



**SMALL BUSINESS  
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

**Small Business Development Committee Meeting**

May 11, 2021 | 9:00 – 10:30am | via Zoom Videoconference

**Committee Member Attendance:** *Attendance noted as Yes (Y) or No (N)*

Raul Fernandez, Chair	Y	Jenn Mason	Y
Elias Audy	N	Anne Meyers	Y
Tracy Chen	Y	Debbie G. Miller	Y
Raj Dhanda	N	Colleen Suhanosky	Y
David Gladstone	Y	Debbie Raisner Thompson	Y
Talia Glass	N	LeRoy Watkins	Y
Melissa Tapper Goldman	N	Andrew Weiner	Y
David Leschinsky	Y		

**Staff:** Meredith L. Mooney

**Members of the Public:** Sadhna Brown

**Materials Presented:** [5/11/2021 meeting agenda](#), [April 13, 2021 draft meeting minutes](#), [May 4, 2021 Memo Economic Development Division Staff Updates to the Small Business Development Committee \(SBDC\)](#)

**Zoom Recording Link:**

[https://brooklinema.zoomgov.com/rec/share/ZvaglOa\\_B9n4ka2sQxlEkyuUm\\_9RP3rP1-OV8BVJ88YBJhJ49PMqXXQ08-hLHEDP.Q8PHp8gfP1JZNWKR?startTime=1618319114000](https://brooklinema.zoomgov.com/rec/share/ZvaglOa_B9n4ka2sQxlEkyuUm_9RP3rP1-OV8BVJ88YBJhJ49PMqXXQ08-hLHEDP.Q8PHp8gfP1JZNWKR?startTime=1618319114000)

**Meeting Minutes**

With a quorum present, Chair Raul Fernandez convened the meeting.

**April 13, 2021 Meeting Minutes**

- The committee approved the draft April 13, 2021 meeting minutes 11-0-0.

**Public Comment**

- No public comment was given.

## Discussion and brainstorm about commercial area activations and programming, as well as potential funding sources

- Potential funding sources:
  - American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds – Federal guidelines were recently released on how that money can be utilized.
  - Local Rapid Recovery Plan (future implementation funds are anticipated - either state or federal funds)
  - Event sponsorships
  
- Potential projects/initiatives:
  - Centre Street Parking Deck: Raul spoke with Brookline’s Economic Development Director Kara Brewton, as well as State Representative Tommy Vitolo about pursuing a parking deck in the Centre Street Lot. Construction of a multi-functional parking structure would present a myriad of opportunities and benefits for Brookline’s largest commercial area (e.g. transforming the streetscape, green and community space creation)
  - Creation of community space behind the Coolidge Corner Theatre
  - Plant new street trees, flowers (account for maintenance/watering cost) to brighten and beautify Coolidge Corner
  - Adding more decorative lighting
  - Support for regular outdoor events and programming
    - Enlisting professional event planner services (at least in the interim 2-3 years until a district management entity can be formed and take over coordination of Coolidge Corner events)
    - Area-wide scavenger hunts
    - Marketing and promotion of events and programming
    - Event ideas:
      - Food tours
      - Public art walk
      - Establishment of a Third Thursday or First Friday festivities
      - Silent Discos
  - Create more (indoor and outdoor) live entertainment.
  - Public art installations
  - Permanent outdoor games (e.g. Twister, shuffle board, chess)
  - Parking management improvements
    - Improved public parking signage (e.g. underutilized Babcock St lot)
  - Vacant storefront activation: Community art project/competition
  
- Action Items:
  - More stakeholder outreach and building community support for Coolidge Corner area improvements, especially a Centre Street parking deck.
  - Provide a compelling comprehensive vision for improving Coolidge Corner
  - Planning for year-round activities, attractions to bring people into Brookline’s business districts

- Prioritize projects to be included in the LRRP program that are applicable to other Brookline commercial areas
- Parking management improvements to make out-of-town visitor experience in Brookline's commercial areas easier and more enjoyable
- Create a business improvement district to provide an independently-resourced entity to manage/execute various commercial area initiatives, oversee implementation of a strategy to ensure Coolidge Corner's long-term competitive standing against other destination areas
- Explore extending number of Coolidge Corner Farmer's Market days
  - Or explore additional day(s) for the farmers market, but in a different location in town
  - Potential Concerns: Local businesses have reported a dip in revenue on farmers market days due to fewer parking space availability, and shoppers returning home immediately after shopping to keep their market items fresh
- Determine whether food trucks might be beneficial to Brookline's commercial area
  - Opportunity to support start-up food entrepreneurs?
  - Timing of introducing food trucks while local restaurants are still in recovery post-COVID?
- Explore Brookline Chamber of Commerce taking a leadership role in events planning
- Explore opportunities for small businesses to benefit from the US Open
- Explore opportunities for more Station Street activations

#### **Other Business**

- **Policy issue for future exploration:** Reduce barriers to small businesses working with the Town re: recycling
- **Coolidge Corner Theatre Expansion** construction due to start summer 2021. Construction impacts anticipated.
- Gillian Jackson, the Town's arts coordination, is willing to run an arts and music series in our commercial areas if funding becomes available.
- Brookline Chamber of Commerce's **Restaurants for Brookline initiative**, a collaboration with the Chamber, Food Pantry, and Senior Center, which connected Brookline restaurants with people suffering from food insecurity, will be extended with fundraising and grant funding support.

**Meeting adjourned at 10:30am.**