



Downtown Bloomsburg, Inc. (DBI) will bring together diverse community interests and resources to promote the economic vitality, architectural heritage, and cultural vibrancy of the Downtown commercial district for the benefit of greater Bloomsburg.

### **DBI public-input session**

Tuesday, 7 February 2023, 6:00 p.m.

In person, Brewskis, 22 East Main Street

Board members present: Matt Beagle, Oren B. Helbok, Justin Hummel, Jessica Lehman, Jeff Lylo, Josh Nespoli, Sue Norton, Tim Pelton, Cindy Schultz, Carey Smith, Tim Wagner, Mike Zarrett  
Others present: 50-60 downtown business owners and other area residents

- Tim W. welcomed everyone and urged their participation; he said that we had NOT gathered to talk about parking.
- A few attendees aired complaints about street signs, sidewalk trip hazards, and inadequate lighting. Others asked about banners commemorating veterans and flags at the fountain; Tim W. pointed out that DBI had recently bought the new holiday banners and bows.
- Justin said that at a meeting at Bloom U. he heard suggestions that DBI provide orientation materials to students; that we put downtown directories on dorm bulletin boards; that we engage students in street cleaning; that downtown businesses offer internships; and we engage more with the professional engagement office.
- An attendee asked who recruits new businesses to town. Tim W. said that we have no organized program for it, but the Town makes finding information (on its Web site) about starting a business easier than in the past. Josh said that making the building codes – and the Codes office – more business-friendly has helped; we should maintain an inventory of vacancies. Various people suggested that all of us can serve as ambassadors, talking to business owners in other towns as we travel to them about the advantages of locating in Bloom. Tim W. said that we should have a brochure that we can carry and give out.
- Various attendees talked about other town's events, such as "Friday After Five" in Cumberland, Maryland.
- Someone said that we need a single calendar for events; Justin said that the Town will shortly ask everyone to post their events to the Town's Google calendar; it will appear on the revamped bloomsburgpa.org Web site.
- Tim W. and Matt explained DBI's boundaries (between East and West Streets, Ridge Avenue to 3<sup>rd</sup> Street) and its history. An attendee asked if anyone can attend DBI board meetings; another suggested posting the minutes publicly.
- An attendee asked about eliminating the gross receipts tax; Mike defended it. Oren said that the Town could look at tax incentives for new businesses and development.
- An attendee said that Penn College in Williamsport gives discount cards to students for use at nearby businesses. Another attendee said that the high school wrestling team put a discount card together, but most Main Street businesses do not appear on it.
- Attendees asked about doing more events. Various people said that they require lots of volunteers. Someone suggested that we look at other organizations that have lots of volunteers and find out how they manage them. (One attendee said that MusikFest in Bethlehem has 1,400 volunteers. Another said that finding the organizers may prove harder than finding other volunteers.)
- Kim Kus said that Brewskis will start doing First Friday events, with vendors coming in, and other businesses should synch up.
- The DBI board has debated whether to support or oppose bringing in outside vendors such as food trucks during downtown events: Should we focus on protecting existing downtown merchants or bringing in larger crowds with outside vendors to create more overall traffic?
- An attendee asked about capitalizing on the arts; Josh said that Moose Arts Park [now revealed as Dr. Charles Gillespie Memorial Park] will serve as a center of arts-related activities.
- An attendee suggested that the Ministerium can help promote downtown activities through their congregations.
- Tim W. thanked everyone for attending, and the session broke up at about 7:15.

Respectfully submitted by Oren B. Helbok, recording secretary pro tem, 7 February 2023