



**When our businesses succeed so does our community**

*The Strasburg Business Alliance will foster economic growth and prosperity in the Strasburg community. The Alliance will positively and actively promote local businesses and community interests through networking, advocacy, events and education.*

## **Meeting Notes**

**August 20, 2020**

**Market Pavilion at Strasburg Square 6:00**

**Participants:** Kyle Slonecker, Chair, Siblings' Rivalry Brewery  
Sharon Baroncelli, CEO, Shenandoah County Chamber of Commerce  
Abby Walters, Sager Realty  
Doreen Ricard, One Stop Studio Shop  
Alice Muellerweiss, Anytime Fitness, Hopewell Bed & Bike  
Kevin Watson, Anytime Fitness, Hopewell Bed & Bike  
Michelle Warren, Dirty to Clean Grooming Spa  
Sarah Davis, E Pearls, Artful Designs  
David Lassiter, E Pearls  
Melissa Radar, Sugar Creek  
Sue Haynes, Clementine Vintage, Skyline Paintball & Laser Tag  
Olivia Hilton, Town of Strasburg  
Marybeth Price, Box Office Brewery  
Becky Moser, Becky Bundts  
Brandy Boies, Mayor, Town of Strasburg  
Kath Stanley, Secretary, Lydia's Clothes Closet

**Comments from our Chairperson, Kyle Slonecker:** Kyle welcomed everyone to the meeting. He noted we were still in Phase 3 of the re-opening associated with COVID-19 precautions. Per the Governor's guidance the next step would be complete reopening with no restrictions or to returning to Phase 2.

At the end of the meeting Kyle informed the group that Marylisa Lichens, Vice Chair, had tendered her resignation. Marylisa cited several reasons to include overseeing her children's virtual learning, starting up a new business and caring for her parents. Kyle

then tendered his resignation from the Alliance citing the need to become involved with his children's virtual educational needs. No selections for replacements were made at this meeting, but everyone was asked to think about this for discussion and decisions at the next scheduled meeting. Appreciation was expressed for Kyle's and Marylisa's efforts in getting the Alliance started.

**Potential Funds:** Both Sharon Baroncelli and Olivia Hilton talked about the funds available to Small Businesses through Shenandoah County. This was funding from the Federal CARES Act. The first tranche of funds, authorized by the Board of Supervisors for Small Business, totaled \$500,000. Sharon reported out the county had received 38 funding applications, reviewed 29 and approved 27. About \$300,000 of the initial \$500,000 covers the work done so far. Those not yet reviewed was due to needing additional information. Olivia reported that she thought 6 of the applications received came from Strasburg businesses. When asked how this funding opportunity was communicated to Strasburg businesses, Olivia stated she had personally reached out to 40-50 Strasburg businesses informing them of this opportunity. Olivia mentioned some of the responses she received suggested some business owners were not interested in applying for additional funding due to previous attempts and difficulties.

Sharon noted that the County has received an additional \$3.8M in CARES Act funding. Some of those funds, if needed, may be set aside for small business recovery. \$50,000 is being set-aside for local non-profits. There would be a separate application for non-profit organizations and the applications would be reviewed by a Chamber Non-profit Grant Review Committee.

Sharon also talked about the "Rebuild Virginia" funding through the state. \$70 million has been earmarked for small businesses. The cap for such funds would be \$10,000. Mary Beth Price noted that if a business received Federal Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) funding, they were not eligible for "Rebuild Virginia" funding.

Per discussion at the July 18, 2020, meeting, Shenandoah County Tourism & Economic Development is applying for a \$500,000 Community Development Block Grant through the state's Department of Housing & Community Development. If awarded, this grant will enable the County to establish a Small Business Grant program through which local, small businesses will be able to apply for up to \$10,000 in rent/mortgage relief and possibly costs expended to re-open after COVID-related closures. This has yet to be approved.

Doreen Ricard mentioned the Town of Strasburg may not need all of the CARES Act funding provided by the county. There had been some informal discussions of using remaining funds to support small business in Strasburg, but this would have to be done through the County. Doreen asked if other Towns were returning CARES funding to the County to be used for this purpose. Sharon shared that other Towns are having these discussions as well.

Melissa Radar asked if funds were not used, would they be lost. She is concerned about the unknown for the fall. Sharon indicated unused funding goes back to the County. She could not predict what would happen in the future.

Kyle said if a business had yet to hear from the federal Small Business Administration on their loan request, they should reach out to the State Small Business Administration. He found the State had better communications with the Federal Government than he had.

**Other Uses for CARES Funds:** Doreen asked if there were any initiatives under discussion to help with Day Care, especially during this time of virtual schooling. Sharon said the Chamber was addressing this issue. Someone suggested churches may be interested, especially if there was funding to support this type of activity. Sharon said the Chamber would be happy to work with any Church that reached out to her.

**Promotion Council:** At the July 21, 2020, meeting a council was formed to discuss ideas and programs to promote Strasburg Businesses. The council included, Olivia Hilton, Alice Muellerweiss, Sue Haynes, Sharon and Brandy Boies. (Note Alice was unable to attend the Promotion Council meeting due to technical difficulties with the video conferencing application.) Brandy had an idea which she shared with the Promotion Council and she presented it to the Alliance at this meeting.

Brandy is interested in have a “Mayor’s Wellness Challenge” for the town. It would be a holistic approach to wellness to include

- ✓ Social health,
- ✓ Mental Health,
- ✓ Intellectual Health,
- ✓ Occupational Health,
- ✓ Physical Health and
- ✓ Spiritual Health

Those interested in participating would do an activity in each one of the above categories, completing a “Wellness Wheel.” In addition to the focus on the participant, another objective would be to draw citizens to Strasburg’s business areas. Brandy was looking for feedback on interest and whether Alliance members thought such a program would work in Strasburg

Olivia mentioned there are other ongoing efforts within the County that could be tied to this. She also mentioned the “Main Street Organization” that is awarding \$5,000 for good ideas, suggesting this could be a possible funding source.

Brandy said she was not looking to the Alliance to run this program, just support it. Sarah Davis suggested the concept and objectives for such an event be fleshed out some more. Becky thought this was a good idea because she meets folks at the weekly Farmer’s Market that just want to chat. She thinks such an effort could bring the community together even more. Further, since what Brandy laid out covered many areas, this would best be led by the Town.

Other promotion ideas were discussed briefly to include:

- ✓ Continue support of T-Shirt Thursday where participating businesses provide a 10% discount to anyone wearing a t-shirt advertising a County business or Town. Participating businesses should also highlight their involvement.
- ✓ Upgrades to November's Small Business Saturday that the County Chamber will be rolling out.
- ✓ Linking your business to the Towns Website. The Town is working on a form a business would fill out to establish the link
- ✓ Place your businesses cards and/or brochures at the Strasburg Visitor's Center. Also think of sharing the same with Hotels
- ✓ The Town is working on an initiative to highlight the many butterflies throughout town. If you have the space, ask for a butterfly to be painted on your property.
- ✓ Start a Welcome New Residents project. This used to be done.

**Spring Festival and Christmas Parade Councils:** Neither of these Councils had been able to meet during the past month. Meetings have been scheduled and they will be reporting out at the next Alliance meeting.

**Other:** Melissa mentioned she had heard the limits to the Front Porch Friday events was suggesting to people do not come into town if you do not have a ticket. Olivia reaffirmed the limit giving out 150 tickets was a must and she would feel uncomfortable suggesting others come. However, nothing precluded a business from advertising the event and suggesting alternative seating area.

Sue Haynes said if a business accepts American Express cards, they were providing free hand sanitizer, signage and decals to promote physical distancing.

Olivia asked for feedback for the Community Advisory Team. Should there be a focus on existing businesses or new businesses. The voice consensus was existing businesses.

The Town, in partnership with the Farmer's Market, will be holding the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Harvest Festival on September 19<sup>th</sup>. The Festival will be scaled down from previous years and will be held at Strasburg Square rather than Strasburg Park. There will be a truck the community can fill with food. Stay tuned for more information.

**Next Meeting, Thursday, September 17, 2020**