



*Summary Report*  
**FHB Annual Meeting**  
**Report of the Secretary**  
**2019 Achievements**  
**Held on March 9, 2020**  
**495 Hope Street, Bristol**



Friends of Historic Bristol held its second Annual Meeting on March 9, 2020. During the meeting, the Report of the Secretary was received. This report focuses on the accomplishments of the organization during 2019, as its Board of Directors, Advisory Board, and members sought to implement its [Vision](#), [Mission](#), and [Initiatives](#).

During 2019, Friends of Historic Bristol carried out the following initiatives:

- In January (1/25/19), FHB met with Patrick McMahon, the CEO of Main Street America for the State of Connecticut. The goal of the meeting was to learn the details of MSA membership and to expose Patrick to several East Bay towns that have interest in MSA. An additional achievement of this meeting was the partnership that was solidified between FHB, Grow Smart RI (a statewide leader in sustainable and equitable economic growth) and Preserve RI (the Statewide Advocate for Rhode Island's Historic Places).
- In February (2/28/2019), FHB brought Donovan Rypkema, CEO of PlaceEconomics, to Bristol as part of our on-going economic revitalization program. We held three roundtables in our Brighter Future economic development community initiative



where more than 75 local business owners, Bristol municipal leaders, non-profit organizations, religious leaders, and others, led by Rypkema, explored what economic development consists of, how it has changed in the 21st century, and what is needed to address economic development in Bristol. [Read the Rypkema Roundtable Report here](#) (opens a 20pp pdf).

- Rypkema subsequently gave a community presentation on the evening of 2/28 at St. Michael's Church about effective economic revitalization, focusing on many of the Main Street America successes. This program was attended by more than 200 members of the Bristol community. [View the presentation video here](#).



- In April (4/6/19), FHB held a “NonProfits Call to Action” as part of its “CONNECT” economic development program with the goal of developing partnerships between nonprofits and FHB and discussing economic development priorities so that nonprofits can build a critical mass and speak with one voice to the other sectors - public and private - in developing economic plans.

More than 15 of Bristol's leading nonprofit organizations participated in a Call to Action at the Old Statehouse. A lively brainstorming discussion brought out numerous ways that local programs could connect and communicate to help each other better meet the needs of customers. [Read the Non\\_Profit Call To Action Report here](#) (opens a 6 pp pdf)

- Also in April, FHB conducted a mini-survey of downtown business and nonprofit leaders, collecting data on monthly income percentages so that we could judge the timing and impact of the Hope St. bridge closure. This data was brought to the May 19 community meeting with RIDOT representatives speaking about the bridge closure.



- Throughout the year, we have been in contact with representatives of Main Street America - Kathy LaPlante, representing the NorthEast MSA program staff, and Patrick McMahon, the CEO of the statewide Connecticut Main Street Center, to further our understanding and our relationship with this 40 year old successful program for downtown revitalization.
- In May (5/31/19), FHB also coordinated two meetings focused on Main Street America, one between Patrick McMahon and Bristol Town Administrator Steve Contente, as well as a meeting between McMahon and Bristol business owners at Portside Tavern to promote a better understanding of how MSA can benefit Bristol. Patrick McMahon, the CEO of the statewide Connecticut Main

Street Center, discussed economic development strategies used by the [Connecticut Main Street Center](#) which serves as the catalyst that ignites Connecticut's Main Streets as the cornerstone of thriving communities. There are currently 80 Main Street communities in Connecticut. Patrick stated that Rhode Island had a statewide Main Street America program 20 years ago and urged FHB to move forward in re-instituting the program as a proven method for revitalizing local economies. He recommended the return of RI's Historic Tax Credit program and adaptive repurposing of existing downtown buildings as transformational strategies that yield a high return on investment. Currently 40 of the 50 states in the US have Main Street America programs.



- On June (6/10/19), we held a “Business Call to Action.” This event was answered by more than 30 Bristol business owners and managers, as well as representatives of Grow Smart RI, Discover Newport, and East Bay Chamber of Commerce. Participating business owners identified challenges to their operation and what is needed to overcome those challenges and

improve the local economy. Lively discussion yielded information about what types of promotional, marketing and branding efforts would help the businesses to be more profitable and improve the overall quality of life in Bristol. There were also many suggestions regarding how the Town government and businesses could work together to improve the economy. [Read the full report here](#) (opens an 8pp pdf).

- In a continuing effort to coordinate a community response and educate the public, FHB has written and posted 3 major reports based on the community input from our 3 community Roundtables held on February 26, our April 6 Nonprofits Call to Action, and our June 10 Business Call to Action. These documents provide a current, useful base for economic development.
- As a result of our speakers series and community roundtable forums, FHB has become a leading organization for Main Street America in RI.



- FHB provided testimony at public hearings throughout 2019 at HDC, Planning and Zoning Board meetings and at the legal appeals to both the HDC and Planning Board decisions relating to the Belvedere at Thames

development proposals, filed by the Abutters to the property. The legal suits brought by the abutters and the testimony provided by members of FHB and experts recruited by FHB were instrumental in bringing about the unanimous decision by the Zoning Board to deny the Belvedere at Thames project as submitted.

- FHB carried out multiple strategic planning sessions, in April after the Nonprofit Call to Action, in September at a Strategic Planning Board Retreat where we looked at the past 12 months and focused planning for the upcoming year, and in October to define the programmatic implications of our SWOT organizational analysis.
- FHB membership rose to 100 in 2019, due to a continuous effort to provide educational programs and articles in local media, our Calls to Action, as well as our successful “Meet Friends” Wine & Appetizer gatherings.
- The [FHB website](#), created jointly by our Technology and Marketing Committees, has continued to serve as an effective communications vehicle for our nonprofit, providing an interactive base for receiving community input and broadcasting issues of importance in achieving our mission, as well as serving as a fundraising vehicle to support our ongoing efforts. The [Resources page](#) of the website provides access to all previous Bristol economic development studies, current community development research relevant to Bristol, and the community input from of all of the roundtables and calls-to-action undertaken by FHB.
- FHB has served as an important agent to further communication and community input through our Technology Committee, which has designed and sent out multiple MainChimp and e-mails to our membership and hundreds of additional contacts focused on upcoming community actions and events.

