Indiana Main Street Council Meeting

April 15, 2024, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

IGCS; Conference Room F

**Council Members Present:** Dean Vonderheide, Tenille Zartman, Amy Haacker, Andrew Carty, Brian Sheehan, Meagan Heber, Marsh Davis,

**OCRA Staﬀ:** Abby C., Abby H, Andrea K., and Duke Bennett

Meeting Minutes: Ryan Kommes

# Call to Order & Welcome – Duke Bennett, Executive Director of Indiana Oﬃce of Community and Rural Aﬀairs

# Monday, April 15, 2024, Duke Bennett called the Indiana Main Street Council to order.

# Duke introduced himself as the new executive director of OCRA.

# Introduction of IMS Council members

# Introduce Tenille Zartman, new council member.

**State Coordinator Report – Andrea Kern, Director of Strategic Initiatives**

* Recap of Indiana Main Street 2024 Q1
  + Accreditation visits with Main Street America
  + Main Street Ready visits
  + Education Events – Storyville workshop, three virtual trainings, Corydon Community Exchange
  + New ODAN, IAMS, NAMS programs
* Main Street 101s
  + Kicking off this year’s 101s in May.
* PreservINg Main Street
  + Really proud of the work Kendallville has done through the PreservINg Main Street grant.
    1. Kendallville's preservation efforts have resulted in increased property values, with 12 out of 16 properties selling for more than their assessed value.
  + Brookville has seen an increase of 23 businesses in their downtown since 2022. Local entrepreneurs are purchasing vacant buildings, and a new restaurant is planned for Brookville in 2024.
  + New Castle was recently awarded in 2023 and currently has raised $67,000 of their $200,000 goal.
* Main Street NOW Conference
  + Conference is coming up in May in Birmingham, AL. Prioritizing OCRA scholarships for board members.
  + At least 58 signed up currently from Indiana communities.
* Strategic Plan Updates
  + Regional workshops and anonymous survey to gather input from community leaders in June.
  + Mostly positive feedback regarding the upcoming five-year strategic plan.
  + Council members to provide input on the Indiana Main Street Program.
  + Two regional workshops in June – one in northern Indiana, one in southern Indiana.
  + In conversations with Main Street America on how to address feedback we’ve received.
  + Mayor Vonderheide – are Main Street communities developing faster than communities not in the program?
    1. We don’t have statistics on the growth, but anecdotally, several programs that joined this year were also previous programs that dropped out or lost their status. They want to join the program again.
  + Andrea Kern and Andrew Carty discuss challenges faced by Main Street staff, including high turnover rates and low pay. Staff often face burn out because of the nature of the position.
    1. Andrea Kern and others discuss professionalizing IMS organizations, salaries, and benefits.
    2. A high number of board members often become paid staff in their organization.
    3. Always need to be building up volunteers and board members to take the next step into paid staff once current staff move on.
    4. Marsh Davis – possibly needing to raise the standard for these organizations statewide.
    5. Brian Sheehan discusses community vitality measurement, expressing desire for focused surveys to compare with other communities.
    6. Amy Haacker noted that Franklin Development Corporation's intern-led study shows tangible increase in taxes collected from redeveloped properties, supporting continued funding of the program.

# Main Street Revitalization Program Updates – Abby Huff, Indiana Main Street Senior Program Manager

# Program overview – every other year.

# $2 million total amount for streetscape projects.

# If program total cost is >$2 million, up to $600,000 available.

# If program total cost is <$2 million, up to $500,000 available.

# Facades are no longer included.

# Communities must have a downtown revitalization plan approved by the CDBG program director to be eligible for funding.

# Eligible communities

# Non-entitlement communities and those on a program improvement plan are not eligible for funding.

# Eligible activities for the grant

# Traffic control/Pedestrian safety

# Functional art

# Environmental

# ADA improvements

# Work can only be done within the approved map of the downtown district.

# This structure is subject to CDBG Action Plan approval and will not be final until then.

# Committee Planning – Abby Chapman, Indiana Main Street Outreach and Organization Manager

# Planning and its importance

# Abby discusses the importance of having a clear work plan for committees to avoid burnout and ensure productivity.

# Examples of questions to ask main street organizations to determine how work is getting done and identify areas for improvement.

# Committees are working on education, 40th anniversary planning, and fundraising.

# Role breakdown for committees:

# Technical Assistance

# Promotions

# Development

# Communication – expectations with tasks and council responsibilities.

# Open Forum – All

# Andrea suggests scheduling a committee meeting day July 29, with the October meeting being a full council meeting in Madison.

* Marsh Davis – In regard to READI, has there been any communication with what can be done with Main Streets
  + IDEC plans to play a more active role in project development, but still discussing a lot of opportunities on what that could look like.
* Duke – An agency goal is to increase funding that directly improves our communities’ quality of life. One of the top priorities is to meet with legislators to tell OCRA’s story and get additional funding for programs.
* Brian Sheehan emphasizes the need for funding capacity positions, especially because of the influx of dollars for community development. He also discusses the importance of comprehensive planning and potential mechanisms for facilitating it in communities. He adds many residents don't realize they qualify for funding.
* Andrea – Our community affairs director has been telling our community liaisons to share our CDBG opportunities when other new state funding is not available.
* Mayor Vonderheide – Getting Jasper launched with OCRA has done tremendous things, and ROJAC will be merging with the Heart of Jasper. It wouldn’t have happened if Heart of Jasper wasn’t successful, and it wouldn’t have been successful without the training and assistance of OCRA. Also received great feedback through letters from the eclipse on the quality of the streetscape improvements.
* Abby H – Mayor, how is the DORA program?
  + Mayor Vonderheide – Recently launched in March, and the weather has been a struggle so far, but notes that foot traffic downtown has been higher than ever before already, and they have confidence it will be a good thing for downtown.
  + Andrea Kern mentions Placer.AI contract with Main Street America for visitor data tracking.
* Andrea Kern and Meagan Heber discuss Junior Main Street programs, with Meagan Heber seeking data on successful programs.
  + Meagan Heber mentions engaging with groups like the Mayor's Youth Council but struggles with capacity and resources.
  + Brian mentions bringing in young people as interns is a great opportunity for programs to accomplish a wide array of goals, plus youth engagement is great for the future of community needs.
* Brian – how did the eclipse turn out? Do we know what the impact was?
  + Consensus is that the projections were far off, but in some locations, there was some success.
  + Residents did their own thing and wanted to avoid the traffic.

# Adjourn

* Meeting adjourned at 11:42 am ET