

January Monthly Report

Economic Development Specialist - Brian Doyle

1. Business Retention/Attraction

Business Retention:

Dance N Art Studio: Referred a home school group looking to rent a space one day a week to the Dance N Art Studio and Watts Hall Community Arts.

Station 118: Met with Owners Emily Moreau and Scott Goldrick to review programs available to restaurants in the COVID economy. Some additional state funds will be made available later in 2022. Will keep them apprised of the application process so they can prepare in advance.

Laura's Dolce Vitae Bakery: Emailed a follow up message to Laurel Christopher requesting a conversation with Code Enforcement Officer Mandy Everett to ensure she is set with her state and town licenses to open her bakery as well as address any issues that need discussion.

Coastal Cards: Spoke with owner Ray Girtman about ideas to increase displaying the varied products he and his son sell at their location. I've contacted some Main Street Directors in the state to discuss creative ways to affordably increase display capacity.

Grace Pond Farm: Met with owner Gregg Hampson at his business and learned about his family-run, certified organic dairy and livestock farm. Was impressed by the broad selection of products available. Encouraged Gregg and his wife Rhiannon to consider pursuing strategic planning assistance available through the Maine Department of Agriculture as they look to make investments of time and funding. The organic market is specialized and the Hampsons will need guidance from an individual(s) who is knowledgeable about all matters organic. I indicated Thomaston is interested in hosting a Farmer's Market at Watts Hall and Gregg expressed an interest in participating should one be set up.

Business Attraction:

Flaura Designs: E-mailed Aura Ellis multiple times and determined there is a delay with her liquor license inspection. The issue has been addressed and an inspection date will be occurring later in February. Ms. Ellis is planning on a March opening. I contacted the Maine Department of Agriculture and asked if this inspection can be expedited and was informed that this was not an option. Will suggest a meeting with Code Enforcement Officer Mandy Everett to ensure Ms. Ellis is all set.

Cornhole Connection: Referred to local start-up business Cornhole Connection LLC by 159 Main Street landlord Amy Morey. E-mailed prospective tenants and later spoke to them about their plans to open their business together. Arranged a Zoom meeting with Cornhole Connections LLC with Community Concepts Finance Corps Business Advisor Sharon Gilsleider to assist them with creating a business plan and budget. Reconnected to Ms. Morey and let her know her prospective tenants are taking steps to understand the challenges and identify the opportunities to improve their chance of success. Will support the tenants' municipal license needs and will schedule a meeting with Code Enforcement Officer Mandy Everett to ensure they are in compliance.

1. Business Retention/Attraction (continued)

Confidential Site Searches:

Opportunity 1:

I've sent a follow up email to one entrepreneur inquiring about his interest in locating a business in Thomaston. I'll plan to stop by his business and attempt to speak with him during this quieter time of the year.

Opportunity 2:

A second entrepreneur still has not made a decision yet but replied to my e-mail sent in early January. He continues to consider multiple towns and therefore I've suggested a follow up conversation via Zoom or in person to impress him that Thomaston is interested in finding the right space for him.

2. Watts Block

Marquee: Will reconnect with Watts Hall Trustees to discuss 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 am reviewing fundraising and programming ideas to be considered by the Watts Hall Community Arts organization.

T-Mobile Grant: Learned Thomaston was not selected to receive a grant from T-Mobile. Encouraged to reapply in the next quarter and to examine their website for any suggestions

3. Enhance the Downtown Thomaston Experience

153 Main Street: Toured the 153 Main Street location with new owner Mauve O'Regan and Code Enforcement officer Mandy Everett. Ms. O'Regan outlined her plans to keep the first floor for retail or service use. The second and third floor space will each have one apartment. Ms. Everett outlined the steps involved with seeking changes to the physical plant of the building. Ms. O'Regan will operate her business from the first-floor location while she and her co-owner husband Jeff Boulet look for a potential tenant. I continue to research for businesses that might be a good fit for them.

Thomaston Main Street (TMS): Sent an email message to Thomaston Main Street members thanking them for their efforts in 2021 and suggesting we meet soon to celebrate our successes on some Saturday and Schedule a Zoom meeting to identify steps we wish to take in 2022. Have sent a Doodle Poll for a meeting in February and hope to meet then. A priority in 2022 will be to recruit non-merchants to this committee that will have more time to contribute.

Community discussion on Art in Thomaston: I continue to create a list of names of local individuals who have an interest in the arts. 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 expect to set a date in February/March and COVID may require a Zoom meeting initially. Will recognize the mural created by Nancy Baker later in the Spring.

3.Enhance the Downtown Thomaston experience (continued):

Downtown Parking Policy: Created an updated packet of the approved parking changes in the downtown. Distributed this information to landlords and merchants via email and hand delivered them to the tenants. Requested the landlords send this information to the tenants as well electronically. I've received feedback about the changes and have responded to the comments offered. Will pass this information along to the Select Board for their consideration.

Knox Museum: At the request of Saco Main Street member and Knox Museum Board member Nicki Janczura, I met with Knox Museum's Interim Director Lee Heffner to discuss prospective changes to the Thomaston Main Street FB page. Nicki will be assisting with incorporating changes to our FB page in order to make it more engaging. Ms. Heffner also seeks to join Thomaston Main Street and we welcome her participation.

Blueberry Moose: Spoke with owner JoAnn Hoppe who raised safety concerns in the downtown and provided feedback about the newly created parking guidelines.

Coastal Mountain Chiropractic: Met with owner Matt Thomas who requested that two cars be able to park in the single spaces behind Watts Block. Sent an email to Police Chief Tim Hoppe and Public Works Director Brandon Allen about this creative idea to solicit their feedback

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.

Dance N' Art Studio	Thomaston Grocery	Coastal Mountain Chiro	Coastal Cards
Thomaston café	Camden National Bank	Blueberry Moose	Station 118
Athen's Pizza	Flipside Coffee	Spindrift Massage	

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

Commercial Real Estate Owner: Contacted by Scott Shapiro who introduced himself to me and expressed an interest in meeting with me to discuss ways Thomaston can support commercial development. Mr. Shapiro is currently traveling and will reconnect with me when he returns.

Midcoast School of Technology: Sent a follow up 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: Had a follow up conversation with COO Matt Graham about LM's current and future needs as they pursue and attract contracts. Discussed the Maine Technology Institute's Prime Fund as an option to fund improvements in the manufacturing capacity. Provided Mr. Graham more information about the Prime Fund's eligibility criteria to see if the company ownership is interested in pursuing these funds. Will arrange a call with MTI should pursuing this fund be of interest.

The University of Maine Career Center is highlighting Lyman-Morse's partnership with a west coast entity to build the Navia 27, an all-electric hydrofoil boat, in their campus wide newsletter. Students staff and faculty will be able to learn more about Lyman-Morse which will hopefully assist them with

4. Market Economic Development Specialist role and CCFC resources- Identify CCFC Technical Assistance resources that are available to them (continued)

Lyman-Morse (cont.) workforce recruitment. Have begun brainstorming a list of colleges, universities and professional associations for Mackenzie Lyman to include with their social media marketing efforts.

Asked Matt Graham if Lyman-Morse would like to be nominated for a Small Business Administration (SBA) award. At this time, Lyman-Morse is not eligible to receive an award as they do not access any SBA funds or services. I will discuss if SBA resources are attractive with Lyman-Morse's new CFO Garrett Adams, as I'm confident they would be a strong contender for one of the annual State SBA awards.

Multi business visit: Coordinating a day in March to visit three Thomaston-based businesses: Brooks Trapp Mill, Lyman-Morse Boatbuilding and Dragon Cement. Initially sought to schedule this in January but due to Covid we need to bump it to March. Will invite Charlotte Mace, Director of Business Development at Maine's Department of Economic and Community Development, Chris Rector, Senator King's Office, Sarah Lawrence, Congresswoman Pingree's Office, Ellie Espling, Senator Collins' Office, and Kara George, Thomaston Town Manager.

Jeff's Marine: I've not received a proper contact at Creative Composites Group based in Augusta in order to arrange a call to discuss building a small skiff for Jeff's Marine. Will contact Executive Director of the Maine Composites Alliance Steve Von Vogt and identify the proper contact.

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

Social Media Training: Learned in January that a social media training session had been offered to downtown merchants in the recent past. Will send a survey out to the merchants prior to our February meeting assessing their professional development interests from a broader perspective.

6. TIF Program.

Learned that our TIF amendment documents had not been received by the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD). Contacted John Pottle, the attorney who is working on the TIF amendments, and inquired when the completed document would be sent to Maine DECD. Mr. Pottle submitted the document and received feedback that additional information would be needed to complete the requested amendments.

7. Meeting Attendance

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

8. Represent town at various events in the region

Monthly Midcoast Council of Governments (MCOG) meeting (Formerly Mid-Coast Economic Development District meeting)
Monthly Knox County Workforce Development Coalition
MCOG By-Laws Ad Hoc Committee.

9. Connectivity

Midcoast Internet Development Corporation (Formerly the Midcoast Internet Coalition): Participated in a Zoom call with the Midcoast Internet Development Corporation and town managers from Thomaston, Rockland, Rockport and Camden. The call informed the managers of potential changes to MIDC's development plans based upon Consolidated Communications' intentions to enhance their service in the region. MIDC leadership remains focused on raising funds to keep their plans moving forward. A Select Board workshop is scheduled in February to allow for greater discussion of this topic.

10. ARPA Funds

EDA Working Waterfront Grant: Had follow up conversations with Lyman-Morse and the Harbor Committee. Explained we would not have a strong application for an EDA grant to support our working waterfront. We will be contacting the Maine Department of Maine Resources to discuss applying for a Shoreland Planning Grant to assist with gathering information to make our future EDA application more competitive.

Use of ARPA funds to help Businesses: Contacted the communities of Brewer, Sanford and Biddeford to inquire how they have used their ARPA funds to support businesses. Brewer indicated they purchased PPE supplies (masks and other items) to help businesses with short-term needs. Sanford didn't have any program and I've not heard back from Biddeford. I'll continue to pursue ideas for Thomaston to consider using.

11. Housing

List of Developers: Contacted Greg Payne, the Senior Advisor on Housing Policy for the Governor's Office, to determine if there is a list of housing developers with an interest in working in specific parts of the state. Mr. Payne indicated the list doesn't exist at this time but the idea has been considered as a way to expedite relationships being established. He will keep me posted should a list be created. I asked John Egan, Senior Business Development Officer of the Genesis Fund, for the same list. I've contacted others I know who are in real estate and municipal government to determine if there are any other referrals I can secure.

Extending lifespan of affordable housing: Requested a meeting with John Eagan of the Genesis Fund to learn more about the process of assisting owners with extending the lifespan of affordable housing units. I hope to lock in a time in February.

11. Housing (continued)

Brooks Trap Mill: Learned that Brooks Trapp Mill is not following up on any of the housing leads I provided them. Brooks Trapp Mill will be meeting with a variety of state and federal leaders later in March and workforce housing needs will be discussed.

Maine Working Homes LLC: A follow up meeting with by Merritt Carey and Andrew Curtis of Maine Working Homes LLC is scheduled for Tuesday, February 8th to review properties and houses that might of interest for them to develop. Other individuals invited to this meeting are: Zel Bowman-Labarge, Diane Giese, John Fancy and Kara George.

Thomaston Pace Auction Galleries: Contacted owner Kaja Veilleux and learned he is open to selling his Rt 1 property to be developed for housing. Some apartments are already occupied, and other space is still unfinished. Arranging a time to tour the site so I can gather better information about it.

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.