – her current tenure is set to end in February 2023, when 3 other committee terms are also expiring, which could result in 4 new members being seated in March 2023. Resigning one year early will help stagger committee member terms more effectively and avoid turnover of nearly half the committee in one year.

Old Business:

BOCC/NLIDAC Meeting Takeaways

The committee spent some time discussing outcomes and next steps from the BOCC/NLIDAC meeting held on February 25. Laura suggested, for example in respect to improvements to the Second Avenue alley, that in the absence of a concrete proposal, it is difficult for the committee to act. As funders not doers, she suggested that the LID needs to look to the community champions like the NBA, NCA, or NCAA to initiate the discussion through a proposal.

Eric agreed with that perspective, and suggested that a good next step would be to set up a walking tour of the alley with the commissioners. Others agreed with his suggestion.

Biff agreed with this approach. He suggested that a good starting point would be a proposal coming from a community organization, that could then lead to a conversation with the commissioners, county staff, and the community on steps that can be taken to make Old Town and alley improvements. Code and other land use regulation changes could be included in that conversation.

Other committee members commented on and supported the emphasis placed in the meeting on the need to maintain a critical mass of business and retail uses along Second Avenue, as key to ensuring a thriving business community in Niwot.

Mark thanked all the committee members for their contributions to the joint meeting. He noted that in the coming weeks he will have a chance to debrief the meeting with the commissioners, and he will plan to report back out to the committee.

Online Funding Request Form

Mark reviewed the online funding request form with the committee. The committee provided feedback on the form itself, asked questions about implementation of the online form, and suggested a variety of improvements to the draft form. Mark noted that he will bring the questions and suggestions back to the staff he is working with on the form, to make the changes and prepare the form for implementation. The committee agreed to establish a submittal deadline of 5:00pm on the Thursday before the monthly NLIDAC meeting.

Public Comment:

No members of the public spoke during public comment.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:00 p.m.