

**CITY OF MILL VALLEY
BUSINESS TASK FORCE
COMMUNITY INPUT MEETING**

MEETING MINUTES

Mill Valley Community Center
April 29, 2008
6:00 – 8:00PM

Andrew Berman, Vice Mayor	Present	Bob Valentino	Present
Garry Lion, Councilmember	Present	Dennis Fisco	Present
Maureen Parton, Planning Commissioner	Present	Jeff Perry	Not Present
Ann Aversa	Present	Kelly Kramer	Not Present
Bill Johnson	Present	Michael Salit	Not Present
Doug Canepa	Not Present	Mike House	Not Present
Kathy Severson	Present	Scott Penzarella	Not Present
Larry Lautzker	Present		
Michael Orlandi	Not Present		
Mike Walsh	Present		
Paul Barenfus	Not Present		
Sharon Segal	Present		
Yasmine McGrane	Not Present		

Staff Present: Anne Montgomery, City Manager
Mary Lansing, Administrative Assistant

6:10pm **CALL TO ORDER:** Councilmember Lion called the meeting to order at 6:10 pm.

Welcome and Agenda Approval

Public Open Time – Alan Nichols of Sausalito spoke of his interest in providing streetcar services in southern Marin. Jai Flicker of the Learning Center on Miller Avenue voiced concerns over the current Planning Department permit process which has currently disallowed his tutoring service business. Owner of the building, Larry Quam, indicated his support for the Learning Center business and asked for speedy permit approval as the matter is currently before the Planning Commission. Julia Brix suggested that small banners for all Marin County towns and cities be provided to support local businesses.

Review of Mission Statement and Goals for Business Task Force – Councilmember Garry Lion presented a PowerPoint summary as he reviewed the BTF Mission Statement, as well as Scope, Deliverable, Proposed Work Plan, Task Force Organization, Estimated Taxable Sales (nominal and CPI adjusted), and Hotel Revenues (nominal and CPI adjusted) charts. Also included was a brief description of the SubTeams scope of work.

Community Input – Vice Mayor Andrew Berman, serving as moderator, opened the meeting for comments and suggestions from community members and business owners:

- Mark Fishkin of the Mill Valley Film Festival encouraged collaboration with nonprofits in the community, and also announced that the California Film Institute was in final negotiations to buy the Sequoia Theatre to further support the annual fall film festival.
- Batel Libes suggested that local public entities be required to buy all purchases locally whenever possible and encouraged the establishment of guidelines to invest in the community.
- BTF member Ann Aversa noted the importance of educating citizens that no local sales tax is collected on internet purchases.
- Kathy Rosecranz commented that a shop-locally strategy provided good synergy in the community on behalf of residents and businesses alike.
- Bob Valentino noted that some of the school lunch programs now purchase food from vendors in Alameda County which takes away from locally owned businesses.
- Paula Reynolds, Mill Valley School District Board member, indicated that recent changes in state regulations for nutritional guidelines prompted need for new vendors.
- Susan Kirsch asked that carbon imprints by businesses be considered as part of the overall environmental impact.
- Jai Flicker of the Learning Center asked how to incorporate various types of businesses in the City's municipal code that do not fall into specific categories.
- Councilmember Lion indicated that retail means any non-home based business and within scope of interest of the BTF.
- Carl Arena voiced his support for the formation of the BTF and the inclusion of all businesses within its scope of interest. Small businesses need to reinvent themselves, and consideration should be given to a more global view of how people want the City of Mill Valley to be 20 years from now. Also suggested that the City empower the Chamber of Commerce with a budget and a review of signage permits and regulations.
- BTF member Sharon Segal asked for suggestions on how best to publicize local businesses. As a member of the BTF Joint Marketing and Best Practices sub-team, she indicated that a review of the role and interface opportunities with the Chamber of Commerce would be part of their action plan discussions.
- Lynette Walsh, local business owner, expressed her concerns over City approval process as too strict, complicated and not helpful. Took one of their business tenants six months to get City approval which discourages business owners.
- _____ Hanson of Tam Valley suggested that serious consideration be given to the streetcar proposition as outlined to the City Council earlier this year. Vice Mayor Berman indicated that the streetcar proposal would be part of the City Circulation Element planning process and considered as a separate issue, noting the importance of inclusiveness with adjacent communities.
- Roy Nee, owner of Mill Creek Plaza in downtown Mill Valley, stated that the building permit process is too long and difficult to navigate. Asked that conditional use permits be provided to move process forward. Need flexibility in interpreting codes to encourage businesses. What is City's intent and vision for promoting business?
- Caroline Robinson spoke in support of the streetcar concept along Miller Avenue.

- Paula Reynolds cited recommendations from the 1991 Business Task Force Report speaking to the importance of a macro perspective for an “economic new vision”, and the importance of looking at trends and mix of actions. Noted recent spike in school enrollment numbers and its impact on City residents and businesses. Also suggested that the City promote itself as a cultural center with the 142 Throckmorton Theatre, Fall Arts Festival, Mountain Play, Marin Theatre Company, Mill Valley Film Festival and numerous other arts related businesses and their positive impacts on the entire community.
- Larry _____ voiced his concern that the business permit process was too restrictive and needed to be more flexible and timely to assist businesses.
- Maureen Parton, Planning Commission member, noted that a primary goal of the City Partnership & Processes sub-team is to provide recommendations for a collaborative, streamlined permit process.
- Kathy Severson, Chamber of Commerce CEO, spoke of Chamber’s goal for a welcoming vision for businesses with a better partnership among the City, businesses, nonprofits and residents. Promotion of cultural icons in Mill Valley – Mountain Play, Dipsea, Film Festival among many – as core to the City’s unique character and history.
- Vice Mayor Berman commented that he felt it is best for the City to focus on what it does right and to keep things in a positive light.
- Councilmember Stephanie Moulton-Peters indicated importance of gathering information on what people want to be provided and how best to provide locally.
- Dennis Fisco, BTF member, noted the importance of providing a strong, positive brand identity for Mill Valley similar to what other groups of businesses do.
- Sharon Segal, BTF member, voiced her support for developing branding/advertising for Mill Valley businesses, as well as an opportunity to be optimistic and to look at the good parts in the community.
- Mike Walsh, BTF member, noted that survival skills are important for business owners.
- Ann Aversa, BTF member, voiced her support for the great network of local merchants in Mill Valley.
- Development of a map of business locations for residents and tourists alike was suggested.
- Regina O’Connell, gallery owner, suggested that a “grace moment” be implemented as part of the City’s parking enforcement policy.
- Carl Arena voiced his support for the grace-moment concept, noted that businesses need to understand market, and asked that emergency safety plans be incorporated in any plans.
- Kristi Denton Cohen, landlord, spoke of a “Save Gas, Buy Locally” concept and suggested that actual data would be helpful information to have for residents.
- Alessa M_____ noted that the downtown plaza was the “beating heart” of the community and asked that it be made more of a vital focus.
- Fabio Aversa, business owner, indicated that more clarity on the permit processes needed to be provided so that good business decisions could be made in a timely manner; allow property owners to upgrade and focus on positives to make visitors feel welcome.
- Jen Lattimer voiced her support for Jai Flicker’s tutoring service particularly as an important program for area teenagers.

- Councilmember Ken Wachtel noted the importance of providing a balance with stores in downtown area, as well as the promotion of existing businesses by the City and Chamber of Commerce.
- Vice Mayor Berman asked how best to optimize outreach by both the City and the Chamber of Commerce.
- Alex Hanson suggested that co-work spaces be tied into green spaces.
- Batel Libes, owner the of Bead Store in Mill Valley, noted that her rent was increased 18 percent last year, which represented a huge impact on her business as well as other local businesses.
- Jim Revoir, owner of Grilly’s on Miller Avenue, recounted difficulties last year when he tried to enlarge existing space to provide indoor seating, but terminated project because of ADA bathroom requirements. Also indicated his concerns for the commuter parking needs on Miller Avenue opposite his business.
- Mike Walsh, BTF member, noted that parking rules can have a huge impact on businesses and their operations. Short-term parking a concern among many business owners.
- Julia Brix suggested that an online survey be part of the BTF plan to ask residents what businesses are important to them and so forth. Also suggested a list of merchants be made available to residents and visitors.
- Larry Lautzker, BTF member, indicated his support for removal of parking meters, and noted that he has artwork from original merchant map produced several years ago.

Both Vice Mayor Berman and Councilmember Lion thanked BTF members and community participants for their time and invaluable contributions. It was noted that all information regarding the BTF is on the City’s website (www.cityofmillvalley.org) and is updated on a regular basis, including future meeting announcements.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Garry Lion, Councilmember

Andrew Berman, Vice Mayor

ATTEST:

Mary Lansing
Assistant to the City Manager