

Business Improvement District  
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes  
Submitted by Blake Opal-Wahoske

The Business Improvement District Board of Directors met on Wednesday, February 21st, at 8 a.m. in the 2nd-floor board room of Wausau City Hall.

Directors present: Mark Craig, Mary Gallagher, Gizo Ujarmeli, MaryAnne Groat, and Blake Opal-Wahoske.  
Directors absent: Mark McKinley, Robb Shepherd, and Rebecca Bearjar.

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:08 am by Mark Craig (Ch)
2. Approval of October 2023 minutes
  - I. Deferred to meeting scheduled for May 15<sup>th</sup> at 8am for approval, due to a lack of quorum.
3. Update on approved 2024 work plans presented by Blake Opal-Wahoske, Executive Director of the Wausau River District.

Organizational/Executive Committee

Goal: Maintain a strong organization with sustainable funding, staff retention, and adequate office equipment while limiting overhead expenses.

Team: Joe (Ch), Katie, Erik, Liz, and John

- I. Strategy 1: Manage organizational funding
  - a. Maintain/secure appropriate funding to execute work plans
    - i. 2024 Sponsorship onboarding
      1. Ruder Ware, Eye Clinic of WI, & Miron Construction
      2. City of Wausau Tourism room tax and continuing approp. room tax
      3. Greenheck Foundation
    - ii. End of year
      1. KerberRose to file our 990
      2. City of Wausau supplied W2s
      3. City payroll account has been closed, remaining fund balance deposited into our account.
      4. Annual worker's comp audit completed
  - b. Monitor BID discussions and Room Tax legislation
  - c. Diversify funding sources
- II. Strategy 2: Engage in community outreach
  - a. Distribute the News You Need newsletter to stakeholders
  - b. Engage in meetings with community groups
    - i. Presentation to City of Wausau ED Committee 2/6
  - c. Training for WRD Stakeholders
- III. Strategy 3: Develop, recruit, and engage board and team members
  - a. Recruit, orientate, and train new board members
    - i. Board members on at least one committee?
  - b. Volunteer recruitment and engagement

- i. Workshop on Volunteer Management 3/19-3/20
- IV. Other
  - a. Completion of national accreditation at executive meetings as a team. Counts toward trainings.
  - b. Discussion of areas/topics Wausau could benefit from a technical assistance visit from WI MS.
  - c. Discussion of new business
    - i. Mark Craig, will connect with new businesses in Compass properties to WRD.
  - d. Transformation strategy and vision statement
  - e. Update on Staffing
  - f. Update on Office Lease
  - g. MSNOW Conference – May 6-8 Birmingham, AL
  - h. Board education:
    - i. Design Board Call: Wednesday, February 14<sup>th</sup>.  
Register: <https://forms.office.com/r/w0maUt5YDY>
    - ii. Economic Vitality Board Call: Tuesday, April 9th.  
Register: <https://forms.office.com/r/bU3a28gyih>
    - iii. Roundtable Discussion Groups – Placemaking and Tourism Marketing
      - 1. DeForest – Feb 1st, 9 am–noon.  
Register: <https://forms.office.com/r/p7AYVUYgiG>
      - 2. Ladysmith – Feb 15th, 9 am-noon.  
Register: <https://forms.office.com/r/p7AYVUYgiG>
    - iv. March 19th Volunteer Strategy Development/Management. Viroqua. 8:30 am – 4pm. Register: <https://forms.office.com/r/mP00EUGpp3>
    - v. Pre-recorded trainings are available in the email thread.

#### Placemaking Committee

Goal: Create and enhance a memorable sense of place within the River District.

Team: Gary, Christine, and Casey

- I. Strategy 1: Encourage pedestrian exploration throughout the district.
  - a. Downtown History Minute
  - b. Walk Your Wheels sidewalk stencil
  - c. Walking/Running Trail map
    - i. Attached for review
- II. Strategy 2: Implement a minimum of two placemaking programs/projects per year.
  - a. Memorial Bridge Restoration
    - i. HiLo was recommended by Mark Criag, as WRD is struggling to get in touch with the original company.
  - b. Wausau Pride
    - i. Headliners are being confirmed and secured.
    - ii. Venues booked.
    - iii. Greenheck grant and room tax submitted.
    - iv. Training members now-June, facilitating non-profit July-Dec.
  - c. Merchandise
    - i. Community Competition. More information to come.
  - d. Umbrellas over Third Street
    - i. Discussion among members on the colors of the umbrellas.

- ii. Discussion among members about the need to have the remaining line on the 500 block of Third Street activated. Gizo, the property owner of that property, expressed interest in signing the release waiver. WRD to facilitate.
  - e. Tree Lights
    - i. BOLDT to replace damaged lights – IN KIND
    - ii. Women’s Community and WPD 2025 partnership
  - f. River West Gateway Signage
    - i. RW Stakeholder meeting to discuss the week of 2/12
    - ii. Brad Lenz and Bill Herbert were contacted re: branding and ordinances.
- III. Other
  - a. Rise up mural: Fostering connections between them and property owners.
    - i. Hmong heritage mural
    - ii. Refugee traveling mural, downtown as its first location.

Business Development Committee

Goal: Undertake business retention, recruitment, and marketing efforts in the River District.

Team: Joe (Ch), Liz, Lucas, Zachary, Bryan, Traci and Brit

- I. Strategy 1: Advocate for change in focus on parking as an economic incentive
  - a. .Advocate for bicycle parking and provide education.
  - b. Advocate for improved parking and signage
  - c. Collect data on traffic volume and unique visitor counts.
- II. Strategy 2: Provide support to organizations and constituents that are actively recruiting businesses to the district.
  - a. Write and submit the Wisconsin Main Street Awards annually.
    - i. Submitted 1/19; should know winners by the end of March.
  - b. Host an annual roundtable for business and property owners.
  - c. Operate the Friends of the River District (FORD) program.
    - i. Karen Wong re: Eesa Bakery on Forest Street
  - d. Create and distribute a News You Need Newsletter
  - e. Update and maintain a business listing on our website.
  - f. Host State of the River District event
  - g. Host an annual stakeholder networking event
    - i. Thursday, 2/29 5-7pm @ The Landmark
  - h. Participate in the Small Business Expo
  - i. Update and distribute the annual business resource guide.
    - i. Included in quarterly newsletter and website
      - 1. Eliminate additional print cost
  - j. Administer the sign grant program.
    - i. Jimmy Johns
  - k. Maintain directional signage.
  - l. Update and distribute market profile annually.
  - m. Meet with:
    - i. Tyler Tate, owner of RD Antiques building
- III. Strategy 3: Implement a minimum of four events that have a direct economic impact and undertake marketing of the district as a destination.
  - a. Wausau Night Market
    - i. Applications are live, deadline 4/1

- ii. Press Release to go out end of February for a last push
  - iii. Further discussion with stakeholders at Retailer's meeting 2/15
  - iv. Event permit and open intoxicant to be submitted by 3/1
- b. River West retail event
  - i. Discussion at stakeholder meeting week of 2/12
- c. ExhibiTour
  - i. Alex & David to meet to discuss this year's event
- d. Small Business Saturday
- e. District Marketing
  - i. We Are Mainstreet Campaign
  - ii. Live Downtown Campaign
  - iii. 6 mos of CWA Video ads
  - iv. Hot Happenings
  - v. Shop Local Holiday Campaign
  - vi. Shop Local Summer Campaign
  - vii. District brochure map
- f. Other
  - i. MainStreet Bounceback - technical assistance, sent to recipients (10 total)
  - ii. Potential CVB partnership on Digital Kiosks signs
  - iii. 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Marketing Report

Residential Development Committee

Goal: Advocate for increased residential density within a walkable distance of the district.

Team: Matt, Matt, Tammy, Will and Kody

- I. Strategy 1: Develop an inventory of residential listings within a walkable distance of the district.
  - a. Update and maintain residential listings on the website.
  - b. Creation and implementation of the Live Downtown Campaign
    - i. Focus on testimonials and the advantages of living downtown rather than individual storytelling. (safety concern).
  - c. Creation of a process to collect the vacancy rate of residential units.
- II. Strategy 2: Advocate for increased residential density within a .5-mile radius of the district.
  - a. Creation of a guide that promotes existing funding and design opportunities for property owners and design cohesiveness in new developments.
  - b. Advocate for design cohesiveness in new residential developments
  - c. Gather and share economic data on the impact of improved and increased housing.

4. Adjourned at 9:02am

Respectfully submitted,

Blake Opal-Wahoske

Executive Director