

Niwot Local Improvement District Advisory Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, December 7, 2021

Niwot Inn/Virtual Meeting

Present: Scott Firle, Eric Bergeson, Bruce Rabeler, Laura Skaggs, Cornelia Sawle, Mary Coonce, Lisa Rivard, Heidi Storz, Keith Waters

Guests: Jocelyn Rowley, Catherine McHale, Gene Hayworth, Biff Warren

Staff: Mark Ruzzin

Call to Order:

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

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

The advisory committee considered the October 5, 2021 meeting minutes:

ACTION: On a motion from Bruce, seconded by Mary, the committee voted unanimously to approve the October 5, 2021 meeting minutes, as presented.

Treasurer's Report:

Bruce provided the monthly Treasurer's Report, walking the committee through the report he prepared for the meeting. Bruce noted that through September 2021, the LID had collected over \$191,000 in sales tax revenues, a 23% increase over 2020 collections year-to-date. The Food Service and Accommodations sector continues to improve in total collections, and is now collecting revenue close to pre-pandemic levels. That said, this sector's contribution as a percentage of total revenue collections has remained flat, as the retail sector in particular is performing so strongly. Remote sales accounted for 25% of LID collections in September, and comprise 18.4% of total collections year-to-date. Remote sales collections in 2021 have already surpassed the total amount collected in 2020. Bruce clarified for the committee that remote sales are those that result in goods being shipped to an address within the LID.

Bruce noted that, year-to-date, the committee has approved over \$201,000 in funding requests, or 135% of the annual budget of \$149,000, meaning the committee has overspent the 2021 budget by about \$52,000. Bruce reminded the committee that the LID's budget for 2022 will be \$170,666, an increase of \$21,000 from 2021; if both 2022 funding requests are approved later in the meeting, 12% of the 2022 budget will have been committed.

In respect to reimbursements, just over \$95,000 of 2021 expenses have been reimbursed, leaving about \$106,000 in approved funding requests waiting reimbursement. Bruce noted that, as is typical, total reimbursements will be less than the total approved funding requests, and once all the reimbursement requests have been submitted and approved, the committee will have a fair accounting of its actual total 2021 expenditures.

Mark noted for the committee that earlier in December the county commissioners approved the LID's budget supplemental request, to true up the LID's annual budget with its expected total expenditures for 2021.

As Bruce noted in his report, last week Mark spoke with Mitch Goodwin in the county's Office of Financial Management about the LID's sales tax collections, in light of the record collection amount seen in September. In the monthly revenue reports that Mitch prepares for the committee, he shares all the information he is legally able to share in respect to total collections, sector collection amounts, and remote seller collection amounts. Mitch closely tracks the LID's revenue collections, monitors trends, and communicates both with Mark and state staff at the Department of Revenue if and when necessary.

In respect to the integrity of the revenue collection numbers and the question of future clawbacks of LID revenue, Mitch's guidance to committee members is to take a conservative approach to setting the district's annual budget, track the monthly reports to look for anomalies and oddities and follow-up on any if necessary, and keep a healthy reserve as a hedge against any revenue reductions that would result from a clawback. Mark shared with the committee that these are the strategies Mitch employs as he manages a variety of tax revenue streams for the county organization.

Mark also noted for the committee that he asked Mitch about the role the vendor plays in a clawback scenario, specifically in a case when a vendor may have misapplied the LID sales tax to hundreds or even thousands of transactions. Mitch informed Mark that in this case, the vendor is under no obligation to return the mistakenly collected sales taxes to the individual consumers – the taxes are remitted back to the vendor who is able to then keep the taxes in their entirety.

Mark added that Mitch also noted that the experience of increased sales tax collections in 2021 for the LID is a trend he is seeing across the county in all the sales tax revenue streams he manages, as is the increase in the percentage of sales tax revenues coming from remote sellers.

Event Report: Niwot Jazz Festival

Gene Hayworth provided the committee with a report on the Niwot Jazz Festival, which was held on Saturday, September 4. In respect to the festival financials, not factoring the LID funding request approval amount of \$10,000, the festival raised over \$14,000 through a variety of strategies (tip jars, donations, sponsorships, etc.), to offset total expenses of over \$15,000. With the LID funding commitment, the festival is well-positioned financially for hosting the event in 2022.

The event ran from 12:00-8:00 p.m., and was held for the most part in Cottonwood Square, though four of the acts did perform on Second Avenue over the course of the day. While attendance was slow at the beginning of the day, it increased as the day went on, and reached over 700 people for the closing acts.

The event sponsors collected survey results from 36 attendees, which revealed that people came from all over the Denver metro area to attend the show, that they came expecting to spend money while in Niwot for the show, and that attendees had some familiarity with Niwot.

Gene walked through a number of other aspects of the event, including reports from business owners in Cottonwood Square, community engagement with the event, complaints and kudos, and general take-aways and lessons learned from hosting a first-time event.

The committee spent some time asking questions of Gene and discussing various aspects of the event, including marketing, logistics, community and attendee reactions, timing of future events, and use of volunteers.

Event Report: Rock and Rails Concert Series

Biff Warren provided the committee with a report on the Rock and Rails concert series, walking through the written report that was provided to the county's Community Planning and Permitting department. Biff noted that it was a successful year for Rock and Rails. Attendance was strong, the weather cooperated, and all 13 events went off without a hitch. The net profit for the events was nearly \$44,000, which is distributed equally between the NCAA and NBA and primarily used to maintain and improve Whistle Stop Park and Children's Park.

Biff pointed out that most attendees come from around the county, with attendance being in the neighborhood of 700-900 people per concert.

Laura noted that it is important to acknowledge that the LID investment in Rock and Rails results in direct benefit to Niwot organizations that do important work for the community.

Activity Report: Economic Development and Marketing

Catherine McHale provided the committee with a report on 2021 economic development and marketing activities. She informed the committee about business recruitment efforts, the commercial space inventory database, business development and marketing support services, individual business outreach and meetings, networking activities, marketing campaigns and social media strategies, the business directory and business map, and the variety of activities and initiatives that she engages in to promote the business district and the Niwot community.

Event Report: Dancing Under the Stars

In respect to Dancing Under the Stars, Catherine noted that the event was held over 14 Friday nights in the summer. The events typically attracted 150-200 people per night, with live music featured on two of the nights. The events do lead to an increase in activity at the businesses located near the dance floor, but less so for businesses farther afield. The tip jar for the events raised about \$800 over the course of the summer, and to assist with tipping, Catherine created a virtual Venmo “tip jar” for those dancers who attended events but didn’t have cash on hand.

Funding Requests:

The advisory committee considered the following funding requests:

1. Niwot Business Association: 2022 Marketing Plan First Half - \$17,984.00

Catherine presented the funding request for the NBA. She noted that the request proposes to increase the marketing plan funding back to pre-pandemic levels, in recognition that LID revenues have increased and remained strong throughout 2021 and the community appears eager and ready to get out and support its local businesses.

Catherine walked through the proposed 2022 marketing activities, which are focused around social media efforts, print and online advertising campaigns, graphic design needs for branding efforts like the business directory and business map, videos, and seasonal branding campaigns.

Catherine noted that the marketing plan in total for 2022 is proposed to cost about \$36,000, which will put the plan on par with the marketing campaign expenses in 2019 and 2020.

Mary pointed out that the activities contemplated for the marketing plan are both stand alone in respect to supporting and promoting the business district, and also will serve to supplement the event-specific marketing campaigns. Catherine added that she coordinates marketing activities with the event sponsors to leverage advertising resources.

In response to a suggestion from Heidi, Catherine committed to exploring ways to utilize district branding campaigns, e.g. the Small Town, Big heart campaign, in collaboration with the advertising efforts of local businesses, as a tool to support consistent and uniform branding for the Niwot community.

The committee spent some time discussing the reduced marketing expenses of 2021 in relation to the record-setting revenue collections the district is experiencing in 2021. Catherine noted that the effect of branding and marketing campaigns is not immediate: The successful outcomes of 2021 are a direct result of the branding and marketing foundation that has been laid over the years. While this foundation made it possible to pull back on spending for 2021, the foundation will erode if branding and marketing investments were continued at a reduced level.

Laura reminded the committee that the funding request is for the first six months of the 2022 Marketing Plan, and that mid-year the committee will have an opportunity to modify the plan direction as it considers the marketing funding request for the last six months of the year.

ACTION: Mary moved, seconded by Lisa, to approve the funding request for \$17,984.00. **The advisory committee unanimously APPROVED the motion.**

2. Niwot Cultural Arts Association: Let's Wine About Winter - \$2,453.00

Biff Warren presented the funding request for the NCAA. Biff noted that 2022 will be the eighth rendition of Let's Wine About Winter, which will be held on February 12. Biff explained that the NCAA will be contributing \$1,000 to the event, to cover event promotion and other costs associated with sponsoring the event. The funding request is set at the same level as the request for the last edition of the event, which was held in 2020.

The committee reflected on how successful the event has been over the years and its focus on bringing people into district businesses.

ACTION: Eric moved, seconded by Mary, to approve the funding request for \$2,453.00. **The advisory committee unanimously APPROVED the motion.**

3. Niwot Business Association: Supplemental Maintenance and Repairs - \$750.00

Eric presented the funding request for the NBA. He noted that the funding request is to cover a number of unexpected electrical repair costs that have surfaced with the Second Avenue street lighting. These unexpected costs will lead to the overspending of the Maintenance and Repairs funding request that was approved in January.

ACTION: Laura moved, seconded by Heidi, to approve the funding request for \$750.00. **The advisory committee unanimously APPROVED the motion.**

New Business:

Mark noted for the committee that the county's annual board and commission recruitment period has opened, and that the vacancy to be created by Laura's resignation is being advertised to the public. The appointment will be for a new member to represent the Niwot Community Association. Laura's last committee meeting will be February 1, 2022.

Old Business:

Eric updated the committee on the status of the Murray Street Parking Lot. The lot has been remediated per the plan approved by the county. Mark noted that once the project is formally accepted, Porchfront Homes will then be able to then install the solar lighting, which will be the last component of the project.

Eric noted for the committee that the sidewalk and drainage project that was proposed for the intersection of Niwot Road and 79th Street will need to be reduced in scope due to drainage issues that would require Niwot Road to be lowered and reconstructed. It is expected that it will be possible to reconstruct some sections of the sidewalk on the south side of Niwot Road to help with pedestrian access in the area.

Strategic Planning Discussion:

Mark pointed the committee members to the handouts of the October strategic planning retreat meeting notes and the November organizations' meeting notes; he thanked Lisa for taking the notes at the November meeting. Heidi noted that earlier in the afternoon she emailed committee members with suggested revisions to the NLIDAC mission and vision statements.

Mark suggested that the committee members focus the evening discussion around the mission and vision statements and also the goals and objectives for the strategic plan. He suggested that plan drafting and editing can be completed outside of meeting time.

The committee members spent time debriefing the November community organizations' meeting, and shared the following observations:

- Several committee members commented that the meeting was very successful.
- The meeting provided a wonderful opportunity for the organizations to share their goals and plans for future activities and for all the organizations to hear what the other groups are planning.
- Common themes emerged through the discussion that can inform the goals and objectives of the NLIDAC.
- There was general appreciation towards the LID for pulling together the meeting and the opportunity to share.
- The organizations in attendance seemed open to the NLIDAC filling the leadership void in the community that the committee identified at its strategic planning retreat, nor was any resistance expressed to the NLIDAC filling that role.]
- Opening up the dialogue with the community groups was important and will provide value in the future.
- Community needs and priorities that NLIDAC members identified at the October strategic planning retreat were mentioned at the meeting, for example:
 - Signage, way-finding, communications needs.
 - Infrastructure improvements.
 - Beautifying the entranceways to Niwot.

In conclusion, committee members agreed that the “lane is clear” for the NLIDAC to move forward in this leadership space and provide comprehensive and cohesive strategic planning efforts to identify and implement mutually shared goals and priorities in collaboration with the other community organizations.

Scott and Laura expressed interest in developing tools that can keep the organizations connected to share information, volunteer opportunities, organizational needs, and other needs and opportunities.

The committee expressed interest in replicating the gathering in the future, perhaps as an annual meeting to share progress reports, plans for the coming year, and other important information.

The committee discussed possibilities to use the niwot.com website as an organization tool and “digital community bulletin board” to keep business, organizations, and residents connected. The committee discussed niwot.com becoming the central hub or portal for connecting to the various community organizations, e.g. through links that send website visitors to the various community organization websites. Both the niwot.com and the Niwot Historical Society websites will be redesigned in 2022, which will provide an opportunity to reimagine the websites as tools for connecting the community. The “digital bulletin board” could also be supplemented with physical bulletin boards located at community centers, for example at The Grange and Niwot Market.

Mark shared the outline of the existing strategic plan with the committee. The strategic plan consists of four specific sections:

1. Mission and Vision statements
2. Value Statements that guide the NLIDAC’s work
3. Definitions of the four funding categories
4. Examples of projects to be completed that fit into the funding categories

Heidi led a short discussion around the topic of creating a grant-type approach to using LID funds, that would see the LID identify topic areas for funding, and ask community organizations to come forward with proposals that meet the LID objectives. Bruce noted his long-standing interest in seeing the NLIDAC be more proactive in defining how LID money will be utilized, to better guide the types of funding requests that are brought to the committee by the community organizations.

Heidi and Scott volunteered to “redraft” the existing strategic plan in a shareable Google doc that committee members can comment in and revise. The committee will then review the red-lined doc at the January NLIDAC meeting.

Public Comment:

No members of the public spoke during public comment.

Adjournment:

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