



**TOWN COUNCIL
WORKSHOP
MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 27, 2018**

Normand Albert, At Large 2018
Kasie Kolbe, District 1 2018
Allen Ward, District 2 2018
Christopher Brunelle, At Large 2019
Mark Lunt, District 1 2019
Kris Crawford, District 2, 2019
Fern Larochelle, At Large 2020

CALL TO ORDER. The Chairman, Allen Ward, called the meeting to order at 6:01PM.

ROLL CALL. Members present were Councilors Ward, Kolbe, Larochelle, Brunelle, Crawford, and Lunt. Also present were Diane Barnes, Town Manager; Tracey Steuber, Economic and Community Development Director/ Moxie Festival Coordinator; Ross Cunningham, Positive Change Lisbon; Mark Stevens, Park and Recreation Director; 7 members of the Moxie Festival Committee, and 1 citizen.

MOXIE FESTIVAL DISCUSSION

Ms. Tracey Steuber, Moxie Festival Coordinator, presented an overview of the Moxie Festival. Ms. Steuber stated the festival takes all year to plan, and the schedule really gets hectic in April when the committee begins coordinating with businesses, processing vendor applications, souvenirs, etc...

Councilor Ward asked if there were other resources the town could use as a template to do better. Councilor Ward stated that the staff had so much time invested in the festival and asked why the economic and community development director was involved in the festival. Ms. Steuber stated she had been hired by the town of Lisbon in 2013, and was asked at that time to be the coordinator for the Moxie Festival, as a part of her job. Ms. Steuber said she became the main contact between the town, the local businesses, and the volunteers. She said the ultimate goal was to enable the festival committee to be a non-profit entity with its own by-laws. However, the committee would still need a liaison with the town due to the fact that the town is ultimately responsible for the festival and needs to have approval over certain budgetary items such as insurance and various permits required.

Ms. Steuber stated the volunteers work hard throughout the year, and as with any volunteer program, they seem to be the same people every year. The schedule is such that they are maxed out and need more volunteers as the festival has grown larger.

Councilor Larochelle asked to hear thoughts from the moxie festival committee about where the festival is today and where it is going.

Several committee members said the Moxie Festival is the biggest event of the year for Lisbon. Members stated the festival brings our community together, not only with each other and their families, but with people from all over the world. Many said the festival has really put Lisbon "on the map". Jonathon Jones recalled a trip to London where he learned, in a conversation, that someone had heard of the festival. Councilor Kolbe stated most of the kids at the Whoopie Pie contest were from away. Two were from other countries. Ms. Steuber said the Hampton Inn located in Lewiston promoted the Moxie Festival and offered a discount rate, which helped to spread the word to travelers staying in Maine. Deb Wagner said the festival has evolved in a good way offering more and more events each year.

Ross Cunningham stated no one could really answer the question of why the town puts on the moxie festival. Mr. Cunningham said he would like to see a stronger mission statement from the committee. Councilor Kolbe agreed, stating she grew up in Lisbon and the festival was always a part of life in the town. She said until she got involved with the festival she never really thought about why the town put on the festival; it just happened.

Several members of the committee stated that logistics was a challenge. The festival is so spread out that some of the patrons miss out on some of the events or do not know where to go. Ms. Steuber stated Marcea Crawford was coordinating the "Art Walk", a new event for the next festival. The "Art Walk" would provide a connection

between the vendors and the MTM. Ms. Steuber also mentioned that Miss Crawford was a valuable asset to the committee and would be getting college credit for her help with the festival planning.

Councilor Larochelle said the businesses really benefit from the festival, however they do not understand from where the Moxie Festival gets its budgetary backing. The business owner, when asked for a donation, always assumes the town pays for the festival via tax revenues. Councilor Larochelle stated that businesses also worry about vendors setting up in their storefronts. Ms. Steuber stated that she, along with the Vendor Coordinator, visit with all the local business owners to discuss the festival schedule and what their plans are for the event. No vendors will be placed where it may interfere with the operation of those businesses wishing to remain open during the festival. Councilor Larochelle said it would be nice to see the businesses take ownership of the downtown area events.

Councilor Larochelle said a lot of things have changed legally over the past few years, and that has made it harder for businesses to get more involved. One example was the parade. In the past, if a business or individual wanted to join the parade, they could. Now, proof of insurance is required. Ms. Steuber agreed stating unfortunate societal changes have made more required permits and insurance increases necessary to protect both the event participants and those enjoying the festival.

Mr. Cunningham stated from the budget report it looked like the festival made money, yet vendors and non profits are charged fees, and monies were received from tax revenue. Mr. Cunningham said, from an imaging point of view, the festival made a bunch of money. Ms. Steuber said the money that is made from the festival pays for the upcoming festival. Ms. Steuber explained various expenses involved with the festival that must be met before the event takes place. Ms. Steuber also stated that some of the parade participants are paid to appear in the parade. This is how some of the Non-Profits earn money for their charities. She said the festival also relied a great deal on the Coca Cola sponsorship, and new expenses arise as the festival grows larger. She said she had developed a job description with Mrs. Barnes for an assistant event coordinator to help with the festival in the future. She had reached out to colleges to try and hire a student to help alleviate expenses and give a student a chance to earn college credit while working the festival. Ms. Steuber also explained that most festivals are not run by the presiding towns. Many festivals are either run by a local Chamber of Commerce or involved in the Main Street Program. Mrs. Steuber said these programs work through large business sponsorships, such as local Hospitals or Hotels. Lisbon does not have these resources.

Councilor Ward stated he would like the committee to embrace non-profits and encourage more participation and ideas from them. Councilor Ward stated non-profits were the reason the festival is so successful today, as evident in the volunteers today.

Councilor Ward asked what the mission statement was for the festival. Ms. Steuber stated the festival not only helped bring the community together, but helped to introduce the assets of Lisbon, such as Beaver Park to festival goers, and to demonstrate what a wonderful place Lisbon is to live or conduct business.

Councilor Ward said roughly 40,000 people attend the festival. Councilor Ward asked how much money the festival brings to local businesses. Ms. Steuber stated businesses say it is the biggest day of the year for them. In fact, many businesses are reaching out to the town for other events held throughout the year due to the success of the moxie festival.

Councilor Larochelle asked if the committee could see having an event manager coordinate the festival. Mrs. Wagner said that no one person can do all that the festival requires and anyone new would have to work closely with the committee. The festival has become so large that it can no longer be run by volunteers alone. Mr. Jones stated the amounts of hours required as the festival nears are equivalent to a second job. Several committee members stated that Ms. Steuber's wealth of knowledge was indispensable to the committee, and they would like to keep working with her as a liaison to the town. The committee also stated they would like to have a member of the Council at the monthly meetings.

Councilor Ward conveyed an observation from Councilor Albert stating that what was discussed at this meeting was for the festival budget 2 years from now in an attempt to keep from having to discuss last minutes changes to next year's festival budget. Mrs. Barnes said that this year's budget already included the request for an event manager to help Ms. Steuber. Councilor Ward asked what levels of resources were required. Ms. Steuber stated that 20 hours a week would work from April up to the festival. The Manager would be dealing with the media, graphic design, vendor applications, and mailings, and all the various administration activities regarding the festival.

Councilor Ward asked the committee to submit a list of goals for the festival and encouraged the Committee to continue open communications with the Town Council.

ADJOURNMENT

Seeing no other comments, Councilor Ward adjourned the workshop at 8:18 PM.

Michelle Foss, Assistant Town Clerk
Date Approved: March 6, 2018