

Special Town Council Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 29, 2023

Town Hall

104 North King Street

Also being streamed on the town's Facebook page "Shepherdstown, West Virginia"

DRAFT

Present: Mayor Jim Auxer, Lori Robertson (Recorder), Jim Ford, Chris Stroech, Jenny Haynes, Cheryl Roberts, and Marty Amerikaner.

Absent: None

Staff: Town Clerk Amy Boyd, Town Administrator Stephanie Grove, and Public Works Director Frank Welch

Visitors: Meredith Wait, Sue Kemnitzer, Elise Baach, Annette Gavin-Bates, Lois Turco, Eric Lewis, Jim Ford, Mark Kohut, Harriett Pearson, Jan Hafer, Mark Purdy, Christian Asam, Steve Pearson, Becky Phipps, Carol Asam, Marianne Alexander, and Phillip Webber.

Agenda:

1. Call meeting to order

Call the meeting to order by Mayor Auxer at 5:30 p.m.

The Mayor introduced Stephanie Grove as our new Town Administrator.

2. Review of applications for the Market House

Mayor - we have three applicants giving each 20 minutes to speak.

The first applicant is via phone call from Florida - Michelle Matro.

M. Matro - has a for profit business called United Businesses. Has been looking for the right place to live, visited Shepherdstown and loved it. The goal is to unite businesses.

L. Rampy - how do you make your money?

M. Metro - it is member based -products and services. Products that relate to environmental and social issues. Retail and service (educational and consulting). The venture will need to make money. Services offered and myself and for business owners (job training).

C. Stroeck - have you reached out to the local businesses to try to gauge their interest regarding their needs? And you state you need a rent offset? Starting Date?

M. Metro - have not reached out - whatever they need, she will provide it. Would need a rent offset. Not sure for how long - it would help out a lot. Starting date depends on the ability to find housing. May 1st is preferred.

C. Roberts - what did you notice when you visited here in regards to diversity? Any interaction with people?

M. Metro - it felt inviting, loved the artwork. It was early in the day so not much.

M. Amerikaner - you have to create a business? What about occupancy? What will happen inside the Market House?

M. Matro - will create a new business model specific to Shepherdstown. Again, need to find housing first. Have a public bathroom, retail, business display, and a community board.

J. Haynes - selling merchandise?

M. Matro - branded United Business merchandise reflecting environmental and social needs, and local art hung to be sold.

Second applicant - **Marianne Alexander - Shepherdstown Connects**

Represents many groups - non-profits working together, at least 10 groups involved.. They are concerned that there is no community calendar. Wants to see the Market House as in information hub. Shepherd University is not being showcased enough. Would like to bring some of the elements of the old visitor's center. Some of the involved groups are CATF, SAIL, Boyd Center, Historic Shepherdstown, Potomac Valley Audubon Society, Shepherdstown Community Club, Shepherdstown Shares, Speak Story Series, SU Dean of Arts, Lifelong Learning, etc. We would like to partner with the CVB.

C. Stroeck - Shepherdstown Connects is not a non-profit? How would you get all of these groups organized in one spot?

M. Alexander - no, we are an alliance that is comprised of 501(C)3's. Each group will bring in what they do best in that space. We don't have the resources to bring the Market House up to snuff.

J. Haynes - likes the partnership idea with CVB.

M. Alexander - we do not want to put the community groups upstairs - we don't want to be in the attic.

M. Amerikaner - are you the public face for this alliance? What is your funding source?

M. Alexander - yes, and we need to still coordinate all of it. No, not saying that the alliance would be paying rent. We would be relying volunteers to promote a local flavor of Shepherdstown. Shepherdstown Shares has an excess of volunteers.

L. Rampy - what size space are you looking for?

M. Alexander - we haven't worked that out yet. We want to be ambassadors representing Shepherdstown.

Third applicant - **Annette Gavin-Bates - Jefferson County Convention & Visitors Bureau (JCCVB or CVB)**

___The CVB is a 501(C)3 non-profit. We want to create a welcome center and community space in the Market House. (She handed out a booklet highlighting Shepherdstown). We are a destination marketing organization and welcome center. Visitors need knowledgeable insight and our trained ambassadors can do that. We will support the town, businesses, events, culture, and the arts. We bring many fiscal resources to the table providing steady funding. There is a 23 member board, 7 are from Shepherdstown. There is a paid professional staff. If approved, we will secure funding for repairs and maintenance. Michael Mills has been contacted and he has offered some pro-bono services. We will create a welcome center section for Shepherdstown. Trained ambassadors will welcome visitors. We see the second floor as a flex-space for rotating artists, etc. We see ourselves as custodians of Shepherdstown's history.

Mayor - the CVB is funded by the hotel/motel tax.

E. Lewis - is an accountant for the Bavarian Inn. The occupancy tax is paid by guests at the BI. There is a 6% tax that is held in trust and remitted to a government agency. The BI annexed 1/2 of its property which allowed the town to collect the 1% tax. In 2022, 1% equated to \$72K. If the CVB comes to Shepherdstown, the town will get the whole amount of hotel/motel tax whereas before they got half. The whole amount is broken down with the town giving the CVB 50% with the other 50% going to Shepherdstown Parks & Rec. Of the P&R's share, 20% of that is available to P&R immediately with the other 30% allowed to be used within the parameters of the state code. Those parameters include arts, historic sites and beautification sites.

C. Stroeck - looking at the spreadsheet, it looks like our take is doubled?

E. Lewis - yes, the town gets the county's piece.

M. Amerikaner - worries that enough focus won't be on Shepherdstown. Days open? Funding sources?

A. Gavin-Bates - if we know about the happenings in Shepherdstown, we will promote/market them. Will promote Shepherdstown merchandise. 5-7 days a week. Funding - private, public, and grants.

L. Rampy - thoughts on the collaboration idea? Regarding ambassadors, how do you collect feedback on these people? Do you encourage a sign in for visitors? Lease length?

A. Gavin-Bates - definitely want to entertain this idea. The ADA bathroom will take a bit of doing and we are also thinking about a lift to get to the second floor. Comment directed to M. Alexander - please take on the community calendar! Very confident in the ambassadors. We do encourage a sign in to gather emails and to see where they are coming from. This is a big investment for us, so we'd like to see a 10-20 year lease due to the upfront costs.

C. Roberts - are you looking to use the Shepherdstown Connects volunteers to run it?

A. Gavin-Bates - no, we want to use our own paid staff. We would like to get to the point of an area in the MH where Connects volunteers can help.

C. Stroeck - in regards to what our survey showed us as to what people want to see inside the MH like accessible bathrooms, library pick-up/drop-off, and computer availability for those in need, do you see any issues?

A. Gavin-Bates - no, we can absolutely work through it. We still need to look at the building for the final usable space.

C. Asam - is concerned about the timeline, that it will take long. This is an important structure.

Mayor - we are trying to move forward as quickly as possible. The lease will be a public hearing.

L. Rampy - move to go into Executive Session at 6:53 p.m. pursuant to 6-9A-4(b)(2)(A). Second by M. Amerikaner. No objections noted.

Everyone left the room except council and the town administrator .

J. Haynes - move to come out of Executive Session at 7:20 p.m. pursuant to 6-9A-4(b)(2)(A). Second by C. Roberts. No objections noted.

All visitors had gone.

L. Robertson - move to approve the CVB application and to direct the Mayor and legal counsel to prepare and negotiate the lease. Second by C. Stroech. No objections noted.

L. Robertson – move to adjourn at 7:22 p.m. Second by J. Haynes. No objections noted.

Draft Minutes respectfully submitted by L. Robertson, Recorder for the Corporation of Shepherdstown.