



**SMALL BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

Small Business Development Committee Meeting

March 3, 2020 | 8:30-10:30am | Room 111 – Brookline Town Hall, 333 Washington St, Brookline, MA

Committee Members in Attendance: Raul Fernandez (Chair), Annika Sarin, Raj Dhanda, Mark Barer, Melissa Tapper Goldman, Anne Meyers, Debbie Miller, Sandy Machado, Sam Glasgow, David Leschinsky, and Caitlin Starr (Staff Liaison to the Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Community Relations)

Committee Members Absent: Elias Audy, Debbie Raisner Thompson, Steve Silverman, and Talia Glass

Staff: Meredith L. Mooney

Members of the Public: Morry Sapoznik, Jamie Siracusa, and State Representative Tommy Vitolo

Materials Presented: 3/3/2020 meeting agenda, 3/3/2020 Small Business Development Committee Meeting PowerPoint Slide Deck, draft language and explanation for proposed warrant article that would redistribute unused special liquor licenses in Washington Square to either Coolidge Corner or Brookline Village

Meeting Minutes

Approval of the February 4, 2020 Meeting Minutes:

- **The Small Business Development Committee (SBDC) unanimously approved the February 4, 2020 meeting minutes.**
 - o Note: Sam Glasgow and David Leschinsky arrived after the meeting minutes vote was taken.

Chair's Opening Remarks:

- Raul Fernandez encouraged committee members to participate in and help to get the word out about the upcoming Census.

Subcommittee Reports: The chairs of the SBDC's three subcommittees provided status updates on subcommittee work.

- **Commercial Areas Experience** (Melissa Tapper Goldman, Subcommittee Chair): The subcommittee's recent discussion focused on how to address persistent parking and

transportation challenges, as well as planning a Visioning Exercise for Brookline's commercial areas.

- Parking:
 - The subcommittee is working to identify a subject matter expert in Town Hall who can give an overview of key findings and identify knowledge gaps from previous parking or transportation studies that the Town has undertaken. However, it appears that parking studies to date have been conducted on a per project basis, and that knowledge does not reside with just one Town Hall staff member.
 - As an alternative to a comprehensive parking study, the subcommittee is interested in partnering with the Brookline Chamber of Commerce to distribute a survey to assess employee's parking and transit needs to inform advocacy efforts on behalf of local businesses.
 - Committee discussion revealed a lack of consensus around the scope and goals of parking or transportation study. The goals of such a study would need to be more clearly defined.
 - Raul requested that a discussion on parking be added as an agenda item at a future meeting. Given the amount of time and consideration that the subcommittee had spent on the issue of parking, Melissa felt that such a discussion would not be the best use of the full committee's time. Additional information (i.e. identifying knowledge gaps from previous parking studies) is needed before the committee can formulate a recommendation to the Select Board.
- Visioning Exercise:
 - Melissa and other subcommittee members are preparing to facilitate a Visioning Exercise at the next SBDC meeting. This exercise will help the committee identify shared areas of interest that the full committee can focus on.
- **Regulatory** (Sam Glasgow, Subcommittee Chair):
 - Potential Improvements to the Façade Loan Program:
 - The subcommittee is exploring opportunities to increase the value of the Town's existing Façade Loan Program to the business community. Improving the marketing and promotion of the program, and possibly expanding or even restructuring the program are under consideration.
 - \$20,000 in loan funding is currently unused. The subcommittee suspects that the maximum loan amount (i.e. \$10,000) as well as the program structure (i.e. a loan, not a grant) are not particularly valuable to businesses.
 - The subcommittee is reaching out to past façade loan program recipients to gather feedback, researching municipal finance issues around providing grants to businesses, and exploring creative partnership arrangements.
 - Committee members suggested that the subcommittee also consider what impact landlord-tenant issues might have on the program.
 - The subcommittee will explore further, develop a proposal, and report back to the full committee.
 - SCORE Business Workshop Series:

- The Town is working with SCORE Boston to establish a regular business workshop series at the Public Library of Brookline.

The Women and POC-Owned Business Subcommittee report was postponed until after the warrant article public hearing on the special liquor licenses reallocation warrant article, which was scheduled to begin at 9am.

Public Hearing on the Small Business Development Committee’s possible sponsorship of a warrant article proposing to reallocate two remaining special liquor licenses from Washington Square to Brookline Village and/or Coolidge Corner:

- Raul opened the public hearing on the warrant article and acknowledged that the committee had discussed this warrant article proposal at its February 4th meeting and at several subcommittee meetings throughout January and February.
- Meredith L. Mooney, Economic Development Planner and committee staff, gave an overview of the proposed warrant article. The warrant article language had been reviewed and signed off on by the Town Meeting Moderator, Town Counsel, and State Representative Tommy Vitolo.
- Committee Discussion:
 - o Staff clarified that the current warrant article language gives Washington Square restaurants the ability to obtain one of the remaining special liquor licenses up to and even after Town Meeting. A Washington Square restaurant would be able to obtain one of the special liquor licenses until the Legislature approves the new Home Rule language.
- Public Comment:
 - o Morry Sapoznik (Owner of Olive Connection): Attended the public hearing to learn more about the warrant article.
 - o Jamie Siracusa (Owner of Brothers & Sisters Co.): Is interested in obtaining a liquor license in the future and wanted to attend the public hearing to learn more about the warrant article proposal.
 - o State Representative Tommy Vitolo: Rep. Vitolo expressed his appreciation for the Town’s early outreach and clear communication on this issue, and responded to a committee member’s question about why these special liquor licenses have to be designated to a specific commercial district. In 2018, the Legislature allocated the original set of special liquor licenses (i.e. 12 licenses in addition to the Town’s standard liquor license allotment) to specific commercial areas, which had not been the Town’s preference. Based on Rep. Vitolo’s recent conversations with the chair of the Legislature’s Licensing Committee, it’s very unlikely that the Legislature would approve anything other than what’s included in the current warrant article proposal.
- **The committee unanimously voted favorable action on this warrant article and declared the committee’s intention to sponsor this warrant article as ten or more Brookline voters.**
- Raul Fernandez formally closed the public hearing.

Subcommittee Reports, Continued:

- **Women and POC-Owned Businesses** (Raul Fernandez, subcommittee member): The subcommittee continues to explore the unique challenges facing women and POC-owned businesses.

- Guest Speaker: Jen Faigel, Executive Director of [Commonwealth Kitchen](#), a non-profit food business incubator based in Dorchester, attended a recent subcommittee meeting to share her expertise and perspective on challenges facing women and POC-owned restaurants and food businesses in the Boston area.
- REAF Funding: A staff working group is developing an application and guidelines for the Town's Racial Equity Advancement Fund (REAF), which was created by Warrant Article 29 at the last Town Meeting. The subcommittee's next meeting will be focused on developing a proposal to present to the full committee about how REAF funding could be used to support women and POC-owned businesses in Brookline.
- New Women-Owned Business: Melissa Tapper Goldman reported that Andem Arts, a women-owned arts incubator created by the owners of Village Clay, is opening up in Brookline Village. They're hosting a So Far Sounds pop-up concert on March 13, 2020.
- Future Topic of Discussion: Although immigrant-owned businesses are not currently included in the SBDC's charge, the subcommittee would like the SBDC to consider incorporating immigrant-owned businesses into the SBDC's scope. Committee members inquired about the impetus for broadening the SBDC's scope and any examples of discriminatory policies in the Town's licensing and permitting processes.

Preparation for March 31st Visioning Exercise:

- Melissa Tapper Goldman provided instructions to committee members regarding the Visioning Exercise planned for the committee's next meeting on March 31, 2020.

Discussion and potential vote on Single-Payer Healthcare draft letter of support:

- Melissa Tapper Goldman gauged the committee's interest in signing a letter of support for single-payer healthcare that could be circulated to the state's Congressional delegation and perhaps some news outlets. At a previous meeting, the committee had identified the cost of healthcare as tremendous cost and time burden on small businesses.
- After some discussion, it was concluded that there was not consensus among the committee on endorsing the letter and/or single-payer healthcare. No vote was taken.

Upcoming Events:

- The Asian American Network is encouraging people to come out and support Asian-owned restaurants, especially Chinese-owned restaurants to counterbalance the impact that coronavirus fears have had on their businesses.
- The Brookline Chamber of Commerce's March 13th Warrant Article Forum will be an opportunity for businesses and the community to learn about business-related warrant article proposals. The event is free and open to the public. Free pizza will be served.
- The Brookline Chamber of Commerce's LGBTQ Chamber luncheon.

Next Steps:

- Raul concluded the meeting by encouraging subcommittees to develop more concrete proposals to bring to the full committee for further consideration and a potential vote.

Meeting adjourned.