

Downtown Revitalization Meeting
April 7, 2015 at 5:30 p.m.

In Attendance:

Jeff Schreiber	- Small Wonders Daycare and Potential Entrepreneur
Leslie Schreiber	- Small Wonders Daycare
Marie Miller	- Down on Main
Debra McCoy	- Mimi's Boutique
Sue Buchanan	- Councilwoman
Artie Altomare	- Mayor
Gary Phillips	- G&F Enterprise and Administrator
Ben Lynch	- Economic and Business Development

Things to know before the meeting:

Ben met with the school to talk about potential volunteering from the students. This would spur excitement and support from the community for the downtown revitalization efforts when they see the children of the community taking pride in their town. The school groups that have said they would contribute are the Leetonia Bears Football Team, National Honors Society, Key Club and Envirothon. This is a very good opportunity to start all the efforts. We will likely have a volunteer day with the school in early May.

The meeting was held in the Leetonia Library Meeting room. We opened up with introductions and what needed to be fixed, improved or cleaned up in the downtown area. Some of the things we covered were:

Trash

There is trash in the alleys and on the streets that need to be cleaned up. This would be a good activity for the students from the school to do.

Parking

This is probably the biggest issue in the downtown area. Customers, residents and store owners/employees have no where to park downtown. People are resorted to parking on the street or parking far away from the downtown area. Residents take up spots on the street which prevents potential customers from finding parking and discourages people from shopping downtown. This is an issue that needs to be looked into ASAP.

Some potential solutions:

- Open lot owned by Larry Altomare next to the old bank building. This lot would be perfect for parking for all the businesses in the downtown area. However, Larry does not like people parking here due to liabilities of people hurting themselves/damaging their cars while on his property. Potential ways to acquire/use this lot:
 - o Talk to Larry about donating the parcel of land or letting the village use it for open parking
 - o Talk to Larry about purchasing the lot and then opening it for the use by the public
 - o Provide insurance to Larry for the property against potential injuries and other liabilities for the use of the lot.
 - o If Larry is not willing to sell or is asking a more than fair price, possible application of eminent domain could be used to acquire the piece of land for a fair market price. Could be argued easily as needed for economic development.
- Old garage and building near G&F Enterprises owned by Bettie White. This structure is very old and decrepit. Can be torn down to make room for parking. Also owns other land in downtown.
 - o Ben will talk to Bettie White about different possibilities.
- Diagonal parking on Main Street. Not feasible since the road is too narrow.
- Parking meters to keep street parking open to customers. Not desirable since it will drive away customers from being too much of a hassle.
- Organize Eagle's parking lot in a more efficient parking system. Maximize potential parked cars.

Signs leading to businesses downtown

A lot of people, even people who live in town, do not know of the businesses in the downtown area. Outside residents have a hard time even finding the downtown business district. Signage is needed not only pointing to the downtown area but also showcasing the businesses in the area.

- Signs on Route 344 and Washingtonville pointing to the business district.
- Signs on Route 344 and Washingtonville showcasing the stores
 - o The village advertising for businesses may not be legal. Will have to talk with Chip
- Digital sign near Dairy Queen
 - o Very Costly but is very useful. Can put adverts for businesses as well as local events.
- Marie Miller talked about possibly donating signs to the town with the local businesses

Painting Curbs

It has been about three or four years since the curbs have been painted in town. It would make the downtown area look more presentable with just this small application. This could be a good project for the students.

Sidewalks

Some parts of the sidewalks need to be repaired or replaced. Hopefully we will be able to get grant money to do so.

Planters/Trees

It would liven up the downtown area to put some sort of plant life in the downtown area. This would help with the dreary feel.

Cleaning the sides of the buildings

The original idea was to power wash all of the buildings downtown. However, the buildings are old and may not be able to handle the power washing. We will have to look into other possibilities of cleaning the sides of the buildings.

Mural

A Mural on the sides of the buildings facing the train tracks will make that side of the downtown area more attractive.

- Can talk to the art teacher of Leetonia schools and see if they would be interested in designing and painting the buildings.
 - o Potential liability problems
- Will have to talk to the Eagles' president to see if it would be okay to paint their building

Yellow building

The yellow building has shingles that are falling off and other unattractive aspects. Will have to get the zoning officer to talk to them about fixing their roof and other problems.

- Vacant first floor that needs to be fixed/renovated

Windows and lighting inside the buildings

A lot of the buildings windows, lighting and other utilities are outdated since much of the buildings are historic. Ben is looking into all inclusive grants to fix all of the buildings downtown.

- Display windows can also be washed inside and out. This could be a project for the students to do as well.

Bear Paws Painted on the Sidewalk

In previous years, students painted blue bear paws on the sidewalks of the downtown area. However, the paws have faded away and it would be nice for them to repaint those if possible. Will talk to the art teacher on this issue as well.

Planting green space on CSX property

There is an open area near the Dairy Queen which would be good to turn into a community garden or green area. There is already a mound of topsoil there so it would be easy to start this project at little to no cost.

Funding opportunities for projects

- Some projects can be funded by the village but not all
- Address VFW, Legion and the Eagles about donations. They are required to donate a certain amount of money each year.
- Court fines and community service
- Grants and other state/county funding

What would you like to see in the downtown area?

- Coffee Shop
- Bakery
- Bank
- More food places
- Benches
- Greenery
- Farmers Market

Other things discussed

- The problem with parking at the Day Care and residents being angry with Small Wonders for blocking their alley. Will have to look into a solution to this problem
- Monday April 13th the streets and sidewalks will be cleaned.