



**SMALL BUSINESS  
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

**Small Business Development Committee Meeting**

June 22, 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	Y	Anne Meyers	Y
Tracy Chen	Y	Debbie G. Miller	Y
Raj Dhanda	N	Colleen Suhanosky	Y
David Gladstone	Y	Debbie Raisner Thompson	N
Talia Glass	Y	LeRoy Watkins	N
Melissa Tapper Goldman	N	Andrew Weiner	Y
David Leschinsky	Y		

**Staff:** Meredith L. Mooney, Caitlin Starr

**Members of the Public:** Ann Burke, Elizabeth Jones

**Materials Presented:** [6/22/2021 meeting agenda](#), [May 11, 2021 draft meeting minutes](#)

**Zoom Recording Link:**

<https://brooklinema.zoomgov.com/rec/share/CkFaaV6u7oZetSN3ToLYR3CzdMYB7SfptX10VFBBi0XPVL4rBxHfwq9P-gMWQbc-.O-BDByxWLNhGprkF>

**Meeting Minutes**

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

**May 11, 2021 Meeting Minutes**

- The committee approved the draft May 11, 2021 meeting minutes 8-0-0. Two committee members were having technical difficulties at the start of the meeting and did not participate in the meeting minutes vote. Talia Glass joined the meeting after the meeting minutes vote was taken.

**Public Comment**

- No public comment was given.

## Economic Development Division staff updates

- Meredith L. Mooney provided the following updates:
  - **Future of outdoor dining in Brookline:** The two outdoor seating warrant articles, which the Small Business Development Committee championed, passed with overwhelming support at Town Meeting. A staff working group will reconvene over the summer to begin planning for a more permanent outdoor dining program, which will likely take effect in January 2022. Options for a more permanent outdoor dining program, or perhaps a temporary pilot program, will be presented to the Select Board in the fall.
  - **Monthly Virtual Office Hours:** In July, the Economic Development Division will experiment with transitioning the COVID-era virtual town halls with the Brookline business community to standing virtual office hours.
  - **Mural approval policy:** The Economic Development Division recently reached out to the Regulatory Division, which staffs the Planning Board and administers the Town's sign and façade review process, regarding modifying and streamlining the Town's mural approval process. This project was initiated in anticipation of projects promoting murals and public art installations that will likely be included in the Town's Local Rapid Recovery Plan.

Committee members who attended the Economic Development Advisory Board's [retail panel discussion](#) the previous evening referenced a recommendation made by one of the panelists that the business licensing and permitting approval process be made as simple as possible. That same philosophy should apply to any re-envisioning of the mural approval process.

Staff should seek further committee input after more initial research and internal staff discussions.

- **2<sup>nd</sup> Round of Small Business Relief Grants:** Due to legal concerns cited by Town Counsel, the Select Board would need to approve the SBDC's recommendation to prioritize WMBEs in the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of Small Business Relief Grant funding, and formally direct staff to incorporate that new piece of criteria into the updated grant guidelines. Although a formal vote was not taken, the majority of committee members indicated continued support for prioritizing DBEs in the upcoming grant funding awards. Concerns and parallels were drawn between this proposal and a recent legal challenge to the Small Business Administration's prioritizing DBEs in the distribution of the Restaurant Revitalization Fund.

## Local Rapid Recovery Plan Update (Ann Burke, LRRP Plan Facilitator)

- Ann Burke, LRRP Facilitator, provided a status update on the development of the Rapid Recovery Plan.

- A lot of helpful feedback has been gathered through focus group discussions, which will be wrapped up in late June/early July.
- Emerging project ideas:
  - Parking utilization strategy and management, as well as a multi-functional parking deck on the Centre Street Lot. These projects would require consultation with one of the LRRP's Subject Matter Experts (SMEs).
  - Creation of an outdoor dining toolkit for restaurants to improve the aesthetics of outdoor dining set-ups.
  - Incorporating more murals and public art installations into the commercial area.
  - A "popportunity" initiative providing low barriers of entry for aspiring entrepreneurs, especially MWBEs, modeled on Central Square's Popportunity initiative, as well as the Town of Ashland's Corner Spot program.
  - District branding
  - Creation of an incentivize program for property owners to optimize the retail mix.
  - A project to explore streamlining the Town's business license and permitting process is under consideration. The Town of Ludlow's expedited business permitting overlay district is a potential model for this initiative.
  - Creation of a Business Improvement District as a sustainable, "backbone" district management entity.
- Committee questions and feedback:
  - Is additional staffing required at the Town level to implement these projects? Ideally, Town staff will be able to work directly with BID staff to facilitate the projects and programs proposed in the LRRP. An interim solution – perhaps an events coordinator/consultant - will be needed in the meantime until a BID is up and running.
  - Include a community gathering space as part of the multi-functional parking deck on the Centre Street Lot. Currently there are no large, community gathering areas (e.g. plazas, large green space) in Coolidge Corner or JFK Crossing.
  - Improvement of the commercial area's the overall cleanliness is also needed.
- Next steps:
  - Wrap up focus groups and one-on-one interviews.
  - Consult with SMEs on more complex project proposals.
  - Refine project ideas and rubrics.
  - Complete plan and submit to the state by late August, mid-September at the latest.

**Diverse Business Directory Presentation (Caitlin Staff, DICR Assistant Director & Elizabeth Jones, DICR Intern)**

- With the assistance of Elizabeth Jones, DICR's summer intern, the office of Diversity Inclusion and Community Relations will be launching a Diverse Business Directory. The office will begin gathering data in July. Data will be collected regarding diverse business ownership, staff, as well

as accessibility features. Information will be gathered through October, and a full directory will be released to the public in January. The directory will be updated annually going forward.

#### **Other Business**

- **Chamber updates:** Debbie Miller provided updates on Chamber programming, including Discover Brookline and Restaurants for Brookline program.

#### **Committee housekeeping (Summer meeting schedule)**

- The committee resolved to convene in July, with the potential for another meeting in August in addition to a joint meeting with the Economic Development Advisory Board to review the final projects to be included in the Local Rapid Recovery Plan.

#### **Potential committee projects or to-do list items:**

- Streamlining the business license and permitting review process, starting with capturing more “small business journeys” in opening a business in Brookline shortly after a business has opened and when the experience is still fresh in a business owner’s mind. Perhaps also surveying recently opened businesses, and engaging members of Bob Allen’s team for feedback. Raul and Anne volunteered to work on this initiative.
- Conversation with the DPW Commissioner and the SBDC to identify possible areas of collaboration and discuss commercial areas beautification opportunities.

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