**West Liberty Business Association –** Meeting Minutes

February 9, 2017, 7:30 a.m.

Liberty Gathering Place

**Present:** Officers: President Ryan Berry (Berry Digital Solutions), Vice President Chris Anders (Berry Digital Solutions), Members: Laura Haverkos & Humberto Nieto (The Flying Pepper Food Truck), Tami Wenger (Project Teddy Bear), Nancy Spragen (Library), Ali Parthemore (Logan County Chamber of Commerce)

**Focus on Membership in 2017:**

Ryan wants a stronger focus put on growing and cultivating membership in 2017. WLBA Officers met a week prior to this meeting and developed ideas to achieve this. Similar to area chambers of commerce, Ryan wants to clearly define the benefits of membership and add more if possible. Plans are also underway to put together a “Welcome Packet” or basket for new businesses that includes business cards of local service providers, freebies and other items to entice more new businesses to join the WLBA. Ali shared a packet the Logan County Chamber uses for similar purposes.

For existing businesses that have been in West Liberty for awhile, but haven’t joined the WLBA or participated recently, the idea was proposed that we should find out when these businesses were established in West Liberty and offer them “Anniversary Packets” that are similar to the welcome baskets but honor them for their years of service and re-introduce them to the WLBA. We may also promote these existing businesses milestone anniversaries on the website and social media channels.

Ryan mentioned that Main Graphics in Urbana is nearly done with the proof for the new West Liberty maps and attractions brochures. Ryan will share and distribute with the membership as soon as they’re ready.

Chris proposed the idea of spending some of the WLBA’s surplus on a window sign to go in empty buildings or buildings that are currently available For Rent. This sign could feature WLBA branding and encourage entrepreneurs to join our community in that location. The signage can be re-used over and over again with the building owner’s permission, and there may be opportunities to sell ad spots on the sign to businesses outside of downtown who would love to have the downtown exposure to help offset the cost.

Nancy offered up the Library’s window to the WLBA for a display some time this year to promote the WLBA and our events. It was mentioned that a good time to do this display could be the month of June or July leading up to the Bicentennial.

**Bicentennial:**

Tami gave an update from the Bicentennial Planning Committee. She mentioned that many events have had to be cut due to lack of volunteers. Baking contests have been cancelled unless volunteers step up soon, and the games planned at the Castles have been put on hold until volunteers and organizers can be secured. The Castles has the games at their locations and they are planning some promotions during the Bicentennial, but they do not have the staff necessary to run and organize the games. Anyone interested in volunteering should contact Tami at [www.revtami.org](http://www.revtami.org) or via the Facebook group for the West Liberty Bicentennial Planning Committee.

Tami asked the WLBA to take ownership of Thursday evening’s kickoff meal. She has a local church that is also available to help, and she has booked the shelter houses at the Lions Club Ballpark, but the committee still needs someone to help organize that event. Ryan suggested moving the event downtown to help businesses rather than draw the crowds out to the ballpark. Others suggested ideas about having the downtown businesses staying open later that night for Open Houses with snacks. And rather than hosting a meal, encouraging folks to walk, shop and eat downtown that evening. Another idea was asking Alex at the Grove if they’re willing to open up and host other vendors as another draw, and Laura & Humberto expressed interest in having The Flying Pepper downtown serving meals as well. More planning is planned for the next WLBA meeting.

Tami also said nominations are needed for Oldest Male & Female “Pioneers”, Favorite Local Business, and Favorite Local Farmer. Awards are planned for each.

The Community Quilt is coming along, but more local businesses are need to sign up for squares. See Cyndi at Town Hall to buy a square.

As for music, Tami said there are bands already booked for each day, but more would be welcome, but the Committee does not have a big budget to pay the bands, so they’re mostly interested in local acts that want to play regardless of pay.

This year’s fireworks are still slated for 12 days before the Bicentennial on Saturday, June 24th after the Lions Club’s Fish Fry. Everyone agreed that it would be nice to have all of those events together, but attempts to coordinate that haven’t been successful. The Bicentennial doesn’t feel right soliciting the community to donate to 2 fireworks funds, so everyone will try to come up with a solution that makes it possible to have fireworks at the Bicentennial or brainstorm other ideas for an event to have one evening at the park.

**Annual Dinner:**

Ryan asked WL-S Superintendent Kraig Hissong to speak at the Annual Dinner a couple weeks before the incident at the school and he has not heard back if he’s available. Ryan will reach out again this week, and if Kraig is unable to speak, Ryan has a couple of backup speakers in mind.

Ryan was unsure of the exact date and time of the Annual Dinner, but he confirmed with Katie Neer after the meeting that it will be held at Green Hills’ Foundation Hall again this year on Tuesday, April 18th from 6-8pm. Katie is finalizing details on the dinner.

Ryan introduced Mark Boyer’s idea of ending the silent auction for Website ads in favor of GOLD, SILVER, & BRONZE advertising packages. Rather than the unknown price of advertising on the website each year (due to the unpredictability of the silent auction), Mark suggested following the Hardin County Chamber’s lead of offering set prices for different ad packages. For example, a GOLD package could include a banner ad on the home page, signage at all WLBA events, headline sponsorship at a major event like the Tour of Homes, and a planned Social Media advertising package throughout the year. Everyone seemed receptive to that format change, but Ryan is unsure if there is enough time to implement it before April’s annual dinner. If it’s not possible to come up with these packages in time, we’ll default to the silent auction style and put together a plan to roll out the packages in time for 2018.

**Ali from the Logan County Chamber:**

Ali visited the WLBA this morning to share some big tourism events coming to the county in 2017. The next big event is the Great Ohio Bicycle Adventure coming to Bellefontaine in June. Up to 2,000 bicyclist are expected for the event and the group will be calling Bellefontaine’s Blue Jacket Park home from Wednesday, June 21st until Friday June 23rd. There is an optional bike loop through West Liberty, to Ohio Caverns and the Castles on Thursday, June 22nd. The Chamber needs lots of volunteers, and area businesses are encouraged to Welcome GOBA riders on their signs and storefronts. The riders are always looking for locations with A/C and WiFi to rest and recharge. The Logan County Chamber is currently hosting biweekly meetings on Thursday mornings for the event. If you are interested, please contact the Logan County Chamber and Ali Parthermore or attend a meeting.

**Other:**

Nancy mentioned that the WLBA storage in the back of the library could really use some tidying up and organization. Some of the banners and other items are collecting mold and it could use some TLC soon. Ryan and Chris suggested visiting the storage room with a small group after the next WLBA meeting and taking a few minutes to go through items, throw out stuff no longer needed and organize everything.

Nancy also wondered if she should replace all of the WL-S flags with American flags for President’s Day per the usual protocol. She mentioned that it wasn’t done last year due to a major snowstorm, and it was agreed upon by all in attendance that the WL-S flags should remain, at least until Memorial Day when it may be a better time to transition to the American flags.

**The next monthly meeting will be Thursday, March 9 at 7:30a.m. at Sweetie Pie’s.**