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Beautification project underway for Franklin

Members of the new community collaborative are continuing to meet to discuss ways of initiating small tasks to beautify downtown Franklin before Community Day on May 9.

The first meeting of the team, in January, was to brainstorm ideas for low-cost and simple projects. A second meeting, last week, brought in a few new faces, including local artisans and service workers.

Denise Sharlow and Colleen Ives, both with the marketing organization Choose Franklin, organized and spearheaded the team. "We've made some great headway" since the first meeting, Sharlow said.

Choose Franklin obtained a \$5,000 grant for the initiative and the team is looking to launch three projects that will be low in cost and simple enough to do with a small number of volunteers.

The first project will be to paint all the fire hydrants and bollards — the posts that protect the hydrants — as well as a general scrubdown of downtown streets and sidewalks.

Leading the subcommittee that is organizing the project is the city's municipal services director, Brian Sullivan. He said the city has power washers to use for the scrubdown and the group plans to do the scrubdown during April school vacation in hopes of enlisting high school students as volunteers to help get it done.

Sharlow took interest in the second project, doing something to make the empty storefronts downtown more aesthetically appealing. She said the group will "mix the practical with the artistic with this project."

The group plans to clean the windows and improve or beautify them by painting murals, displaying historical photographs or having local artisans work in the storefronts or display student artwork.

The third project is to set up American flags throughout the downtown area. Flags were displayed in front of Franklin businesses as part of the city's Centennial celebration a decade ago, but those involved in the collaborative project are unsure whatever happened to them. The group is hoping that local business owners might still have flags stored away and the group hopes to use one as a template to make more. An idea to make it a cheaper project is to have local businesses sponsor the flags as they did during the Centennial.

Sharlow and Ives said they were impressed with the productivity of last week's meeting.

"It's amazing what you can accomplish when you put your mind to it," Ives said at the end of

the meeting.

The next meeting of the group is scheduled Tuesday, March 24, at 3 p.m. in the Franklin High School library. Those interested in getting involved are urged to attend.
