

Niwot Local Improvement District Advisory Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, June 2, 2020

Virtual Meeting

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

Guests: Catherine McHale, Jocelyn Rowley

Staff: Summer Laws, 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 May 5, 2020 meeting minutes:

ACTION: On a motion from Eric, seconded by Cornelia, the committee voted unanimously to approve the May 5, 2020 meeting minutes, as presented.

Treasurer's Report:

Bruce presented the monthly Treasurer's Report to the committee and walked through the various financial reports he prepared for the meeting. Bruce noted that revenue collections through March were strong, up 8.9% over 2019, but he cautioned that these were pre-COVID numbers. Over 50% of the collections came from the retail sector, while accommodations/food service collections continued to be on the decline.

Year-to-date the committee has approved nearly \$94,000 in funding requests, against a budget of \$149,313. Funding requests are changing as a result of COVID, so it is difficult to predict how many requests will be made through the rest of the year. From a revenue perspective the year started strong, but it remains to be seen how the remaining months of the year will play out.

The committee spent some time discussing various aspects of the first quarter revenue reports, including expected delays in future revenue reports due to sales tax filing extensions that have been provided to businesses by the state, in response to COVID.

Funding Requests:

1. Niwot Business Association: 2020 Marketing Second Half - \$14,578.00

Catherine McHale presented the funding request for the NBA. The request builds on the 2020 marketing plan that was presented to the committee last December. The marketing activities that had been contemplated for the first six months of 2020 have all been completed: Catherine walked through the various activities and provided an update on outcomes, including the Passport program.

Catherine noted that she has revised the plan in response to the COVID pandemic and revisited some of the marketing strategies to adapt to current conditions, with the focus shifting some to encouraging ongoing marketing efforts and business support for the local businesses. The plan has a renewed emphasis on social media and other low-cost marketing efforts to keep attention focused on Niwot. For example, the advertising campaign has been changed to a “Keep Niwot Strong” message, to reinforce the message of staying connected to and supportive of the Niwot business community and the Niwot community at-large. The goal is to draw people in and keep them loyal to Niwot, with tactical changes being made on an ongoing basis in response to how the various strategies are received by the community.

Catherine is planning to update the Niwot business map in September, in response to changing retail conditions. Some shops have closed their doors, but there are new retail outlets opening up, for example on the west end of Second Avenue. While not possible at this time, Catherine does plan to continue to use video as a tool for marketing Niwot, based on the great results they have seen with past video efforts.

The total cost for the 2020 marketing program then will be \$38,578; the NBA contributes \$8,000 for the social media campaigns, with the remaining funds coming from the LID. The advisory committee approved \$16,289 in December, so this June request is for \$14,578. The committee expressed its appreciation to the NBA for contributing \$8,000 to the marketing program.

ACTION: On a motion from Jim, seconded by Laura, the committee voted unanimously to APPROVE the funding request for \$14,578. Biff abstained from the vote, given that marketing program funds will be directed to the Left Hand Valley Courier. **NOTE:** Upon further review of the funding request amount, a second motion was offered by Jim, seconded by Bruce, to APPROVE the funding request for a total of \$12,289.00; this revised total reflects that the Holiday Card initiative has been removed from the marketing plan. This motion also passed unanimously, with Biff again abstaining.

Old Business:

Summer Laws of the Boulder County Commissioners’ Office joined the meeting to provide an update on the county’s Small Business Relief Grant Program, as follow-up to the presentation she provided the committee in May. The grant program was designed to provide financial support to businesses located in the unincorporated county, in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Summer walked through a presentation with the committee, discussing the development of the program, grant program timelines, the process used to evaluate applications, and other key aspects of the effort. Key insights included:

- Program development began in late April, with closeout expected in Q3 2020.
- The oversight team, led by Summer, consulted with other county grant programs on program design, in order to get the effort up and running as quickly as possible.
- The program supported key county priorities relating to racial equity, sustainability, and other community values.
- 121 eligible applications were received for the \$200,000 in available funding.
- After an initial vetting, the evaluation team reviewed 74 of these applications, totaling \$400,000 in requests.
- 34 awards were approved, totaling \$192,500 in grants.

- Of the awardees:
 - Over 70% have less than \$500,000 in annual revenue
 - Over 60% have been in business over 10 years
 - Over 70% were women-owned businesses
 - 11 have a Niwot business address, and 9 are located on the outskirts of Boulder
- Awardees have been notified and contracting and payment is already in process.

Eric participated on the team that evaluated the final traunch of applications, and expressed his appreciation to the oversight team for their strong work on the effort.

The committee spent some time discussing various aspects of the program and its funding stream. In wrapping up, Laura thanked Summer for her informative presentations over the past two meetings, and thanked Eric for his service on the evaluation team.

Laura led the committee through a discussion on their interest in supplementing the county grant program with a LID-focused program, as follow-up to the conversation that began at the May meeting. She suggested that, in light of the ongoing revenue uncertainty facing the district, the LID should hold off on committing any funds to a business assistance program and hold that money to be sure the LID has the revenue it needs to implement its traditional event and marketing programming to support a vibrant business community when things return to the “new normal.”

The committee in general supported Laura’s suggestion. Eric noted for the committee that various discussions are happening around near-term actions that could be taken to support the business community, including through events that are in alignment with public health orders. The committee expressed their support for considering funding requests for such events, and discussed a variety of different ideas. Biff informed the committee that the Rock and Rails planning committee is considering a variety of options to still hold the concert series, evaluating the prospects on a month-by-month basis. The series could start as late as September if conditions are such that it can be held safely.

Regarding other matters, Biff noted for the committee that the Murray Street parking lot application has been scheduled for the June 17 county Planning Commission meeting. The NBA has received grant funding from Xcel Energy for the infrastructure necessary to provide electric vehicle charging stations in the parking lot, and is applying for a grant to provide funds to purchase the actual stations themselves.

New Business:

Cornelia noted that there remains interest in taking steps to repair the wood carvings along Niwot Road. The committee had a short discussion about the conversations that are happening in regards to this issue and its interest in seeing a repair proposal being submitted to the LID.

Biff informed the committee that the NCAA repainted the Whistlestop Park caboose at a cost of \$2500. The caboose restoration project will be delayed until at least next year and perhaps even longer.

Public Comment:

No members of the public were present for public comment.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:25 p.m.