

Minutes: Bethel Business Association meeting – November 5, 2008

Chair Rick Benson called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Secretary's report was accepted as submitted. There was no Treasurer's report or membership report this meeting.

Town Hall vote: Rick noted that the vote on the Town Hall bond was overwhelmingly accepted, so that project will be moving forward and could be ready for use by late 2009.

Candidates Forum: Rick heard positive feedback from quite a few people about this event, and the Herald ran the BBA press release that summarized some of the highlights of the Q&A.

Branliere Recreation Trail: Two weeks ago, Rick, John Dutton and Dick Adams used Dick's GPS to mark the corners and boundaries of the property. They found excellent places for dramatic views that could be made with just a little clearing of trees. Dick completed mapping the property, based on the GPS readings.

Rick and Jamal Kheiry will attend a grant-writing workshop on Nov. 12 to gather more information on grant money available for development of community trails. They'll report on any new information at the next regular meeting.

Downtown decorations: Christmas decorations were put up on Nov. 3 with much-appreciated help from Bob Dean and Keith Bollman. The flags were taken down at the same time; the ones on the bridge are too tattered for use next year, but the remaining ones are fine.

Business inventory: This project is ongoing; the grant is being written through the Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation.

Miscellaneous items brought up for discussion

School brochure: Jamal asked the attendees what they thought of the idea of pitching in some BBA funding for an information kit he's preparing for the school. It consists of two brochures that will be sent to parents in other school districts to promote the positive points of Bethel Schools. The business benefit is that this type of information often is sought-after by realtors and others who are trying to convince people to make Bethel their home, so the BBA might consider it at least partly a business-development effort. Rick suggested that the issue be presented to the membership for consideration at the next regular meeting, so that more people would be available to assess and vote on the idea.

Attendees brought up the point that it might make businesses more inclined to support this and other school efforts if the school – in particular the students – were more visible to people in the town. It was noted that Sharon Academy garners a large amount of publicity and community good will because of its strong emphasis on community service; similar benefits could accrue to Bethel Schools if such coordinated, visible programs were implemented here.

Dog waste downtown: Some downtown merchants have raised concerns about dog-owners not cleaning up their pets' waste from sidewalks, but it was noted that the situation has been improving.

Fish hatchery: Mary Floyd suggested that one of the BBA Mixers be held at the fish hatchery to raise awareness of what it does. Spring was suggested as a good time for it.

Business focus: Mary reiterated her desire to see a business subcommittee of the BBA make active contact with BBA members to keep apprised of their concerns and make sure the organization is representing them. Discussion noted that it's difficult to find the time for such active contacts, since the BBA officers and others are quite busy. However, it was noted that an occasional short newsletter with high-impact items (not everything from the minutes) could be sent to members to keep them in the loop, so that any of them who feel strongly about an issue can respond and/or participate. Jamal will come up with a draft of such a newsletter for Rick's review.

Mascoma Bank Open House: Will be Dec. 4, 5:30 p.m.

Upcoming meetings: The next BBA Mixer will be **11/13 (note the date-change from the last minutes)** at the Black Forest Café, 6:30 p.m. The next regular meeting will be on Dec. 3 at the usual venue, 245 Main St. The BBA Holiday Party will be Thursday, Dec. 18, and a theme/activity will be announced at the next meeting. Ideas being talked about include a Yankee Swap/Thrifty-Gift exchange and certainly some good holiday food.

Jamal Kheiry
Secretary