



## Kingston Citizens Advisory Council (KCAC)

### Business Roundtable Notes

September 5, 2018

#### Moderators:

Dave Muller, Windermere Real Estate

Micki Monroe, D'Vine Wines / Greater Kingston Chamber of Commerce

#### Panelists:

Lacey Menne Anders (LMA) – Borrowed Kitchen / Farmhouse Café

Craig Smith (CS) – Firehouse Theater

Jett Woelke (JW) – Windermere Real Estate

Stacey Patrick (SP) – Clever Giftshop / Lucky Star Consignment

#### What is good about running a business in Kingston?

- SP - The people
- JW – People, the family-oriented community, can-do spirit. Neighbors would help if you came on hard times. People want to do what's right and give back to their community.
- CS – The arts, connections. The theater made it through hard times because of good people in Kingston. The kids.
- LMA – Grew up here, walks to work. Town is like "Cheers," where everyone knows your name. Local feeling

#### Why did you choose Kingston to open your business?

- LMA – Kingston needed a bakery. I grew up here, I live here, and I wanted to support the community.
- CS – It started with a video store by Albertsons. When that business model phased out, I thought a theater would be a good business to get into. I had my first video store near Port Hadlock.
- JW – To serve the community where I live.
- SP – I saw a need for a clothing store and gift shop.

#### What are the challenges or successes of running a business in Kingston?

- SP – Knowing people. I listen, learn their jean sizes, and call them when their size comes in. During the recession, I figured out how to run an intern program when I couldn't afford employees. I made people laugh and learned how to change things up during the downturn.
- JW – Limited resources. Only so many clients in the area and a lot of realtors. Getting people to stop and look around in Kingston, rather than just ride the ferry is a challenge. Successes include finding clients who traded houses and helping people to get what they want. Showing people Kingston.



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- CS – Advertising is a challenge. Would love a local radio station to advertise on. Special events are successes – such as Oscar Night, a catered event where there are prizes for best-dressed.
- LMA – Business in general is hard, which has nothing to do with Kingston. The payroll, employees, bills, etc. It would be nice to have a spot to turn to for support on the business aspect. Baking is easy, so that's a success.

Hundreds of new residents are anticipated to move to Kingston because of the fast ferry. How do you feel this will impact your business?

- LMA – It will bring in more customers, but also more problems. Some customers are difficult. Fifty-two percent of my business is new customers, according to technology which tracks users.
- CS – I see new people all the time in the theater. Last year was the worst year. This year is on track to be the best yet. I'm getting a lot of new newsletter signups. Selling beer and wine. However, with Highway 104, people can't get in or out of the parking lot.
- JW – Real estate loves the fast ferry. It will be good for locals too, to get to events, medical appointments. I'm afraid that locals might get priced out of new homes though.
- SP – I've already seen new families. I'm excited to meet new people and retain local customers.

How can businesses work together to keep each other healthy in the off-season?

- SP – Shop Kingston first. Check in on social media.
- JW – Support local businesses and retailers
- CS – Build synergy. Be involved in multiple things, like coaching. Selling advertising on screen before shows. Use public service announcements. Use word of mouth. Give gift cards to local businesses to your employees.
- LMA – I saw a quote at the Farmer's Market about no one noticing if you skip shopping at a chain store. Your local farmer's market will miss you. Keep it community and support each other.

If you were mayor of Kingston...

- LMA – My game isn't political
- CS – I would pull us together around the high school and connect. We could strengthen the community with an identity around the school.
- JW – We're missing overnight lodging. My first job as mayor would be to bring an inn to downtown.



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- SP – I would actively recruit businesses that were missing from Kingston so that people didn't have to leave. We need an identity, which should be about the Buccaneers. We could have pirate and nautical stuff all over town to support the school and give us an identity.

Any advice for people who are thinking of starting a business?

- SP – Do it!
- JW – Join the Chamber

#### Questions from the Audience

Do kids from Kingston go to North Kitsap?

- CS – Numerous middle and high school kids do. We need to build a community here, and have the kids go to school here. We need to support the bond in three years, move the bus barn, support field improvements.

Regarding Sunday traffic, do you think most businesses would prefer a) not be open, that business isn't enjoyed by them, b) would enjoy some of the business from that traffic, or c) want to take advantage of most/all of the traffic coming thru Kingston on Sundays?

- LMA – let them shop while they're waiting
- CS – I get some business from long ferry waits. People will come in and watch a movie. WSP and the ferry dock should coordinate better though.
- JW – They should build a holding lane so that ferry people can park and shop while they're waiting
- SP – Not an issue at my current location. But I liked it when the ferry broke.

What is something that you know now, but didn't know when you started your business?

- CS – Movie studios own you. They tell you when you can show a movie, who you need to wait to be done with it. If you want to open a theater, open one in Sequim.
- JW – People who open a business have to be special. They need creativity and have to work hard to succeed. You have to work harder here than somewhere else.
- LMA – Best lesson – start small, be open to new ideas and change. Rearrange the furniture a lot. Don't be afraid of change, or to admit something isn't working. Start small, like I did with scones.



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#### Are there fears of commercial rents going up?

- LMA – As business owners, we are forced to deal with business owners. They can't let traffic decide what rental income will be. Owners need to make sure rent won't drive out businesses.
- CS – I'm currently in lease negotiations. Next may, the theater may or may not be open. It's got to pencil out. The owner of the building is retiring, and his son has taken over. I'm worried about rising prices. My kids want to move back, but where will they live? Where are the starter homes?

#### What does Kingston need?

- Hotel
- Butcher
- Cheese shop
- Something to eat other than pizza
- Oil change shop
- Car wash
- Bowling alley

#### Other comments

- We need a reservation system for the ferry. Then travelers can pause and patronize businesses, and plan to spend money.
- Everyone should come to the October 11 Ferries Long Range Plan meeting at Kingston Village Green. We need to be loud and unified to get what Kingston needs.
- North Kitsap High School gets a lot more press coverage than Kingston. There is no way to advertise when we win. We should involve businesses to get out school spirit. Use the reader board. Put spirit signs on light poles. Brag about victories, like State Champion swim team.
- How will moving from two to three ferries help? It might help the flow of traffic through town.