April 1, 2021

Good evening!  You are receiving this email (sorry for the long and impersonal blast) because you have been an inspiration, an advisor or a valued "red teamer" (that means someone to keep me from making stupid mistakes).  I appreciate this team and wanted to let you know what's up.

There are some new names on the "BCC" so I'm going to reiterate our Vision...bear with me!

"Madison Mercantile" is a Center for Community, Art and Innovation in Madison.  It will be housed in the old "Brehmer Hardware Building" in the shadow of the grain silos and at the end of Madison's Main Street.  The Mercantile has three basic components:

Madison Mercantile Coffee House:  A for-profit coffee and gathering place.

Madison Art Gallery:  A Non-Profit  Art Gallery

Madison Business Innovation Center:  A Non-Profit Business Incubator.

Together, these three entities form an inclusive, welcoming and creative environment for folks of all ages and stripes to relax,work, dream and create.

So....where do we stand?

1.  Building:  The building is \*\*almost\*\* ours.  Funding is approved but there are a few more sticky wickets to navigate before we can close.  In the mean time, we have executed a lease with the sellers from April 1 thru Closing that will allow us to get started.  I have to give a big shout out to the Brehmers for being kind and accommodating!

2.  Entities:  All the appropriate LLCs are filed; liability and workmans comp insurance are in force and tax-exempt status for the Gallery and Business Innovation are in the works.

3.  Board members:

4.  Next Steps:  The long pole in this tent is the commercial food-service-quality kitchen.  Plumbing plans must follow all sorts of public health guidelines and we want to do this right...so it may be six weeks or more before we can start constructing the Coffee House kitchen area.  We are working on the other parts while waiting for approval.  This includes...in this order:

   - High Speed Internet

   - Offices renovation (three offices)

   - Bathroom upgrades

   - Music Stage

   - Gallery Walls (both fixed and movable)

   - Lighting

   - Gallery classroom

   - Business center meeting room

5.  Timeline/Events: We will hold an "Open House" during the Madison "All School Reunion" on July 17-18.  More details as they develop.  Our ultimate goal is to be fully open by September 1st, 2021.  We will hold some informational meetings, board meetings, etc, to get some input as well!

6. Projects, grants, etc:  We are working hard to secure grants to help us set up the non-profits and to plan some large art efforts (like a mural on the building).  The City also has a Capital Improvement Program that will help us spiff up the front facade.

7.  Funding:  The bottom line...after we get the building purchase settled and some grants written, we will launch a "crowd funding" effort.  We will reach out to current and former area residents and alumni to secure their investment in our community.

There is a lot on this plate.  But we deserve a place like this in our community and we are glad that you are helping  to eat this elephant one bite at a time.

Here's how you can help:

1.  Tell folks, get ideas, secure support:  That support can be tangible (like money or stuff) or just a boat load of good Karma and great ideas!

2.  Find things we need: We need to source the kitchen and coffee equipment.  Any leads, send our way!

3.  Find entrepreneurs that need a place to prosper:  There is a ton of room.  We can support a boutique, a dog groomer, a cabinet maker, artists of all kinds, a baker, a yoga studio, some exercise gurus, a masseuse, a cross-fit gym, frame shop, photography studio....a brewery? Let's talk and let's help others realize their dreams.

4.  Find funding!

5.  Come see the space and help us understand what it needs to be.  Call, text or email and I will show you the place!

OK...that's enough for now.  Let's grow together!!