

February 2022 Monthly Report
Economic Development Specialist - Brian Doyle

1. Business Retention/Attraction

Business Retention:

Dance N Art Studio: Replied to email from owner Sadie LaJoie indicating the email I had given her to contact the home school interested in renting a space one day a week is correct. Ms. LaJoie inquired if they could hire an instructor to teach defensive martial arts skills to children at that location. CEO Mandy Everett indicated this would be permissible.

Alan Auto Volvo Restoration: Emailed Alan and asked that he connect with me regarding his plans for his business at 1 Starr Street. Spoke with Mr. Prosser and learned his plans for his car museum remain the same.

Laura's Dolce Vitae Bakery: Received a reply from Laurel Christopher that addressed my concerns regarding her state license requirements. Introduced Ms. Christopher to CEO Mandy Everett and encouraged setting a time to meet on site to review changes and remaining needs of the project.

Coastal Cards: Met with owner Ray Girtman and learned more about the direction he and his son wish to take their business. They are following trends in their industry regarding packaging their products for easy display, handling and storage. Ray continues to look for affordable display units that removes clutter and enhances product visibility. Brainstormed use of the higher wall space and ceiling area as an option. Offered to contact Fire Chief to ensure any ideas would be fire safety compliant.

Station 118: Met with Owners Emily and Scott who asked if they could place a business sign on the roof of their business. Reviewed Thomaston sign ordinance and spoke with CEO Mandy Everett and agreed this type of sign is not allowed. Sent an email to them denying their request.

Business Attraction:

Flaura Designs: Sent a follow up note to Aura indicating I'd like to see her new store as would Mandy Everett, Thomaston's new CEO. Will swing by the store when I'm in the downtown to see if I can speak with her in person.

Cornhole Connection: Met with owners Penny and Cameo to review paperwork the town needs for their business to open. Pleased to learn their state forms are complete. Encouraged them to continue working with Community Concepts colleague Sharon Gilsleider on their business plan and the budget. Toured the new store and was pleased to see inventory on shelves already. Offered to meet with them to assist with developing a marketing plan. Will work to schedule a time after their opening scheduled for early March has happened

1. Business Attraction: (continued)

Confidential Site Searches:

Opportunity 1: No progress with receiving a response from a business seeking a space that addresses their expansion needs. Will request a time for an off-site conversation to determine the viability of this inquiry.

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 upon him that Thomaston is interested in finding the right space for him.

2. Watts Block

Improvement in HVAC system: Participated in a meeting with Bill Hahn and Doug Martin of W.H. Demmons to discuss the HVAC needs of Watts Hall. Efficiency Maine programs can partially fund the improvements required to address the heating and cooling and COVID air quality demands of Watts Hall. Will search for other affordable gap funds that will allow Thomaston to move forward with this project. Pursued USDA Rural Development Funds and learned we are not eligible to access them.

3. Enhance the Downtown Thomaston Experience

Thomaston Main Street (TMS): Facilitated a Zoom meeting that discussed goals for 2022. Attendance at this meeting was modest so my onsite visits will encourage conversation about how to schedule a better time to meet going forward. Will create an online survey to be sent to the residents and downtown merchants requesting feedback on what people wish to experience in Thomaston this year.

Community discussion on Art in Thomaston: Emailed Nancy Baker and confirmed she remains very interested in pursuing ideas to bring more art to Thomaston. Will attempt to raise funds to support this initiative through personal donations and foundations. Expect to host a meeting via Zoom of interested parties to begin the discussion of creating a list of ideas to pursue. Will recognize the mural recently created by Nancy later in the Spring.

Downtown Parking Updates: Confirmed the proposed additional handicapped parking space on Rt 1 is in compliance of all Americans With Disability Act (ADA) and Maine Department of Transportation guidelines. Will install proper signs at this location as the weather gets better. Responded to inquiries about the parking protocol via in person conversations and e-mails. Requested a determination on who is responsible to pay for repairs to the wooden doors that allows access to dumpsters behind The Block. Will follow up with the landlord who requested this information.

3. Enhance the Downtown Thomaston Experience: (continued)

Coastal Mountain Chiropractic: Discussed parking idea raised by owner Matt Thomas who requested two cars be able to park in the single spaces behind Watts Block. Concept approved by Chief of Police, Public Works Director and Town Manager as long as the second car doesn't exceed a specific distance identified by Public Works Director Brandon Allen.

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
Thomaston café	Camden National Bank	Blueberry Moose	Station 118
Athen's Pizza	Flipside Coffee	Spindrift Massage	150 Main Salon
Cornhole Connection	Hoffman's	Thomaston Auction Galleries	

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

Annual Report: Completed annual report and submitted it to Town Clerk Missy Stevens.

Cannabis Cured: Introduced myself and explained my role in Thomaston. Spoke with company owners to determine if they began operations in 2021 and explained this information is part of my annual report. Encouraged them to contact me with questions they need assistance with.

Shoreland Planning Grant: Contacted Melissa Britsch of the Maine Department of Marine Resources to discuss two possible grant opportunities. Received suggestions on how to proceed. Emailed Kathleen Layden to inquire about funds to support replacement of moorings. Ms. Layden indicated she would research options that exist.

Midcoast School of Technology: Electronically introduced Bobby Deetjen, Director of the Midcoast School of Technology, to Mark Curtis, HR Director at Dragon. Mr. Deetjen seeks to offer additional lunch and lean events to introduce his students and faculty to local businesses.

Lyman Morse: Sent a follow up note to COO Matt Graham after he returned from vacation suggesting a conversation about LM's current and future needs as they pursue and attract contracts. The Maine Technology Institute's Prime Fund is an option to fund improvements in their 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. Recommended additional discussion should also occur regarding expectations about the dredging project.

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

Lyman-Morse participated in a marketing video created by The University of Maine that was funded by a Maine Technology Institute award. The video aired on YouTube, promoted businesses that are connected to U Maine's Advanced Structures and Composite Center. Will place this video on our municipal website to educate our community about advances Lyman-Morse is achieving in their manufacturing practices by partnering with U Maine <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rbqoEnoJGus>

Job Fair in Thomaston: Rockland Career Center staff inquired if Thomaston is interested in participating in hosting a smaller job fair focused on only hospitality-based businesses. Contacted businesses in this sector as well as others that are not and the response was modest. CareerCenter staff are evaluating whether they should move forward with this idea.

Multi business visit: Coordinating a day in March/April to visit three Thomaston-based businesses: Brooks Trapp Mill, Lyman-Morse Boatbuilding and Dragon Cement. Will invite Charlotte Mace, Director of Business Development at Maine's Department of Economic and Community Development, representatives from Senator King's, Collin's, Congresswoman Pingree's staff, and Thomaston officials Kara George and Diane Giese.

Thomaston Pace Auction Galleries: Met with Kaja Veilleux at his Rt 1 location and learned more about the challenges of his business. Impressed by the sophistication of his organization and the global audience that participates in his online and in person auctions. Provided him with information that can support his strategic planning needs. Will arrange a visit to tour his apartment building and continue our conversation about how to support his business needs.

Brooks Trap Mill: Scheduled a meeting with Brooks Trapp Mill owners in March to prepare them for the future site visit with state, federal and municipal leaders. Encouraged them to be prepared to tell their story so the attendees will understand the complexities of their family-owned business, their challenges and specific questions they wish to be addressed.

Jeff's Marine: Emailed General Manager Thomas Turansky and asked if he would like to participate in a Lunch and Learn series at the Midcoast School of Technology. Also inquired if an interest remains for a call with Creative Composites Group based in Augusta to discuss building a small skiff for Jeff's Marine.

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

Social Media Training: Will discuss training needs at the March Thomaston Main Street meeting.

6. TIF Program.

Contacted TIF Attorney John Pottle and inquired if the Town's current and amended TIF would allow for improvements to infrastructure connected to workforce housing. Mr. Pottle indicated that funds can be approved by a town vote in specific areas.

7. Meeting Attendance

Weekly call with Community Concepts Finance Corp Supervisor Mia Purcell

Bi-weekly 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 Harbor Committee Meeting

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.

Camden Rotary Zoom Meeting regarding workforce/affordable housing

9. Connectivity

Midcoast Internet Development Corporation (Formerly the Midcoast Internet Coalition): Provided feedback to Greg Hamlin on his PowerPoint about the Midcoast Internet Development Corporation that he intends to present at a Select Board Workshop.

Consolidated Communications: Emailed Sarah Davis, Director of Legislative and Regulatory Affairs, to determine if Consolidated would share information on the location of broadband service provided by other Internet Service Providers (ISP) in Thomaston. No reply to this inquiry was received.

10. ARPA Funds

Received a PowerPoint on creative use of ARPA funds from Charlotte Mace, Director of Maine's Office of Business Development.

11. Housing

Extending lifespan of affordable housing: Spoke with John Eagan, Chief Lending and Program Officer of the Genesis Fund, to learn more about the process of assisting owners with extending the lifespan of affordable housing units. Will share this information with the Select Board.

Funding Sources connected to infrastructure: Continue to network with various state and federal entities searching for funding sources to support the infrastructure required to create workforce/affordable housing. New programs continue to be created so this research process is ongoing.

Legislative Report on Housing: Shared report with Kara George, John Fancy, Zel Bowman-LaBerge, Diane Giese created by an Augusta based Commission to identify best practices communities should consider enhancing housing within their community.

Use of remaining CDGB funds to support housing needs in Thomaston: Scheduling a meeting in March with Deborah Johnson, Director of the Maine Office of Community Development, to review options Thomaston has to use funds remaining from a 2006 CDGB Housing Assistance program supporting improvements to housing occupied by Low to Moderate Income families.

Maine Working Homes LLC: Facilitated a meeting attended by Merritt Carey and Andrew Curtis of Maine Working Homes LLC and Kara George, John Fancy, Zel Bowman-LaBerge, Diane Giese and Dave Martucci from Thomaston. Reviewed properties and houses that are potential sites for development. Maine Working Homes is interested in partnering with Thomaston and has inquired about ways Thomaston can help them lower their costs of a future housing project. Thomaston is gathering information about federal and state resources that could be applied to a potential future project.

Networking: Continue to make progress making contacts and having conversations at state, federal and non-profit entities to gather information on incentives, developers and best practices used in successful housing projects.