

# MARKETING WORK SESSION

December 4, 2019

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In Attendance:

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**Members Present:** Mayor Janet Winkler, Commissioners: Larry Chapman, Jonathan Greer, Barry Mitchell, Rick Shew, Ann Smith, Bill Warren and Commissioner-Elect, Jeff Link

**Others Present:** Town Manager, Rebecca Bentley, Town Clerk, Tammy Swanson, Guests, Carl White and Dillon Warren

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Call to Order:

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Janet called the meeting to order, and Mayor Pro Tem, Bill Warren led the group in prayer.

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Marketing Discussion:

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Janet commented that our meeting tonight is a work session to share ideas about the best ways to market the Town and HUB Station. She commented that the discussion will be very informal.

**Billboards for Advertisement:** Dillon Warren discussed advertising with billboards. He stated that most of the local billboards are owned by Lamar Advertising, and cost approximately \$500 per month. He shared ideas for featuring different locations in Town on the billboards, such as Windmill Park or HUB Station.

Bill Warren stated that there is a trick to purchasing billboard space. The billboards located in Billboard Park right down the street are \$550 per month to rent. One way to find vacant space is to ride around and see which ones are empty. He stated that he has been able to purchase some billboard space for a 3 to 6-month period for as little as \$200 per month, but they are not in what is considered prime locations. The prime locations (higher traffic areas) are higher in cost and harder to come by. Bill discussed some locations on Hwy. 321 that are reasonable in cost– again depending on location. He stated that when the Town had a merchant’s association, they purchased a street scape of the windmill – it didn’t include business names, but used florist, jewelry shop, etc. He commented that this type of design would be a great way to let people know what types of businesses are located in Hudson.

Dillon stated that one of the owners of the Local Bean Coffee Shop is a great photographer, and he suggested that we contact her about doing some photography for a billboard.

**Marketing Discussion with Carl White-** Carl White started out by saying that usually the best deals hinge on inventory. He commented that success depends on timing. Mr. White stated that he likes to visit places as a tourist to get a real feel for area. He commented that we need to be authentic in the storytelling about the Town. He discussed a town that he visited recently that didn’t live up to their name.

Mr. White stated that the Jan Karon story will air in the first quarter of next year. He added that right now he is covered up with doing Christmas stories. He discussed the Carolina Theater Trail, stating that 39 theaters have been discovered in NC. He stated that he sat down and talked with Keith Smith about dinner theater, and he has also talked to Lenoir about theater there as well.

Mr. White discussed branding for the Town. He stated that his work is featured on the television station My TV12 in Charlotte and on the Fox Station, which includes an estimated 6 million viewers. He stated that if a story is told in the right way about Hudson, it can let people know a lot about what Hudson has to offer. He stated that when he thinks of Hudson, he sees the downtown area as growing place. He commented that

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although Hudson don't do the same things other towns may do, we want to feature what Hudson does do. He commented that the HUB is a great success and is a wonderful accomplishment for the Town. He stated that the question for Hudson is whether or not we can do something that will draw people to Hudson.

Janet commented that our opportunity to tell our story would be in sponsorships – correct?

Mr. White stated that Hudson has to create something and take it to an audience. He stated that if he was to cover the Butterfly Festival for instance, he already has sponsorships in place.

Janet stated that our role would be deciding on our brand. When that is determined, we have to decide what components of that message we want to show people - whether that be on billboards or in some other fashion.

Mr. White stated that his approach is to ask, “What is the Town’s objective?” What do you want to spotlight with the brand? He stated that once that is decided, his team takes it from there - they are the storytellers. Mr. White commented that the two things he needs from the Town are: (1) the objectives and (2) a budget. He briefly discussed the cost of commercials that will be needed along with the programming.

Barry asked what the costs usually are for this type of project.

Mr. White stated that there are packages that can be purchased. He commented that simple commercials are approximately \$3,800, and then there can be very technical ones, which can cost up to \$60,000. He stated that Hudson does not have all of the variables to sell what would cost \$60,000 in a commercial. Mr. White stated that because Hudson doesn't have anywhere for tourists to spend the night, we would probably want to focus more on pushing the one day activities. Mr. White estimated that the cost of the type programming the Town would need would be approximately \$30,000, plus just a couple commercials.

Bill asked what a 5 to 6-minute segment would cost?

Mr. White stated that short segments usually cost around \$8,000. He stated that these type things need to be as short as possible and still get the message across. He commented that people tend to watch shorter things rather than longer things. He stated that some stories need 30 minutes to tell, while others need only 7 minutes.

Ann stated that one thing we talked about with the HUB Steering Committee is that we want HUB Station to be known regionally not just locally.

Bill commented that the thing that brought him to Hudson in 1979 was the art of music in the area. He stated that he came here to perform and he loved it. He added that he believes we need to do more concerts at HUB Station.

Ann commented that we also need to include our parks and walking trails in our package. We need to let people know that we are a walkable town. People can go to the HUB and take an art class, or use the bike paths to ride bikes, etc.

Janet asked if there is a different type of marketing to reach Town residents and not just tourists. Some of residents are not aware of the things we have going on in Town.

Mr. White stated that this is a common issue. People need something to be proud of in their own town.

He mentioned that Caldwell County has just been classified as a Tier One county, which creates both pros and cons for the county. He mentioned that it can create an avenue for extra revenue.

Mr. White stated that he is obviously sold on Hudson, but Hudson just needs to decide what it wants to be known for – its brand.

Janet thanked Mr. White for his involvement with our “Jan Karon Days” events.

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Janet stated that she believes for us to get our feet wet, we need to start out with a billboard.

Bill commented that it could include a picture of the Town's logo or it could be the windmill. He commented that the best thing to do may be check with Lamar Advertising to see what kind deals they have for billboards.

Ann mentioned one of the pictures of HUB Station used in some of our brochures.

Janet stated that a decision does not have to be made tonight, but we need to be thinking about the best way to market our town to potential visitors, as well as our residents.

Ann discussed the fact that a lot of the attendees to the Jan Karon events were from out of the area. Ann asked if we should mail out information in January about upcoming events for the entire year.

Bill stated that getting people here is the key to exposing them to what we have to offer.

Larry asked Dillon if he could put together some marketing ideas for the next regular meeting.

Dillon stated that he could put together something – a concept showing examples. Dillon stated that the picture of the HUB from the brochure would be a great place to start. He also mentioned that hiring the photographer from the Local Bean Coffee Shop would be a big help as well.

Rebecca commented that we need to decide what the objective is for the billboard.

Janet commented that if we can find a deal that needs to happen fast, we probably need to use something we already have available.

Jeff Link commented that since a driver has only about 3 seconds to read a billboard, having a website address on the billboard could let people know where to go to get information about the Town.

Ann mentioned that the new webpage for HUB Station should be available after the first of the year.

Bill stated that he believes the Town's objective is the arts and events at HUB Station.

Jeff mentioned that once they come to the HUB Station, we could give maps, dates of events, etc. He mentioned how Valdese has their events very well advertised.

Rebecca commented that we do need a map or brochures to let people know what is going on in Town.

Janet asked Dillon if he had access to the information about the upcoming events.

Dillon commented that he does have the dates.

Ann stated that it might be a good idea to have marketing work sessions with the Recreation Staff and the HUB Station Staff.

Janet stated that Rebecca has put together information about this year's budget for marketing. She commented that more marketing projects can be added for next year's budget. She stated that she believes we need to get our feet wet first, and decide what we want to showcase before we get Mr. White involved with a project.

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#### Update on Street Repairs/Budget:

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Janet stated that the work orders for the Hickman Avenue repairs will be signed tomorrow. Janet also mentioned that we have allocated out of fund balance \$534,000 for repairs for the two streets and the engineers. Hopefully we will be reimbursed 75% of these expenses for the repairs from the State. Chuck is also going to be discussing the PARTF Grant at our December meeting.

Rebecca stated that she has also asked Chuck to set up a timeline for the PARTF Grant work. The planning period for the project is through August.

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Rebecca stated that she received a call from someone at the State, and they indicated that the expenses for the repairs are being submitted for review. Rebecca commented that the refunds can be up to 75%, which hinges on what has had to be spent across the State for repairs.

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**Ethics Training for Re-elected and Newly Elected Officials:**

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Janet stated that the WPCOG is working to make ethics training available through a webinar or on demand. There is ethics training available at Conover Town Hall on Tuesday, Dec. 10<sup>th</sup> if anyone needing the training is interested in going.

Rebecca mentioned that newly elected officials are also required to have FEMA training.

Janet stated that we will try and keep everyone posted as to when training is available.

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**Adjournment:**

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**Motion: (Bill Warren/Larry Chapman) to adjourn the meeting. Unanimously approved.**

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**Tamra T. Swanson, Town Clerk**