

## Historic Downtown Chipley Merchant's Association

### April 29, 2008 Meeting

Attendees:     The Den                     Angel Cakes                     Tommy McDonald  
                  The Goulding Agency     Foster Folly News             Chris MacBlain  
                  Baxley's Cleaners             Washington County News     Simon Sheffield  
                  Valencia's Jewelers         Phoenix Illusions             Metric Engineering  
                  Mother's Grievance

Discussed at length the facade grant and the 2% loan through the CRA. There is a correction to last week's minutes. The \$6,000.00 facade grant is per public entrance and not for each side of the building. Ted Everett is willing to give a workshop to fully explain these programs. There is a possibility that Carol Westmorling from the Florida Redevelopment Association may also come for the workshop. Kathy Foster suggested flyers be distributed to all businesses about the workshop once the details have been finalized.

Discussed again having an event or a downtown stroll to draw shoppers to our area. Chris MacBlain suggested that we first decide what we want to do and choose a date. Tommy McDonald said once we have a plan of action we can go to a City Council workshop with the details. Because each department of the city is in attendance they will then be able to point out possible problems with the plan and guide us toward solutions.

It was then again pointed out that almost all the stores close at 5:00 and aren't open on weekends. We have a lot of empty buildings and a lot of commercial offices but few retail stores. The question was raised as to why anyone would want to come downtown. Mr Goulding suggested we could move the event to different locations to feature a different business each time we hold an event. He again offered to help us with the advertising.

We also discussed things that have been tried in the past to peak interest. Mr Valencia said it was the CRA that started the Trick or Treating downtown. There was also "Dog Days of August" at one time. For whatever reason interest died down and progress faltered. Several people in attendance shared that in the past many ideas have been tried with some success at first, but then after a few years interest faded. There seems to be an attitude of apathy that needs to be overcome. Building owners don't want to improve their structures because taxes will go up. Business owners who rent their space don't want to make improvements because their rent will go up. And so begins a downward cycle of decay.

Our challenge then is to find a way to succeed in our mission. The mission being to keep the rich heritage of Chipley alive. The more often we meet as merchants to share problems, to share ideas, to share dreams, the more likely we are to "hit" on a workable, affordable solution that will benefit all. Chipley was the best place in the world to grow up. It was a safe place. No matter where we have made our home in the intervening years, in our hearts Chipley always was and always will be Home. We, as merchants, have the unique opportunity to come together and once again create a safe, beautiful, thriving environment in which to build memories for our successors

Our next meeting will be May 6, 2008 at 5:15 in The Den. Join us, please. Bring your questions, concerns, hopes and dreams. For more information contact Greg or Jackie Baxley at 638-0201.

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