

November Monthly Report  
Economic Development Specialist - Brian Doyle

**1. Business Retention/Attraction**

**Business Retention:**

Dance N Art Studio:

Met with Sadie and Jared at their studio to review their plans to attract long term clients. Their after-school program has attracted some interest. I spoke with Steffany Tribou from SAD 13 Superintendent's Office and she agreed to share the flyer with other schools in the region. Sent a message to Sadie encouraging her to consider offering other dance classes to non-school aged individuals. Spoke with Charlie Grover who is overseeing the scheduling of Watts Hall and he agreed this type of use would be welcomed at Watts Hall. Shared this with Sadie and Jared for their consideration.

Station 118:

Visited with owners Scott Goldrick and Emily at their restaurant and observed the steps they are taking to button up the outdoor dining space. They continue to research the costs of hooking up the in floor radiant heat system. Reminded them that CCFC would be interested in supporting their winterizing costs should they need assistance.

Bakery:

Reconnected with Laurel Christopher and learned she expects to be living at her Main Street location in January of 2022. She hopes to open her bakery business, Laurel's Dolce Vitae, later in the Spring. She will keep me posted as the business will come on-line later in 2022.

Hall Funeral Home Crematorium:

Attended a ribbon cutting at Hall Funeral Home's new crematorium. Spoke with President Mike Hall and expressed appreciation for their investment. Took a tour of the facility and participated in a photo of individuals who attended. Shared the photo with Town Manager Kara George who posted it in the December newsletter.

**Business Attraction:**

Flaura Designs:

Owner Aura Ellis informed me that she's intending to open in January in time to be ready for Valentine's Day. She indicated she intends to decorate her Main Street window to inform passersby about her business and planned opening timeline. I'll continue to stay connected to this project to make sure her state licenses are in order prior to opening.

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.

## 1. Business Retention/Attraction (continued)

### **Opportunity 2:**

A second entrepreneur has replied to me and let me know he 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 person or via Zoom to impress him that Thomaston is interested in finding the right space for him.

### **Opportunity 3:**

Continue to email the individual seeking to open a small downtown retail space in Thomaston. We've not been able to meet in person and I've suggested a Zoom call to move the conversation along. 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. I hope to meet with her in December in order to move the conversation along.

### Confidential Purchase:

E-mailed clients who have an accepted offer on a downtown building. The closing date continues to be pushed back and a December closing is now expected.

## **2. Watts Block**

Marquee: Sent a follow up note to Lyman-Morse COO Matt Graham seeking their interest in designing and building a marquee for Watts Hall.

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

1772 Foundation Grant: Completed a grant from the 1772 Foundation to support improvements at the Watts Block. Got feedback from multiple sources on minor edits. Included budget information that was supplied by Bill Hahn. Attempted to submit the grant proposal and the online guidelines were different than the hard copy guidelines I had followed. Spoke with Maine Preservation Manager Brad Miller via phone about the online submission challenges and he explained this was an error on their part and he allowed Thomaston's application to be submitted. Additional conversations with Mr. Miller revealed the 1772 Foundation requires an applicant be an established 501c-3 entity. The Watts Hall Community Arts entity has submitted their paperwork and awaiting word from the IRS. Mr. Miller encouraged Watts Hall Community Arts to resubmit in 2022 for 2023 once they are recognized as a 501c-3 organization.

T-Mobil Grant-Will working with Watts Block Trustees to complete a nationwide grant to fund improvements to community resources. The grant deadline is 12/31/2021.

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

### Tree Lighting Ceremony:

At the request of Town Manager Kara George, scheduled a Holiday Tree Lighting event for 12/4 in the Thomaston Mall. Multiple calls /e-mails were made, and I was not able to secure any support from a local choir to lead the Tree Lighting attendees in song. Luckily, Thomaston Baptist Church Minister Wayne Sawyer agreed to lend his voice to our concert. The following businesses contributed to the success of the event: Flipside Café agreed to bake cookies, Thomaston Grocery Store purchased the hot coco mix, Thomaston Café provided the hot water and mixed the hot coco in Igloo containers supplied by the Thomaston Recreation Department. Oceanside Middle School provided a link to a booklet of children's Christmas carols, Paster

### **3. Enhance the Downtown Thomaston experience (continued):**

#### Tree Lighting Ceremony (continued)

Wayne Sawyer provided a hymnal that contained more formal Christmas carols. Copies will be made from both sources to provide a variety of songs to be sung. Local photographer Jessica LeCaptain requested to take photos at the Mall site after the Tree Lighting event for a modest fee. Received approval for this to be allowed and later met with Jessica to determine a best location for her to arrange an outdoor setting for photos to be taken. Met with volunteer Sheilagh Guyer at the Mall to discuss a coordinated plan for the Tree Lighting and photo session to occur. Assisted Ms. Guyer and additional volunteer Ann Robison with loading the boxes of lights into their cars and then returning the boxes to the Thomaston Town Hall.

Chanukah: Spoke with Rabbi Lily Solochek requesting ideas to recognize and honor the meaning of Chanukah. Various ideas were explored, and Rabbi Lily agreed to write an article about the meaning of the holiday. Provided this article to Town Manager Kara George who included it in the town's December Newsletter. Forwarded this article to local schools to assist their teachers who may be seeking ways to educate their students about the meaning of Chanukah.

Thomaston Harbor Christmas Image: Received a reply from Lyman-Morse COO Matt Graham regarding our inquiry if we could decorate a boat in Christmas lights and use that image on the town's webpage and FB page. Mr. Graham suggested we approach L-M earlier in the year when their boats would be in the water.

#### Thomaston Main Street: (TMS)

During our November meeting, merchants agreed to try and pull together a decorated photo area that shoppers could take selfie photos. The Halloween selfie area was received well at our Trunk or Treat event, so we invested some effort in finding Christmas decorations to recreate this type of easy event. Multiple emails were sent and unfortunately could not locate any decorations. Decided to not pursue this idea once Jessica LaCaptain indicated she would staff and sell photos at the Tree Lighting event. Merchants were reluctant to commit to doing anything else in the downtown as they are extremely busy at this time of year.

Recruitment of volunteers for TMS. Discussion at the meeting focused on ways to recruit non merchants to join Thomaston Main Street. A suggestion was made to hold a social in January to celebrate our successes in 2021 and to briefly identify tasks we need to move forward on in 2022. Will move forward this this plan.

Community discussion on Art in Thomaston: Will work with artist Nancy Baker to identify a date in early 2022 to facilitate a discussion with local artists and supporters of the arts to review ways to bring more art to Thomaston. Agreed that we are too busy at this time for a successful turnout. Will recognize the mural created by Nancy Baker later in the Spring at the request of the artist.

TMS Mascot: Developing a mascot for the downtown and will kick off a naming contest in January. Again, we are too busy at this time and need non merchants to assist with Thomaston Main Street efforts.

### 3. Enhance the Downtown Thomaston experience: (continued)

#### Downtown Landlord Meeting:

Has a follow up meeting with the landlords to confirm the parking guidelines and steps taken to help improve the image of the downtown. Will forward a sample map and guidelines to the landlords to ensure we are all on the same page. The landlords agreed to forward the Select Board approved materials to their tenants. The town will order signs and post the changes on Social media to educate the users of the parking lots in the downtown. Spoke with John Fancy and learned the town purchased the bike racks that are being used in the downtown. Will request the landlords ask their tenants to identify the bikes so we can remove bikes that are not currently owned by Block residents.

Coastal Mountain Chiropractic: Owner Dr. Matt Thomas agreed to provide a quote to express his appreciation for Community Concepts Finance Corp's efforts to assist his business. This project is part of CCFC's plan to recognize their 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of doing business in Maine. Scheduled a time to take a photo of Matt and provided the quote and photo to post on CCFC's webpage.

Tilbury House Publishing: Co-Owner Jonathan Eaton agreed to provide a quote to express his thanks for Community Concepts Finance Corp's efforts to assist his business. This project is part of CCFC's plan to recognize their 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of doing business in Maine. Provided the quote and photo of Jon to post on CCFC's webpage.

RisingTide Boxing: Laurie Gold responded to my inquiry for support offered to assist with the Tree Lighting ceremony.

159 Main Street: Met with landlord Amy Morey to tour her available rental space as well as the second-floor space she currently uses for her personal business. Ms. Morey isn't in any hurry to rent the space quickly and expressed interest in introducing future perspective tenants to me before a lease was signed. I was impressed with the second floor as it could be an exceptional space for a tenant that doesn't need a handicapped accessible location. Agreed to share some ideas with Amy for types of business that would work well in both locations. Offered to arrange a tour of the second-floor space with a local Realtor to begin raising the profile of the facility. Provided Amy with the name of a local trash-collector to pick up multiple bags needing to be removed from the first-floor space.

#### Oceanside Middle School (OMS) Veterans Day Posters:

Was approached by OMS instructors requesting my assistance in asking downtown merchants if they would like to hang Veteran's Day posters made by middle school students. Emailed the merchants and they all expressed an in supporting the project. Delivered posters to the merchants and then later picked them up to assist the school with the project.

**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 National 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**

Accessing Adult Ed and Vocational Programs: Will reconnect with Bobby Deetjen Director of the Midcoast School of Technology, offering my support to schedule a lunch and learn series for Thomaston based businesses to meet with high school and adult aged students seeking a career in the trades.

Lyman Morse: Sent a follow up note to Lyman Morse COO Matt Graham about Destination Occupation's recent award for their work in supporting Maine based businesses with web-based initiatives to assist with workforce recruitment.

#### Thomaston Dredging project:

Will discuss a plan to highlight next steps needed from all participants of the dredging project with Town Manager Kara George and the Harbor Committee.

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

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 Kenney, 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 CCFC Staff and Loan Committee  
Weekly call with CCFC 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:**

Mid-Coast Economic Development District Board of Directors  
Monthly Knox County Workforce Development Coalition  
Monthly Midcoast Internet Coalition meeting

#### **9. Connectivity**

#### Midcoast Internet Coalition:

Prior to MIC's November meeting, I spoke with Greg Hamlin who was appointed by the Select Board to represent Thomaston at MIC meetings. The purpose of the call was to prepare him for his first meeting, answer any questions he might have and brief him on topics that are being discussed. I'm impressed by Greg's broadband knowledge and am confident his skills will be invaluable to Thomaston on this important topic.

## **9. Connectivity (continued)**

### Monthly Meeting:

Reviewed agenda for the Midcoast Internet Development Corporation's first meeting to occur in December. Axiom Technology's Core 4 report will be available at the MIDC meeting.

Outlined the various state, county and federal funding programs to support broadband initiatives. The programs offer opportunities and continued review must occur to determine which funds address MIC's needs. Discussion revisited about the need for the following items to be addressed: 1. speed testing to gather accurate data that may allow MIC to apply for funds previously thought to be inaccessible to MIC's communities. 2. Creation of talking points to ensure we are all sharing the same message. 3. Branding efforts to clarify MIC's mission via our web presence and to meet with local legislators to share this message. 4. Follow up with Knox County Budget Process in order to be current with their process.

## **10. ARPA Funds**

EDA Working Waterfront Grant: Continued to gather ideas on potential changes to pursue that will improve the public access to our working waterfront. Spoke/emailed multiple times with MCEDD staffer Max Johnstone with questions about the application process and eligible projects. We need to submit an application that seeks a minimum of \$100,000 of improvements. Initial ideas presented do not add up to the minimum amount. Reviewed an idea to purchase land adjacent to the waterfront to serve as a satellite parking lot with a local landowner and the Maine Department of Transportation. Learned that EDA does not support funding improvements made to a parking lot unless it is owned by the town. Will recommend the town consider this option on their own outside of the EDA application. Met with the Harbor Committee later in the month and reviewed the following ideas that have been suggested we pursue: Wave attenuation system, dock improvements, improved lighting, land line 911 phone, storage units for regular users to access, improved signage for all beaches and improved public storage and access for kayaks at all town owned waterfront properties. Will work to identify costs associated with each expense as well as the expense of funding a feasibility study for the project.

## **11. Housing**

### Introductions:

Introduced to contacts at Maine State Housing, Governor Mills office and AVESTA by CCFC President Nate Libby.

### Select Board Request for assistance:

Asked by the Select Board to gather information on what resources and best practices are there to help Thomaston determine how to develop affordable housing. (1. funding sources, 2. ordinances to encourage ease of development (reduce upfront costs, reduce minimal lot sizes, allow more multi-family homes and smaller homes etc.) 3. Reducing the impact of Air B&B if more homes/apartments are built 4. Minimum lot standards to ensure safe water issues when municipal water is not accessible.

Sent an inquiry to Maine State Housing requesting answers to the above questions. Received a reply that a multi-person Zoom call needs to happen in order to address the questions. Sent a couple of follow-up notes.

## **11. Housing (continued)**

and have not heard back from my contact. Have forwarded these questions to a different housing contact in hopes to have more to report for the 12/13 Select board meeting.

### **Federal Delegation:**

Contacted the federal delegation and asked for an updated list of federal programs to support housing needs. Received a reply from Chris Rector with a list of USDA housing program information.

**Local housing:** Created a list of known banked owned, empty properties and properties with empty apartments to share with local businesses seeking to create workforce housing for their employees. Updated this list with the assistance of Assessor Dave Martucci as several properties have been sold by the banks. Forwarded these updates to Lyman-Morse and Brooks Trapp Mill for their use.