

October Monthly Report
Economic Development Specialist - Brian Doyle

1. Business Retention/Attraction

Business Retention:

Dance N Art Studio:

Met with Sadie and Jared at their site to discuss their plans to attract long term clients. Was provided with a flyer that encourages families to drop off kids for a few hours as some form of after school care with programming. Sent this to the grammar and middle schools and requested they share it with families. This one-time event was successful. Sadie and Jared are now hosting regular events and are beginning to get some better participation. Forwarded this information to the schools as well. Sadie and Jared are making progress but still remain challenged by similar services provided that are free or at very little cost. Continue to encourage them to pursue creating other programs different clients could pursue.

Oceanside Nutrition:

I sent multiple emails to Brandy and stopped by her business and was never able to speak with her. Learned from her landlord that Brandy is closing her business. I sent an email to Brandy offering my support to plan her next steps as well as resolve any loose ends she may be dealing with.

Station 118:

Owners Scott and Emily requested information about winterizing their outdoor dining area. Contacted City of Portland and was given multiple businesses that have made improvements to their site to allow customers to dine comfortably outside. Toured many of these sites and saw examples that can be used in Thomaston. Provided Emily and Scott website links and photos that profiled building and tarp systems used to provide a warm dining experience. Stopped by Station 118 and spoke with Scott about options I saw and showed him photos as well. Owners Scot and Emily believe they have a plan to affordably close in the space in compliance with fire code requirements. They indicated their current lender is still able to loan them money if it is needed for this project.

Bakery: Emailed owner Laurel Christopher and learned her bakery business will come on-line later in 2022. Renovations to her second-floor residence are taking longer than expected so the bakery will open later as well.

Business Attraction:

Simpler Times:

Learned that Mike has not been able to dedicate time to his food truck project but expects to in the near future.

207 Eats:

This business is now open, and Mr. Leavitt has not e-mailed me with any additional concerns.

Business Attraction: (continued)

Flaura Designs:

Met Aura at her site with Bill Wasson, Code Enforcement Officer and discussed changes that were needed at the store and the forms that were required. Spent 90 minutes with Aura assisting her with completing the necessary town and state forms for her to open. Encouraged her to stay focused on opening on 12/1 so she can take advantage of some holiday shopping income. Explained that business will slow down in the new year and encouraged her to prepare for this. Encouraged Aura to advertise in her storefront windows that she will be opening soon and selling specific things. Offered to have a ribbon cutting event when she is ready to raise the profile of her business. Will contact two state agencies to request they expedite her licenses which will hopefully allow her to sell wine and plants beginning in December.

Confidential Site Searches:

Opportunity 1:

Met with one entrepreneur interested in locating a business in Thomaston. The interest remains there but it isn't pressing at this time. Asked what size building he needs and I'm searching for a site that addresses this need.

Opportunity 2:

A second entrepreneur has not responded to my most recent e-mail for an update. His email indicates he is traveling and will return Monday, November 8. I'll reconnect with him later in the month for an update.

Opportunity 3: Downtown Retail space sought

Flipside co-owner Amanda Gaudet referred a contact interested in opening a small retail store in Thomaston. I e-mailed the contact and then spoke to her about the specific retail store she wishes to open. I outlined multiple concerns and expressed caution about her plans. Offered to make an introduction to a CCFC Business Advisor in order to develop a business plan that would provide information and allow her to make an informed decision.

Confidential Purchase:

Continued emailing clients who intend to purchase a downtown building. I've heard rumors about how they intend to use the building and encouraged them to speak with me to ensure all options are allowable. Suggested a bi-weekly call with myself and Bill to keep us both aware of needs that might be arising.

Renewable Properties:

Had a follow up conversation with Kara George and John Fancy about Renewable Properties desire to develop smaller solar array projects in Thomaston on municipally owned property. Renewable Properties Project Director Kate Neeley is also interested in privately owned sites as well. After speaking Ms. George and John Fancy, a decision was made to pause on going forward with any development of municipally owned property. We will be contacting the Planning Board to encourage pausing any additional solar projects or privately owned property until a plan can be developed and approved by the Select Board.

2. Watts Block

At the suggestion of Charlie Grover, sent a request to Lyman- Morse COO Matt Graham to consider designing and building a marque for Watts Hall.

Continue to meet with Charlie Grover and reviewed fundraising and programming ideas to be considered by the Watts Hall Community Arts.

Met with Downeast Singers Artistic Director Tony Antolini who was interested in reserving Watts Hall for a rehearsal and potential performance space. Determined specific needs for practices and performances. Charlie Grover is negotiating for various performance and practice options in the hopes of locking in a long - standing tenant for Watts Hall. Contacting local schools looking to rent or borrow risers that choir members can use should we secure this agreement.

Reserved Watts Hall for the December meeting for the Thomaston Historical Society.

Made edits to Watts Hall web page to reflect changes in who is overseeing the reservation and scheduling.

Completing a grant from the 1772 to support improvements at the Watts Block

Researching a grant sponsored by T-Mobile to support improvements made to programs or buildings that support community initiatives in towns throughout the United States.

3. Enhance the Downtown Thomaston experience

Holiday events:

Contacted all downtown merchants, local clergy and Masons to ask for suggestion on how to celebrate the holidays in 2021. Received two replies that congregations are reticent about participating in large public gatherings. E-mailed Rabbi Lilly Solochek from Adas Yeshurun Synagogue in Rumford asking for ideas on how to celebrate Chanukah. Scheduled a call for this conversation. The Masons are also cautious about being connected to large scale events. Making several calls and emails to find a choir that could lead an outdoor concert at a large tree lighting event scheduled for December. No luck yet finding a choir. Approached Lyman- Morse to see if we can decorate a boat in lights for an image we can use on our FB page.

Thomaston Main Street:

Scheduled two meetings in October focused on the following topics:

Scheduling events for Halloween that will involve local students, youth and families that will hopefully attract more people to the downtown.

Identifying a date to facilitate a discussion with local artists and supporters of arts to review ways to bring more art to Thomaston. Will recognize the mural created by Nancy Baker later in the Spring at the request of the artist.

3. Enhance the Downtown Thomaston experience: (continued)

Thomaston Main Street: (continued)

Developing a mascot for the downtown and will kick off a naming contest shortly. Provided feedback to Lindsey Pinkham about the timeline for the moose mascot unveiling process that she will share with Thomaston Main Street members at the next meeting.

The First National Bank agreed to sponsor pumpkins to be given to Thomaston's grammar and middle school students. Visited Bull Run Farm, met with owner Nick Smith and agreed to purchase the pumpkins from him. All 163 grammar school students received a pumpkin which they could bring home. Delivered 100 pumpkins to Oceanside Middle School which were decorated by the students and used to decorate our downtown, Trunk or Treat area and the Knox Hotel Apartments. Attended both pumpkin drop off events and have pictures to be used on our FB page. Staffed the Trunk or Treat area with volunteers Lindsey Pinkham and Necole Janczura and was pleased by the strong turnout at the event. The schools and Knox Hotel Apartment leadership and residents expressed sincere thanks for our efforts this year.

Trunk or Treat Next year:

Forwarded a request by Kara George from a local business owner who is interested in coordinating a bigger Trunk or Treat event next year. Replied to the interested party that a meeting will need to be held to discuss how we can coordinate this popular event next year. Will work with Recreation Department Director Rene Door on this effort.

Downtown Landlord Meeting:

Reviewing and pricing products that need to be acquired as part of the plan to coordinate parking and reducing ways to control dog waste and discarded cigarette butts in the downtown. Learned the trees in the planters on Main Street cannot be transplanted this year as Public Works is very busy. Will schedule a follow up meeting asap so signs and dog waste systems can be agreed upon, purchased and installed before winter. Will assist with the creation of parking guideline sheets that can be given to all entities and individuals who work and live in the downtown. Will also educate this same population about other changes to encourage less waste in the downtown.

Alan Auto-Volvo Restoration - Met Alan Prosser in the Code Enforcement and Assessors office and helped him photocopy specific town documents he had that will allow him to understand more about his 1 Starr Street location. Encouraged him to reconnect with Code Enforcement Officer Bill Wasson with any future questions.

Thomaston Grocery: Spoke with owner John Vigue about artist Nancy Baker wishing to postpone the event celebrating the mural she created to the Spring. He agreed to schedule a time asap to bring artists together to discuss ways to bring more art to town.

RisingTide Boxing: Laurie Gold remains very interested in posting information in her storefront to support local events. She supports the artwork created by local youth.

3. Enhance the Downtown Thomaston experience: (continued)

Coastal Cards:

Owner Mr. Girtman continues to be open 7 days a week and is eager to post materials in his storefront windows to highlight events in town. His social media presence is growing and his plans to host a Spring Card Show in Thomaston are hopeful.

Dance N Art Studio:

Sadie and Jared offer their students' artwork to decorate the downtown or residential facilities in the region.

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	Oceanside Nutrition	Dance N' Art Studio	Thomaston Grocery
Coastal Mountain Chiro	Camden National Bank	Coastal Cards	Thomaston café
Blueberry Moose	Station 118	Athen's Pizza	Flipside Coffee
Chambers Jewelers	Downeast Maritime	Endeavor Craftsman	
Edward Jones			

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: Contacted 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: Scheduled and attended meetings at the following offices at the University of Maine: The Advanced Structures and Composite Center, Dean's Office of the College of Engineering, Office of Innovation and Economic Development, Advanced Manufacturing Center, and Career Center. Matt Graham, COO and two of his staff were impressed with how many ways L-M can connect with U Maine resources. Immediate steps were taken to raise L-M's profile on campus with students interviewing for internships and jobs. Ongoing conversations will occur to partner with U Maine on bringing improved technology to L-M that will allow them to compete for a broader range of contracts. Opportunities for greater exchange of ideas involving products made of composite materials will also occur.

Lyman Morse Continued:

RFP Questions: Assisted L-M with identifying options to raise their profile on an RFP to build a boat that will serve an offshore wind turbine testing platform. Made inquiries with contacts at the state, federal and university levels who offered subtle suggestions that I forwarded to Lyman-Morse for their consideration.

Made the following suggestions to Lyman-Morse raise their profile locally and digitally:

Destination Occupation: Sent a follow up link to COO Matt Graham about a recent award won by Destination Occupation recognizing DO's ability to assist companies create a digital marketing plan to attract future employees.

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

Sent link <https://liveandworkinmaine.com/> about Live and Work in Maine to Matt Graham as another option for Lyman-Morse to consider using to raise their job opportunities within the organization.

Thomaston Dredging project:

Coordinated a meeting with Army Corp staff and the following individuals from Thomaston: Kara George- Town Manager, Bill Hahn- Select Board, Bob Armstrong -Harbor Committee, Brian Doyle -Economic Development Specialist, Dwight Jones- Harbor Master. Learned the dredging will occur in 2-3 years. Testing of the channel's core samples and a survey of the channel will be scheduled for next spring. As expected, if the core samples contain contaminants, the cost of relocating the silt will increase. Thomaston is also being asked to determine how deep they wish the channel to be. We are able to create a channel up to 16 feet deep which would add to the cost of the dredging project. Ongoing conversations with businesses in the harbor to determine their needs will begin shortly.

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

Spoke with Shannon Kenney, President of Dream Local Digital about partnering with her business to develop a series of social media workshops to support local businesses. Developing a survey to gauge the businesses interests and their needs. Ms. Kenney is eager to support this initiative as she lives locally and is interested in assisting local businesses whenever possible.

Forwarded a free seminar on Social Media skills sponsored by Androscoggin Valley Council of Government and facilitated by Rich Brooks of Flyte New Media to all of the Thomaston Main Street members.

6. TIF Program

7. Meeting Attendance

Bi-weekly Zoom call with CCFC Staff and Loan Committee
Weekly call with CCFC Supervisor Mia Purcell
Monthly 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
State of Maine -DECD Economic Recovery Input Session

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
MCEDD Board retreat over a two-day period to discuss organizational changes and a search for a new executive director.

9. Connectivity

Midcoast Internet Coalition:

Attended September's monthly meeting of the Midcoast Internet Coalition.

Contacted Greg Hamlin to see if he was interested in attending monthly Mr. Hamlin agreed and is looking forward to connecting soon to the meetings.

Forward information on federal and state programs that are connected to broadband to the Thomaston Select Board and MIC leadership so it can be shared with interested parties.

10. ARPA Funds

Researching an EDA grant that would fund changes to support our working waterfront. Have meeting with the Harbor Committee to discuss this in order to determine if this is a good fit.

11. Housing

Toured Thomaston with Thomaston Select Board member Peter Lammert to identify homes that are empty or have apartments available for purchase or rent. Will create a master list of spaces to share with businesses seeking opportunities to provide housing for their workforce.