

Downtown New Bedford, Inc.
Welcomes you to its 20th Annual Meeting and Election of Officers
October 28, 2009
By Diane Arsenault Nichols

Thank you everyone for being here at our 20th Anniversary Annual meeting. It is truly my pleasure to be here and celebrate my 1 year Anniversary as Executive Director of Downtown New Bedford, Inc.

The year has been interesting, to say the least and has flown by. I am asked quite frequently the question, “how do you like the job and downtown?” I can truly answer that I love my job. This in large part because of the people I work with both in the office (couldn't do it without Marianne who keeps the ship sailing smoothly and on a steady course) and the involvement of our committed Executive Committee, Board of Directors, our Board President Kevin Pelland and the many merchants and professionals throughout the downtown that make everything happen. I am very lucky to be here at this time and place as we see new businesses and enthusiasm for what we do. We have seen many new small businesses start up and become involved in the downtown community, as well as projects that signify very large investments. The exterior renovation of the Greater New Bedford Community Health Center, the construction of the new Fairfield Inn, and the start of the much anticipated renovation of the Trinity Regency Tower to name a few, plus so much more that our guest speaker Frank Mahady will touch on. At our monthly Board meetings we generally announce those who have joined DNB in the past month – so today we welcome; be jeweled; Cafe Arpeggio; No Problemo; Ginger Grill; Navio Artisans Co-operative; Sound Xplosion and Thompson Farland, Inc

Following is a recap of our activities in the past year:

We present a collective voice to communicate with city government, economic development and cultural entities regarding downtown problems and concerns and we are working together more then ever before. We understand the need to collaborate as many of us have the same ultimate goal of improving the quality of our work and experience in the City and Downtown.

We act as a clearinghouse for information relevant to all downtowners, business people and residents alike. To increase our effectiveness in this area we have switched the **Downtown Beat** over to an e-newsletter and constant contact system, spreading the word of what DNB, Inc, is doing and what is going on locally with our many partners and members on a monthly basis that replaces the old print version that came out quarterly. You can also follow downtown activities on Facebook and Twitter. Many thanks to Sally Spooner; Keri Cox and the staff at mediumstudio for all their help.

The quarterly **Downtown Forum** meetings also provide an opportunity for business people and residents to socialize with each other, share ideas and concerns of mutual interest in a casual and cooperative setting. Thank you to our hosts in the past year that include: Hibernia Pub, Union City Grill and Cork Wine Bar – hope to see many of you at the upcoming Forum on November 17 hosted by the Ginger Grill and Travessia Winery.

We sponsor major events bringing thousands of residents and visitors into our downtown to enjoy what our business and historic districts have to offer. These events include both the **Taste of Southcoast** and the **New Bedford Seaport Chowder Festival**. Their success leave us with the task of expanding the borders to accommodate their growing popularity. Thank you to Richard Poyant who chairs both these events and the many volunteers who make them happen.

For the second year we will be taking the lead in coordinating the **Downtown Holiday Stroll**, expanded to two days on December 5th and 6th. The Holiday Window Decorating Contest was a also a welcome addition and will be conducted again.

Good news, back this year, is the fresh laurel and red bows for the lamp posts in the historic district, that is due to the contributions of merchants and residents in the district and the diligence of our “Laurel Lady” Marianne. The crew will be gathered on December 1 to decorate the poles.

New this year was the **Restaurant Run** held in conjunction with the New Bedford Half Marathon. This collaboration with downtown merchants, the Race Committee, and the city proved what we can accomplish together, turning what had been an opportunity missed in our downtown to a vibrant and inviting experience to the attendees and people in our own community who have re-discovered downtown.

New this past May was the **Springtime Window Decorating Contest** this was a cooperative effort with the Economic Development Office that was very well received. Many merchants again put their best foot forward and spruced up our downtown.

We have also worked closely with the GNB Summerfest Planning Committee to see that downtown interests are represented during that great event.

Our annual **Downtown Gala** is an important fund raiser for the organization and along with the **Annual Meeting**, provides a formal opportunity to show appreciation to supporters who go above and beyond the call of duty.

Our **Financial Incentives Committee** continues to assist new and expanding businesses in securing loans at attractive rates through our **Downtown Loan Program**. We have commitments by member banks including: BankFive, Bristol County Savings Bank, Citizens Union Savings Bank, First Citizens' Federal Credit Union, Sovereign Bank and Webster Bank. Thank you to John Souza from Bank Five who chairs this committee.

Our **Public Safety Committee** hosts a Weekly Meeting at which Committee Chair, Arthur Bennett and our Downtown Community Police officer report on safety-related events of the previous week and discuss concerns brought to the meeting by members of the downtown public. The meetings are held in our office on Mondays at 9:00 am. They are free and open to the public. Thank you to Arthur for all his work in getting the reports to us via the **Weekly Update** that is sent electronically to over 500 subscribers.

A new initiative has evolved from the concerns voiced at these meetings around the issues of maintenance and trash pickup. Through our

collaboration with Operation Clean Sweep, Greater New Bedford Refuse Management District and Milhench Supply Co, we organized the popular **Adopt a Spot** campaign. Many downtowners have adopted areas and have pledged to do their best to keep them clean.

We print and distribute more than 20,000 copies of our **Visitors Guide** brochure listing and locating more than 75 participants to visitors. The updated look of this brochure along with the web-site and e-news letter have helped this organization develop a vibrancy. With all this we will continue to inform the public of downtown's many events, assets and attractions. Thanks again to mediumstudio for the countless hours they donate to our design work and communications.

Thank you again to the entire downtown community. With your continued support we look forward to an even more productive year ahead.

Respectfully submitted:
Diane Arsenault Nichols
Executive Director