

May 2022 Monthly Report
Economic Development Specialist - Brian Doyle

1. Business Retention/Attraction

Business Retention:

Doug's Seafood: Encouraged owner Doug Anderson to reconsider his decision to not install a directional sign on RT 90 to educate drivers unfamiliar with the region about his restaurant. His decision didn't change. Approached Mr. Anderson with a marketing idea being pursued by multiple downtown businesses using the Free Press. He declined the offer as he is investing his funds in other directions.

Station 118: Spoke with owners Scott and Emily and indicated they would be contacted by Lindsay Pinkham regarding which date they would offer food at the Music Behind The Block concert series this summer.

Governor's Listening Meeting: Attended a meeting at Station 118 with Town Manager Kara George that was hosted by Governor Mills. The meeting is part of a statewide listening series that allows the Governor and some of her Commissioners to hear comments from municipal, business and non-profit leadership on the challenges being experienced locally. Great ideas for change were offered for the Mills administration to consider.

Thomaston Auction Galleries: Reconnected for the third time with owner Kaja Veilleux as he returned from a trip and encouraged him to register with the Maine Small Business Development Center (Maine SBDC) in order to receive support from Maine SBDC Business Advisor Anne Lancaster. Ms. Lancaster has extensive experience providing strategic planning assistance to senior management and business owners. I suggested Kaja ask one of his support staff to complete the online registration process as he is too busy. Ms. Lancaster is eager to meet with Kaja and I hope he follows through with this initial step to allow the process to begin!

Cornhole Connection: Stopped by the Main Street store and spoke with co-owner Penny Dostie. Learned she is making some progress with marketing their products to local businesses. Indicated the Music Behind the Block series is looking forward to Cornhole Connection providing multiple sets of cornhole boards for attendees of the concerts this summer to enjoy. Encouraged Ms. Dostie to begin sponsoring local events/tournaments that raise their business' profile.

2. Business Attraction:

Confidential Site Searches:

No progress has been made with two separate businesses on potential projects for Thomaston. Repeated emails have gone unanswered.

2. Business Attraction (continued)

Contacted by a business seeking to expand into a downtown space. No options were identified that would address the need expressed.

2. Watts Block

Followed up with Congressional Staff to discuss updates about Congressional Direct Spending and Community Project Funding applications. Senator King has supported Thomaston's Watts Hall application to make improvements to the HVAC and air filtration systems. Senator Collins has yet to make her decision on this project. Congresswoman Pingree was able to select just 10 projects to support and our Watts Hall grant was not chosen. Multiple votes for these funds to be approved still remain. Will encourage Thomaston officials to reconnect with the delegation staff via Zoom to advocate for the Watts Hall application.

3. Enhance the Downtown Thomaston Experience

Thomaston Main Street (TMS): Facilitated a meeting in May that prioritized programming decisions for the rest of the year. Attendance was much better than the previous meeting so discussion was engaging.

Teacher Appreciation Week: Thomaston Main Street merchants were asked to support this event by school administrators a few days before it began. Seven merchants agreed to support this event and unfortunately participating at the locations was modest. Merchants received feedback received from some of the participants that better promotion is essential to greater participation. All agreed that Thomaston Main Street identifies specific "Appreciation Weeks" each year in advance to allow for better promotion.

FaceBook Marketing: Working with TMS member John Usher to register Jo Ann Hoppe as an additional merchant with Admin access to our FB page. Jo Ann, Necole Janczura, Kendray Rodriguez and Missy Poulin have offered invest time to plan and create ideas for raising the profile of Main Street businesses and events in the downtown via FaceBook. Will encourage some training of other merchants on specifics steps to take that will support the plans created.

Music Behind The Block: Received donations totaling \$2,850 from Lyman-Morse, Epifanes NA, First National Bank, Doug's Seafood and Camden National Bank. Lindsey Pinkham and Kendray Rodriguez have selected bands that offer a broad array of music for our audiences to enjoy. Lindsey and Kendray are approaching Station 118 and local service organizations to secure food being served at the concerts We have been unable to book any food trucks for the second year in a row. Committee members will contact food trucks in November to lock in dates for next summer. Beaver Stinson has once again agreed to provide the stage for the series this year!

3. Enhance the Downtown Thomaston Experience: (continued)

Marketing Idea with The Free Press: RisingTide Boxing owner Laurie Gold was able to negotiate a ½ page print ad price for Thomaston Merchants to consider marketing their business with the Free Press. I had ongoing discussions with Free Press ad manager Steve Davis and he suggested two ads instead of one. Contacted all Main Street Merchants and a group of 9 will be participating in the ad special. Will communicate the details of how to pay for the ad and the deadlines involved to the merchants so they can communicate directly with Free Press staff in a timely manner.

Community discussion on Art in Thomaston: A second meeting occurred in June that was attended by just two individuals. The Zoom call was hosted by Select Board member Zel Bowman-Laberge. Information was provided by Brian Doyle about grant resources offered by the Stephen and Tabitha King Foundation and the Maine Humanities Council. Zel Bowman-Laberge reported on a recent Select Board discussion regarding possible municipal funding for public and community art projects. The Select Board is open to hearing proposal for projects that may be able to be funded from the Community + Economic Development Funds. Further discussion about possible projects in Thomaston to consider include:

- Artist talks at Watts Hall with a solo show in the Watts Hall Gallery
- Open call for artist or graphic designers to design a new Thomaston Village Sign (2x)
- Art Gallery Fair at the Thomaston Green (galleries rent booths to show work, etc.)
- Encourage galleries to move to Thomaston.
- Art walks
- Allow artist to use remaining space in Lura Libby for artist studios
- Satellite shows for the Blues Festival & Lobster Festival held in Thomaston
- Public art (sculpture, etc.) commissioned for public spaces
- Gathering of Local Artist to generate ideas to develop more art projects in Thomaston
- Floating galleries visiting the Town Landing; engaging art projects on the St. George river

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday July 27, at 6:30pm. Here is the Zoom link to join the meeting: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83013014980>

Business Visits: Stopped by the following locations and met with owners/staff 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
Camden National Bank	Blueberry Moose	Station 118	Downeast Maritime
Athen's Pizza	Flipside Coffee	150 Main Salon	Family Dentistry
Cornhole Connection	Flaura Flowers & Wine	Ross Levitt Antiques	

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

Thomaston Harbor Dredging: Informed by Senator Susan Collins' staff that the Army Corp of Engineers requested an increase in the earmark to the 2023 budget for the dredging project in Thomaston Harbor. The new amount is \$500,000. Senator Collins has voted in support of this project. Suggesting Thomaston officials appoint an individual to remain focused on this project as I will no longer be employed in Thomaston after June 14th and have accepted a position in another community. I'm recommending a Zoom call be scheduled to allow businesses impacted by the dredging to speak to the Congressional delegation staff who visited Thomaston in May. These individuals were briefed about the project during a recent tour of Lyman-Morse and are aware of the impact and importance of a timely dredging of Thomaston Harbor. I inquired if additional letters of support can be sent to Senator Collins office and was informed this is still possible. Will provide Thomaston with a list of businesses I've used in the past for this type of supportive letter.

Surveying Thomaston Harbor this Summer: I've contacted Army Corp and requested a Zoom meeting this summer to review the project timeline. I've explained that I'm leaving Thomaston for a new position in another community and that a Zoom call with Thomaston officials and businesses associated with Thomaston Harbor would be welcomed.

Annual 4th of July Celebration: Contacted by Photographer Jessica Lecaptain who has expressed an interest in supporting the 4th of July celebration. Introduced Jessica to Brooks Stevens, Chair of the event who is eager to listen to her ideas. Flipside Café contacted me to see if they needed permission to staff a table in front of their location to sell their drinks, sandwiches and desserts. Informed them they can sell their products in front of their store without a permit from the town.

American Legion William Brazier Post: Sent an additional email to Jeremey Miller about the status of their search for an affordable internet service provider, as well as connecting to Thomaston's EMS, Fire and Police staff. Called the Post and learned their phone has been disconnected. I'll stop by the Post in person to determine their interest in these topics.

Shoreland Planning Grant: Informed by Department of Marine Resources staff that Thomaston was awarded an initial award of \$7,000 for the Kiln Parcel paddle craft only boat ramp. Will be forwarding the information about the grant to Sandy Moore who will serve as the point of contact for the grant. Engineering firm Gartley and Dorsky is aware the award has been received and understands funds will not be distributed for services performed before a date to be determined in August. Ms. Moore will be connecting to Department of Marine Resources Staff, Gartley and Dorsky and other entities that are connected to the grant to ensure a smooth execution of the grant guidelines are met.

Lyman-Morse: Spoke with Matt Graham about Lyman-Morse's desire to be creative around attracting workforce to support their current and future needs. Encouraged Mr. Graham to work with Ben Sturtevant of the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development to identify a proper contact at the Maine Department of Labor who can offer support on this need. Also encouraged Matt

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

and Drew Lyman to meet with Charlie Collins of the Maine Community College System who can educate them about training programs his organization supports.

Multi business visit: Facilitated a day of Thomaston experience at Dragon Cement, Brooks Trap Mill, and Lyman-Morse on Tuesday, May 24. Attendees included federal delegation staff from Senator Collins', King's and Representative Pingree's staffs. Also participating were officials from the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development as well as Thomaston's Select Board and Economic Development Committee. Tours of each facility were provided followed up with some time for discussion of challenges and potential programs to support positive change. Follow up correspondence will be provided to each business that offer ideas for them to pursue. I received positive comments from all participants indicating they enjoyed the process and are cautiously hopeful for resolutions to their challenges.

Jeff's Marine: Facilitated a second call with General Manager Thomas Turansky and Alex Thibodeau of Creative Composite Group of Augusta and continued the discussion about pursuing a plan to manufacture a small skiff for Jeff's Marine to sell. Mr. Thibodeau has been unable to locate the molds required to make the boats and will continue his search. There is some funding available to partially support a project like this with some forgivable loans and loans. I've asked Alex to gage his ownership group's interest in this project as it is highly unlikely it would be funded exclusively by grants. Will follow up with Alex in June for an update.

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

6. TIF Program.

The town has received a final approval of their TIF amendments from the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development. Thomaston officials are pleased as there is clarity about how their TIF funds can be used.

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
Monthly Thomaston Main Street meeting

8. Represent town at various events in the region

Monthly Midcoast Council of Governments (MCOG)
Monthly Knox County Workforce Development Coalition

9. Connectivity

Consolidated Communications: Participated in a Zoom call with Kara George Town Manager, Sarah Davis, Director of Legislative and Regulatory Affairs, and Simon Thorn Senior Manager of Government Affairs to learn about Consolidated's plans for Thomaston. Ms. Davis was clear that most of Thomaston was not a priority for their immediate plans. A small portion of town will receive improved access to fiber to the premise broadband service as there is a Consolidated central office located in town they must connect to as part of their regional upgrades plan. Discussion focused on ways to attract ARPA funds to expedite their timeline. Consolidated indicated their Engineers are backlogged with project work and expects to have difficulty in acquiring an estimate of the cost required to bring fiber to the premise broadband service in time to apply for funds offered in October by the Maine Connectivity Authority (CMA) or ConnectMaine Authority (CMA). Brian indicated he would ask ConnectMaine Authority and/or Community Concepts colleague Mia Purcell for information about successful joint efforts involving towns, an internet Service Provider (ISP) and funds secured through MCA or CMA. A follow up meeting will be arranged to continue the discussion with Consolidated Communications. Thomaston has an interest in meeting with other Internet Service Providers to gauge their interest as well.

Midcoast Internet Development Corporation: A recent update was sent from Greg Hamlin, Thomaston's representative on the Midcoast Internet Development Corporation board to Thomaston officials regarding MIDC's plans to continue pursuing funds to create a municipally owned broadband utility district with additional participating towns in the Midcoast. MIDC leadership has been in conversations with Maine based Internet Service Provider GWI and is eager for Thomaston and other communities to commit to this proposed plan. MIDC leadership is requesting a verbal commitment from interested communities to be expressed by June 30. Conversations about the proposal are expected to be conducted at the next Select Board meeting in June.