Grand Haven Main Street Board Work Session Meeting Minutes
Grand Haven Main Street
Wednesday, June 3, 2020 @ 8:00 a.m.
Via Zoom

In attendance: Jeremy Swiftney, Cara Galbavi, Kyle Doyon, Dave Garland, Sharon Behm, Carolyn Taylor, Mayor Bob Monetza, John Steinbech, Kristin Hibbard, Vicki Ellis, Todd Anthes, Cyndi Casemier, Steve Loftis, Bob Warren, Andy VanderHoek

Other: Mike Dora, Pat McGinnis

Call to order 8:00 AM

a. Re-Opening Strategies:

Jeremy: Community re-openings across the state vary, dependent on the community and how similar they are to Grand Haven, e.g. community size, merchant type, and timing of usual season. Supporting local is main theme throughout. Other communities have struggled with their city or local municipalities to re-open and to expand into outdoor spaces; however, we have been fortunate in Grand Haven with the support of our City.

Sharon: All Board members watch the Chamber webinar featuring Petoskey Chamber of Commerce and the ups and downs with re-opening over Memorial Day weekend. Jeremy will share the link with the Board. Sharon’s takeaways: locals were very supportive, locals wore PPE without issue, cohesive signage throughout the entire city with unified message that explained City-wide and merchant expectations -- there was one clear message throughout the City and with the merchants. Few escalated situations with customers not wearing masks. Very stressful time for merchants and employees with more cleaning protocols and customer control procedures. One merchant required his employees to take a break every 90 minutes to step away and then relocate to a different area of the store to reduce stress levels. Many stores changed store layouts multiple times throughout the weekend, so the ability to pivot and change quickly is important. The health and safety and mental wellness of the employees is of highest concern. Regarding restaurants, it is a very stressful time for the restaurant owners and for staff especially due to staff having to keep customer counts due to capacity limits, no condiments being on the tables, needs for disposable or wipeable menus, and limited menus to be able to turn tables over more quickly. Arose with patrons moving tables to sit closer to friends and becoming belligerent if told not to do so.

Jeremy: The Chamber, in coordination with NOCHS, the City, and Main Street DDA, is working on a cohesive signage system for the entire city. Andy mentioned that Fortinos support this cohesive signage and a unified message among the merchants.

Vicki: Main Street DDA needs to give retailers and merchants options on how to proceed. Perhaps we should take a survey of our stakeholders to determine their thoughts and plans so that we can coordinate a message so that all merchants and stakeholders can be on the same page.

Steve: Reports that 95% of retail merchants and restaurants in areas that have re-opened up north are collaborating very well, although this is a somber occasion for the area (e.g. only two restaurants were open in Traverse City over the Memorial Day weekend although restaurants were permitted to be open). Some guests are more comfortable with others, and we have to keep in mind that this is an ever-changing process. Hopefully, Grand Haven can be ahead of the game due to City support and our pre-planning. We need to be mindful and find out which stakeholders are actually opening because not all merchants will or can.

Bob: The City would like to see a city-wide merchant protocol regarding expectations for customers and unified message to increase visibility and customer comfort. The weather also needs to be a concern especially with outdoor events.
Steve: The Ottawa County Health Department will also need to be involved in the process to oversee how things are going.

b. Outside and Outside the Box

Kristin: Inquired about the timing for re-opening outdoor public spaces. Jeremy stated that opening will be dependent on actual merchant desire and availability and approvals from the OCHD and MLCC.

Steve: Advised that “social districts” are being addressed in Lansing (e.g., the first block of Washington to be closed for expanded restaurant and retail space). Merchants are working with the City, MLCC, OCHD, GH Planning Commission, and DPS regarding openings. The positive takeaway is that the merchants are working together, cross/retail and cross/restaurant to support one another and move forward together.

Sharon: A template of the collaborative poster from the Chamber is being sent out this morning. Once approved, we need to distribute this poster throughout our district as soon as possible to show the unified message.


Steve: Asked Whether there is funding through the GHACF, MMS, or in our own budget to use to update our website to showcase being open and to plug micro-events / media calendar. We should also use existing events to slim down to a micro-level or reschedule and promote (e.g. micro bourbon tasting throughout Washington restaurants, OSA rescheduling anniversary party from March to sometime in the fall.)

Sharon: Per Joy Gaasch, Dave Lorenz at Pure Michigan has been trying to seek funding and guidance from the State to move forward with festivals, as they are particularly important throughout Michigan, and will keep us updated.

d. Increasing Excitement Strategies – Local Business PASSPORT

Vicki: Idea of “small business crawl” which has worked in other communities. We cannot do it through our website due to the lack of funding and timing; however, we can do an actual tangible “passport” program. Inside each passport would be exclusive offers from our stakeholders for customers to use throughout a 30-day period. All stakeholders (retail merchants, restaurants, and service providers) would be included. Charge $10.00 per passport. Passport would come with either a Grand Haven mask or Main Street bag or other goodie, and the passport program would also coincide with other giveaways. She is seeking approval from the Board on her budget and her passport plan, so she can approach the stakeholders by end of week as to whether they would like to be included. The 30-day passport program would allow customers to come on their own schedule and not over a one day or weekend event and therefore handle crowd control and capacity issues.

Sharon: Motion to approve Vicki’s passport plan and budget as presented and allow the Promotions Committee to continue to pursue the passport plan. Andy seconded the Motion. No discussion. All approved (Bob Warren abstained without vote due to Zoom technical issues). Motion passed.

Steve: The media in their “COVID cancellation” approach needs to be addressed, and the media needs to be better educated so we can better control our message regarding the fact that we are open, we are planning events, and it is safe to come. We also need to remain flexible because two weeks from now everything may change again.

Sharon: We should do a Facebook live feed on Mondays entitled “Mondays on Main Street” to showcase our stakeholders and what is really going on in Main Street. These videos can occur every Monday throughout the year to show that Main Street is a year-round destination. Jeremy stated that these live videos are starting on Monday.
Carolyn: There has been a collaborative effort with the City between Main Street and various merchants highlighting Grand Haven's re-opening. These videos will be released today.

Kristen: Business owner friend in Saugatuck has a huge Facebook following, high traction, receiving free advertising and media publicity which continues to be shared and ongoing.

e. GRAND HAVEN IS OPEN and WELCOMES YOU!

Vicki: Working on a tagline. As of right now it is, “Times have changed. We have changed. We still visit Grand Haven Main Street.” Sharon offered that “GRAND HAVEN IS OPEN and WELCOMES YOU!” is a more succinct and positive message. Kyle spoke in support of the shorter message, as did Steve. Sharon even suggested that the tag line could even be shorter. Vicki will continue to work on ideas to shorten an emphasize our reopening and positivity.

Dave: Suggested a ribbon cutting on Main Street to showcase the opening of Main Street which could be used as a platform media and a social photo opportunity.

Pat McGinnis spoke wanting to remind the Board about the collaborative videos between merchants, the City, and Main Street as previously discussed. Pat also mentioned that he was contacted regarding the three-hour parking limit but is still unsure why. He advised that any change in parking will have to be related to the situation that is going on. Bob Monetzta stated that it was his thought that any interest in the three-hour parking limit be would be related to the possible limited parking on Washington due to the allowance for encroachment on the street for restaurant and retail outdoor expansion. Lastly, Pat stated that the City website will be completely changed and move away from addressing COVID emergency information and instead set a message of Grand Haven being open and suggested that the Main Street website should set forth a cohesive message and state the same.

f. Public Comment: Public comments found on Facebook were read. One of the public comments stated that the Ottawa County Health Department was unaware of the planned outdoor restaurant and retail expansion; however,

Pat: He, on behalf of the City, has specifically made calls and has had conversations with the Ottawa County Health Department regarding outdoor expansion and they have been adequately notified. It is up to the individual restaurants and merchants (who will have to each apply with the OCHD and MLCC as appropriate) in order to re-open or expand outdoors.

Steve: The Michigan Restaurant and Lodging Association is the best resource for merchants and restaurants for guidance and help, but reminded us that all counties are moving in different directions and there are still a lot of questions regarding Executive Orders and thus we need to remain flexible.

Adjourned: 9:07 a.m.

We are Grand Haven Main Street. We are partners and volunteers from neighborhoods, businesses, and community organizations who are working together to create a one-of-a-kind place and experience that honors our residents, engages visitors, and inspires entrepreneurs. We are everyday people who bring ideas and energy to stage community events, to preserve and celebrate Grand Haven's history and traditions, and to craft an economically vibrant environment in the heart of our community. We are part of a rising tide, pooling our resources, and investing passion to create a dynamic city center that is a source of pride today, tomorrow, and for generations to come.