

# December Monthly Report

## Economic Development Specialist - Brian Doyle

### 1. Business Retention/Attraction

#### **Business Retention:**

Dance N Art Studio: Continued to encourage Sadie and Jared to review ways to diversify their revenue stream as way to meet their operating expenses. Sadie agreed to consider teaching other types of dancing to small groups at Watts Hall. Will follow up with Sadie to encourage her to set dates and begin to market the program.

Station 118: Contacted by owners Scott Goldrick and Emily Moreau about their interest in pursuing a catering license as they continue to get requests to cater off-site events. Introduced them to the DHHS Field Staff Stacie Poulin who will work with them on their application. Offered to assist them with the application if needed.

Provided guidance to Scott and Emily on how to move forward with their entertainment license from the town. A completed packet of information has been assembled and the Select Board will address this request at their January 10<sup>th</sup> meeting. Many thanks Town Clerk Missy Stevens who offered great guidance with this process.

Provided Scott and Emily names of individuals to plow their parking lot.

Laura's Dolce Vitae Bakery: Emailed Laurel Christopher and learned she still expects to be living at her Main Street location in January of 2022. She remains hopeful that she will be able to open her bakery business, Laurel's Dolce Vitae, later in the Spring. I've requested that she and I meet via Zoom or in person to ensure all town and state licenses are in order. A meeting was tentatively arranged for a time when she would be in town later in December but that didn't occur. Sent a follow up note requesting a time for January.

Hall Funeral Home: Emailed Owner Mike Hall and asked if he had plans to rent an apartment at his Route 1 location. Informed him that due to the housing shortage in town, Thomaston is seeking to identify any apartments that are not being used to determine if the owner plans to rent them in the future. Mr. Hall indicated he could not at this time as the space needs some attention.

#### **Business Attraction:**

Flaura Designs: Reconnected with Owner Aura Ellis to make sure she is having success with all of her state and town permits and licenses. Was able to assist Ms. Ellis with a Maine Department of Agriculture license so her inspection can take place. I've requested a face-to-face meeting at her Rt. 1 location so I can introduce her to Thomaston's new CODE Enforcement Officer Mandy Everett.

#### Confidential Site Searches:

#### **Opportunity 1:**

I've not heard from one entrepreneur since sending him an email requesting information on the size

of the building he seeks to occupy. I'll reconnect with him in the New Year as I expect he is very busy at this time.

### **Opportunity 2:**

A second entrepreneur still has not made a decision yet on where he will locate his business. He's considering multiple towns and therefore I've suggested a follow up conversation in January in person or via Zoom to impress him that Thomaston is interested in finding the right space for him.

### **Opportunity 3:**

I had a lengthy phone conversation with an individual seeking to open a small downtown specialized retail space in Thomaston. The client seeks a small affordable space sized for her business and that space doesn't exist at this time unless she partners with another vendor. She is also looking at other communities throughout New England to open her business as the product she seeks to sell has a niche market. I've encouraged her to contact a ~~businesses~~ counselor who can assist her with developing her business plan and a firm budget. I expect her bricks and mortar location, wherever it lands, will need an online e-commerce option in order to make this a for profit business and not just a hobby. Have referred her to Community Concepts Finance Corp as she is looking at locations that Community Concepts Finance Corp covers in other parts of the state.

Confidential Purchase: E-mailed clients and have learned they are now the owners of 153 Main Street, the former Hoekstra Bookstore. I've asked to schedule a time to speak with them in the new year to get an understanding of what their plans are for the first-floor retail and second floor spaces.

## **2. Watts Block**

Marquee: Lyman-Morse COO Matt Graham has requested that we provide him with a design idea for a Watts Hall marquee. Depending upon the complexity of the project, Lyman-Morse may be able to help us out. Mr. Graham indicated they are VERY busy at this time, but he expressed an interest in seeing a drawing from the Watts Hall Trustees.

Strategic Planning: Continue to meet with Charlie Grover, and we are reviewing fundraising and programming ideas to be considered by the Watts Hall Community Arts organization.

1772 Foundation Grant: Contacted by Select Board Chair Diane Giese who is interested in participating in a training session for entities seeking funds to improve historical buildings. The 1772 Foundation will not grant funds to a non-profit that is not trained using their condition assessment protocol. Ms. Giese suggested Thomaston follow through with this training so we can pursue funds for both the Library and Watts Hall.

T-Mobil Grant- Submitted a T-Mobil grant for improvements to Watts Hall. Worked with Bill Hahn on this project as he secured the project estimate from the contractor.

## **3. Enhance the Downtown Thomaston Experience**

### Tree Lighting Ceremony:

Coordinated a Holiday Tree Lighting event on Saturday December 4<sup>th</sup> at the Thomaston Mall. Multiple hands made this event successful. Public Works cut down the tree and relocated it on The Mall along with several other smaller trees. Sheilagh Guyer and Ann Robinson coordinated the decorating of the trees. Thomaston Baptist Church Minister Wayne Sawyer agreed to lead us in voice at our concert. The following businesses contributed to the success of the event: Flipside Café baked cookies, Thomaston Grocery Store provided the hot coco mix, Thomaston Café provided the hot water and mixed the hot coco in Igloo containers supplied by the Thomaston Recreation Department and Laurie Gold of RisingTide Boxing assisted with distributing coco and cookies at the event. Oceanside Middle School provided a link to a booklet of children's Christmas carols that we used along with some songs provided by Reverend Sawyer. An estimated 75 participants attended the concert. Photographer Jessica LeCaptain took photos for families and individuals in an area she had decorated.

### **Thomaston Main Street: (TMS)**

Merchants are very busy in December so during our November meeting, attendees suggested we gather in January and celebrate our successes in 2021. Based upon the increase in Covid cases, we may be meeting via Zoom again and will probably push the social to March or later. A priority in 2022 will be to recruit non merchants to this committee that have more time to contribute.

Thomaston Main Street Non-Profit registration with State of Maine: Completed the registration process for Thomaston Main Street to be recognized as a non-profit entity. Made a couple of calls to the Maine Secretary of State's Office for guidance and then drove the materials to Augusta and turned in the paperwork.

Thomaston Main Street 501(c)(3) registration with the Internal Revenue Service: Consulted with multiple tax professionals on suggested steps to complete this process. Was encouraged to use form 1023-EZ form as Thomaston Main Street meets the criteria to use this shorter simpler form. Accumulated all of the paperwork and sent it to the IRS prior to the end of 2021. Several hours were involved this process.

Community discussion on Art in Thomaston: Will work with artist Nancy Baker to identify a date in 2022 to facilitate a discussion with local artists and supporters of the arts to review ways to bring more art to Thomaston. We had hoped to meet in January but COVID may require a Zoom meeting initially. We will recognize the mural created by Nancy Baker later in the Spring at the request of the artist.

TMS Mascot: We need to reconnect to the mascot project and identify tasks that need to be performed. We hope to kick off a naming contest in January and will move forward with other tasks to attract more attention to the downtown.

Social Media Training: Will be developing a survey on social media training options and send it to the merchants for their consideration. Locally based business Dream Local Digital has agreed to assist us with this training process.

Parking Recommendations: Created a sample parking map for the entire downtown based upon ideas that were agreed upon at multiple landlord meetings. The Select Board was not able to vote on

all recommendations made. They agreed to revisit the parking discussion at their January meeting. Will prepare an updated map of suggested changes for this meeting. Created a letter introducing the parking changes and a map outlining preliminary changes and distributed it to all Block Residents' apartments and Main Street merchants. Once we have an approved parking policy, the landlords have agreed to forward the information to their residents and tenants. The town will order signs and post the changes on social media to educate the users of the parking lots in the downtown.

Knox Museum: At the request of Saco Main Street member and Knox Museum Board member Nicki Janczura, I forwarded an invitation to the Knox Museum's Christmas Open House to all Thomaston Main Street members.

159 Main Street: Sent inquires to Main Street colleagues about what type of businesses they believe would do well in first and second floor retail/commercial spaces. Offered to identify which local realtor is best suited to provide landlord Ms. Morey with the best vision for the second-floor space.

Oceanside Middle School (OMS): Collected the Veterans posters from the downtown merchants and returned them to the Oceanside Middle School teachers. Received timely assistance from Ocean Side Middle School teachers to locate Christmas songs for the Tree Lighting ceremony.

Blueberry Moose: Spoke with owner JoAnn Hoppe and learned the street light adjacent to her business is out. Contacted John Fancy and requested the light be replaced.

**Business Visits:** Stopped by the following locations and met with owners to listen to their feedback and needs and to discuss plans/ideas for the downtown.

Ross Levett Antiques	Dance N' Art Studio	Thomaston Grocery	Edward Jones
Coastal Mountain Chiro	Coastal Cards	Thomaston café	Camden Natl. Bank
Blueberry Moose	Station 118	Athen's Pizza	Flipside Coffee
Chambers Jewelers	Downeast Maritime	Endeavor Craftsman	

#### **4. Market Economic Development Specialist role and CCFC resources- Identify CCFC Technical Assistance resources that are available to them**

Midcoast School of Technology: Sent a note to Bobby Deetjen, Director of the Midcoast School of Technology, offering my support to schedule a lunch and learn series for Thomaston-based businesses. Want to assist engaging local high school and adult aged students seeking a career in the trades.

Lyman Morse: Based upon conversation I had with COO Matt Graham about LM's project with developer Navier Boat to launch an all-electric boat, I've begun searching for ways to address the following needs: identify funds to purchase new manufacturing equipment, examining ways to recruit new employees, look for additional ways to create new manufacturing space at their Thomaston campus. Contacted the Maine Technology Institute and learned the Prime Fund, which will support the purchase of equipment, will be opened in the first quarter of 2022. E-mailed Charlotte Mace, Director of Business Development for the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development, and Chris Rector from Senator Collins office to determine if they had other funding

recommendations. Will work with Mackenzie Lyman to determine how we can use the press release on the Navier Boat project to recruit workforce from regional universities and vocational schools. Contacted Dave Nickerson, President of Rubb Buildings of Sanford, and offered to introduce them to Matt Graham. Lyman-Morse may need a building that can be installed quickly on their Thomaston campus and Rubb has some used, clear span, relocatable buildings for sale that can be installed easily.

Thomaston Dredging project: Will coordinate a meeting with the Harbor Committee and Kara George to identify the next steps needed from all participants of the dredging project.

Jeff's Marine: Spoke with General Manager Thomas Turansky regarding his idea to locate a boat manufacturer who can build a small skiff similar to the Carolina Skiff that is no longer made. Jeff's Marine would like to sell a locally made boat to address this need. Agreed to contact Executive Director of the Maine Composites Alliance, Steve Von Vogt, and identify the proper contact at Creative Composites Group (CCG) in Augusta. Creative Composites Group is a local manufacturer that has the equipment and workforce necessary to make this happen. Once I have the contact person, I'll schedule a call to gauge their interest in this project.

## **5. Provide the town with information on best practices involving use of social media and website.**

Social Media Training: I'm developing a survey to send to downtown merchants to assess their interest and needs for social media training. Will send this survey in January after the holidays have ended. Shannon Kinney, President of Dream Local Digital, is very interested in partnering with us and assisting local businesses whenever possible.

## **6. TIF Program:**

## **7. Meeting Attendance**

Bi-weekly Zoom call with Community Concepts Finance Corp Staff and Loan Committee  
Weekly call with Community Concepts Finance Corp Supervisor Mia Purcell  
Biweekly meeting with Kara George  
Bi-Weekly meeting with Nate Libby and Mia Purcell  
Bi-weekly Thomaston Select Board  
Monthly Thomaston Economic Development Committee  
Monthly Watts Block Trustees  
Monthly Saco Main Street Board of Trustees  
Thomaston Safety Meeting

## **8. Represent Thomaston at events in the region:**

Mid-Coast Economic Development District Board of Directors  
Monthly Knox County Workforce Development Coalition  
Monthly MCOG (formerly MCEDD) meeting

## 9. Connectivity:

Midcoast Internet Development Corporation: (Formerly the Midcoast Internet Coalition): The Midcoast Development Corporation held their first meeting in December. Officers were elected, Core 4 communities were approved to join MIDC, updates were given on fundraising and marketing efforts and the status of the feasibility study from Axiom. MIDC leadership continues to search for planning grants and seed funds to fund the initial leg of the community owned, open access, fiber to the home, broadband network.

## 10. ARPA Funds:

EDA Working Waterfront Grant: Met with Harbor Committee members Thomas Turansky and Bob Armstrong and Mason Sears of SF Marina USA to learn more about wave attenuation systems. Mr. Sears discussed the impact of providing this type of system in the harbor to reduce the impact of waves on local boaters using the public dock. A proposed location was identified for the system to be placed. Agreed to contact the clambers and other users of the public dock to see if they will write letters of support for the system to be installed. Working with Midcoast Council of Governments' Max Johnston to identify how to present this application successfully in a competitive grant round. Mr. Johnstone has stressed the grant must fund improvements to be used or impacted primarily by the public and not a private business. He also stressed a strong letter campaign in support of the grant is essential as well as data that can identify and prove the impact of the proposed funded changes. Have contacted Maine's EDA Administer Alan Brigham to get feedback on the grant application that includes the wave attenuation system as MCOG's Mr. Johnstone is on vacation over the holidays.

## 11. Housing

Brooks Trap Mill: Sent the list of properties that are currently unoccupied, or bank owned to Brooks Trapp Mill owners for their consideration.

Lyman-Morse: Was informed by COO Matt Graham that Lyman-Morse will not be following up on the housing options we had provided them to address their workforce housing needs. They will address their current needs using a property they already own.

Maine Working Homes LLC: Contacted by Merritt Carey and Andrew Curtis of Maine Working Homes LLC, a recently formed company interested in developing affordable housing for people in the Midcoast. The following individuals from Thomaston met with them to learn more about their company and how they might work with Thomaston: Zel Bowman-Labarge, Diane Giese, John Fancy, Kara George and myself. I sent a follow up email to Ms. Carey and Mr. Curtis on a couple of properties that are in Thomaston that may be of interest for them to develop. Maine Working Homes is interested in what support the town has to offer developers of workforce/affordable housing. Future discussion will need to occur on the incentives Thomaston can offer to support this important need. I'm currently researching state and federal incentives that are available as well.

Avesta: Asked by Comprehensive Plan Committee member Daryl Hahn to learn more about extending affordable housing units' "affordability" once their initial restriction period is about to lapse. E-mailed Avesta Staffer Rebecca Hatfield and she referred me to John Eagan of the Genesis Fund.

Mr. Eagan indicated there is a process that allows landlords of affordable housing units to keep them “affordable”. Genesis has the technical expertise and resources to advise current or future owners of affordable housing units on this important matter. Will stay connected to Mr. Eagan for more information on this process as two affordable housing units in Thomaston are close to winding down their restriction period.

Thomaston Place Auction Galleries: Contacted Kaja Veilleux asking him if he is interested in selling his Rt 1 property that has unfinished space to a local business or developer who would develop it for workforce housing. No reply was received, and a second email will be sent in January.

Networking: Continue to make progress making contacts at Maine State Housing, Governor Mills office, AVESTA, USDA and the Genesis Loan Fund. Networking with agencies to gather information on incentives, developers and best practices used in successful housing projects.