

## **Downtown Brookings Inc and Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce**

**Overview:** In recent years Downtown Brookings Inc. (DBI) and the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce (BACC) have entertained the idea of DBI restructuring under the BACC as a formal Chamber Committee. The Board Directors at both the BACC and DBI have had similar discussions in the past few years as to what this would look like and how to proceed. Both organizations, in the past, have been reluctant to proceed with any such merger until most recently.

DBI and the City of Brookings have had a relationship since the inception of the organization. DBI has relied on funding through the city and has used the funding for operational expenses as well as programming. In the past few years DBI has used the funds to provide a part-time executive director (about 30 hours per week). DBI is a membership organization with about 50 members.

In 2017, the DBI Board of Directors has decided not to hire an Executive Director (after the resignation of Elliott Johnson in 2016) but to look at the organization from a sustainability level. DBI Board hired a consultant, Larry Fuller, who undertook a comprehensive approach to look at the current and future state of the organization by conducting a series of interviews and surveys. The end result of his findings were enough for the DBI Board of Directors to vote at a board meeting to begin the process of dismantling the organization.

At a BACC board of directors meeting in April, 2017 Mayor Keith Corbett expressed some optimism towards the future of DBI and said that the City would be willing to listen to a plan to make DBI sustainable for the future. He also mentioned that “uptown” (downtown) Brookings was a significant economic driver in the city and should continue to have a voice in our community. The DBI Board reached out to the Mayor about this issue and in the same month the BACC Executive Board had a discussion with Larry Fuller (unrelated to the DBI) and because of the Chamber membership in the downtown district of more than 85 current members, the BACC Board decided to reach out to DBI.

### **How this might look going forward:**

- Brookings Area Chamber would need to hire a full time staff. Starting around \$30K w/benefits
- Ask City Council to approve continued funding to downtown Brookings oversight, programs, advocacy and business needs. The City needs to be part of the solution.

The re-organization of the DBI would need to dissolve as a non-profit 501 C 3 and come under the umbrella of the Chamber as a Committee – much like the CVB. The City of Brookings along with the Mayor and City Council would need to approve appropriate funds that could be used to hire a FTE for the Brookings Area Chamber to oversee activities for downtown Brookings. In the fall of 2017 the Brookings Area Chamber is going through its 2nd strategic planning process in three years. The plan will include current and future key objectives based on the needs of our business community. Downtown Brookings holds about one fifth of the Chamber’s membership and the new plan will include needs, issues and goals/outcomes that will impact the downtown business district in the next three to five years.

The Brookings Area Chamber if committed to the success and future of our business community and through programming, advocacy and professional development, we feel that having a downtown business district committee as part of the Chamber would only add value to the economic engine that downtown is for our City.