

PUBLIC HEARING/PUBLIC MEETING
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 19TH, 2008
156 E. JACKSON ST.
5:30 PM

PRESENT: Mayor Jenkins, Vice-Mayor Tipton, Council Perry, Council Cassell, Council Hurt, Town Manager Cindy Coates, Town Attorney Mike Carrico

ABSENT: Council Herron

*Mayor Jenkins opened the Public Hearing at 5:32 PM and announced that Kalena Porter from Lenowisco would be leading the Public Hearing.

Kalena Porter opened the first part of the presentation and explained the reason for the Public Hearing. She said the purpose of the meeting is to inform the public on what the Block Grant is and the need for the meeting to be recorded in the meeting minutes. She mentioned the handout for the CDBG Grant. She talked about HUD. She discussed how the VDH and CDBG have approximately \$16 million to give to localities. She said there are five different types of programs that provide the largest sum of money. She mentioned how Gate City has not had a good history for receiving block grants. She discussed the specific years in which Gate City has applied for Grants and which were denied and granted. She asked if anyone had any questions about block grants. There were no questions at this time.

*Mayor Jenkins closed the Public Hearing and opened the Public Meeting at 5:43 PM. He announced that Aaron Arnette from Arnette & Muldrow would be presenting the next part of the presentation.

Aaron Arnette introduced himself and announced the purpose of his being at the meeting. He discussed the Revitalization Grant update and gave the audience a refresher of what some of the public had already seen. He discussed the 'where we've been' aspects of the grant and talked about the dates and processes involved with the Downtown Revitalization Plan. He mentioned how this plan was announced last year, but was unsuccessful. He said the plan is a part of a larger process, a long-range Downtown Master Plan. He mentioned private investment and how a lot has happened since last year. He said he is very encouraged and excited by the community involvement. He explained that there are four areas of impact for the Revitalization Grant; Revitalization, Economic Development, Market Positioning and Cooperation. He said he would explain each of the four aspects in more detail, and that the combination represented a 'Downtown Revitalization Vision'.

A. Revitalization

Mr. Arnette explained how one of the goals for Gate City would be to create a friendly, comfortable and appealing environment. He talked about physical assessment and highlighted the positive aspects of Gate City. He mentioned the gateways into the town. He mentioned grade challenges, focusing on Kane St. and Water St. He expressed the importance of paying attention to the outgoing connections of Downtown. He explained the need for visitors to feel as if they have 'arrived'. He noted the need for distinctions for the Downtown area. He commented on Gate City having a strong sense of 'place & community'. He said the street lights on Jackson St. are too close together, and if every other pole were moved, the length of the streetscape could be doubled. He commented on the abandoned commercial buildings. He mentioned the parking lot. He explained that all of these observations have resulted in the Master Plan. He mentioned the importance of being on the Virginia Landmarks Registry. He commented on the inventory of buildings. He said new development should not take away from the Downtown. He commented on tax credits and loan programs. He explained that the façade master plan is a large part of the

Master Plan. He discussed working with business owners to improve storefronts. He said the project would involve a single-source project manager, one architect and one builder. He explained that the builder could work with business owners to order materials in bulk to be more cost-effective. He commented on the matching program and said funding would come from public and private donations as well. He discussed design guidelines. He mentioned the mixed use of the Performing Arts Center, Streetscapes, Branded Wayfinding System and Gateway Enhancements. He talked about making crosswalks more pedestrian-friendly and installing bump-outs at intersections. He expressed the need for shade trees and showed an example of the canopy appearance the trees could create. He discussed the need for benches that would match the Downtown appearance. He mentioned the importance of details. He explained the factors regarding the way Water St. and Kane St. need to be improved. He discussed how the comprehensive system of Wayfinding would correlate the Gate City brand to all the signage in Town. He discussed suggestions for the entrances to Gate City. He noted the importance of the 4-lane and mentioned utilizing the hill and the concrete wall.

B. Building the Market: Economic Development Strategy

Mr. Arnette discussed the potential for a regional specialty shopping district. He explained the previous market analyses. He discussed trade areas and the importance of Kingsport, TN. He went over the Capture Scenario for Gate City. He said the Town could support an additional 82,126 sq. ft. of retail space. He commented on the importance of restaurants and how the Town has close to 10,000 sq. ft. of available space to designate to the food market. He discussed economic development. He said one of the first steps is to look into new parking options or strengthen existing parking. He said one of the second steps was to recruit destination retail uses. He proposed implementing business incentives for new businesses to come into Gate City. He mentioned cultivating an antiques cluster and making Gate City a regional antiques destination. He suggested the recruitment of bed & breakfast usage. He explained that the final steps included issuing RFP's for the development of key property, recruiting hotel space and recruiting residential units.

C. Market Positioning: Promoting Downtown Gate City

Mr. Arnette explained the first steps for promoting Downtown Gate City include; marketing the brand, instilling loyalty from local trade areas, developing a small, recurring musical event and developing a permanent performance space to highlight music. He detailed the proposed Gate City signage and explained how the picture and colors were chosen. He said the sign would represent a more historic, natural and western feel. He explained the way wilderness and natural resources attach to Gate City. He talked about instilling local loyalty in the Clinch Mountain Music Festival. He mentioned promoting the brand through the internet. He said the next steps would be developing an alternative to the flea market, developing a cultural venue downtown and creating an antique market. He discussed the branding of a Farmers Market, Antiques Market, etc. He explained how the final steps would involve tapping into the existing tourism destinations' marketing efforts, developing a Gate City visitor center and creating a business recruitment package.

D. Cooperation: Implementation Strategy

Mr. Arnette explained the importance for the project to be a community plan. He said the first steps include a leadership roundtable, completion of the CDBG community grant application and obtainment of the Broadband Grant. He said the next steps include identification and petitioning for public funding streams, formalization of structure to lead economic development, the designation of Main St. and the formation of an antiques guild.

Mr. Arnette finished his presentation and explained his excitement towards the Town's progress. He turned the meeting over to Joe Coates.

Joe Coates introduced himself as the Chairman of the Economic Development Committee. He complimented Mayor Jenkins and the Town Council for their work and progressive vision. He went over the progress of the Economic Development Committee to date. He discussed the previous meeting. He explained that the Town has applied for the VDOT Grant which is specific to sidewalk enhancement. He mentioned the Grogan Park Extension project. He said the EDC is currently working on the site, design and materials for the gateway signage. He mentioned that Marvin Egan is donating brick for the project. Mr. Coates explained that high school students will also be involved in the project. He mentioned Beautification Day. He discussed planting beds for plants and flowers. He discussed how private investment is involved. He said there is continuous planning for the Performing Arts Center. He mentioned the development of a bed & breakfast on Water St. He discussed the Clinch Mountain Music Festival that will be held June 14th through June 16th. He commented on the mixed beverage petition. He discussed several designations being worked on. He closed by telling the audience how the EDC is trying to get progress started and that he has a good feeling about the future of Gate City.

Mr. Arnette commented that Gate City has made a lot of progress to date. He said one of the next steps involve the designation of a tagline for Gate City. He gave some examples and made some suggestions. He explained how there will be more Public Meetings and a final Public Hearing. He said these meetings are required for the CDBG process. He explained the need for letters of support from property owners, business owners, implementation partners and the general public. He commented on the CDBG grant application to the DHCD ?. He said the next meeting would be on Tuesday, February 26th at 5:30 PM. This meeting will involve the review of economic issues associated with the application.

Mr. Arnette gave the audience an opportunity to give comments or ask questions. Cindy Coates thanked everyone for attending the meeting and she appreciates all of the support. Ms. Porter explained how the lack of public presence hurt the application process last year. She said she is excited for Gate City and that the Town has a good chance of being awarded the Revitalization Grant. Ms. Coates offered the audience the opportunity to read some of the letters of support that have been submitted. Mayor Jenkins thanked everyone for attending the meeting and thanked all of the committees for their work. He explained that the EDC has kept focus on the process. He thanked Board of Supervisors member Joe Herron and Scott County Economic Development Chairman John Kilgore for attending the meeting and showing their support. Mayor Jenkins was appreciative of the Board of Supervisors having voted to allow the tipping fees to be waived at the landfill for any owner of dilapidated buildings that have been targeted for demolition. He mentioned John Kilgore from the Tourism Committee striving for tourism in Gate City. He explained that there is a lot of musical talent in Gate City and a good educational system filled with good students. He added, however, that there is no reason for the students to stay in Gate City after graduation. He expressed the need to build the Town and the County. Ms. Porter explained that every building on Jackson St. needs to be rehabilitated. She encouraged the business owners in the audience to persuade business owners not in attendance to participate in the Master Plan. Mayor Jenkins thanked Ms. Porter.

Tommy Quillen, a local business owner, said the meeting provided some great information. He asked how his personal input would be involved in the project. Mr. Arnette explained that a lot of public input has already been implemented. Mr. Quillen asked if the Grant was the same as last year. Ms. Porter explained that some significant changes have taken place since last year. Ms. Coates discussed the letters of commitment that will be needed from each building owner who wants to participate in the façade plan. She and Ms. Porter will have more information after their meeting with DHCD officials on February 20th and will bring that information to the February 26th meeting. Ms. Porter explained that she was from Lenowisco. The purpose of Lenowisco is to help Gate City with the grant application process. Mr. Coates invited the audience members to attend the next EDC meeting that will be held on March 4, 2008 at 6:00 PM. Ms. Porter mentioned that there are many communities that would love to have the opportunities that are currently being presented to Gate City.

The Public Meeting ended at 7:00 PM.