

CITY OF WIXOM
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
49045 PONTIAC TRAIL
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2022

APPROVED (A)
BY: DDA BRD. DATE: 3/22/22

This meeting of the Wixom Downtown Development Authority came to order at 7:32 a.m. with the following individuals in attendance:

DDA MEMBERS: Chairperson Vanessa Willett, Vice-Chairperson Kristin Rzeznik, Melanie Cheney, Mark Garmo, Kaitie Guzowski, Russ Meredith, Wes Umlor, and Patrick Beagle, Mayor

ABSENT: Excused: K. Fine; A. Habbouche; C. Serylo

STAFF: DDA Staff: Laura Cloutier, DDA Executive Director
City Staff: Steve Brown, City Manager
City Staff: Drew Benson, Assistant City Manager
Mona Freiburger, Recording Secretary

Determination of Quorum:

Quorum was met.

Reading of Vision and Mission Statement:

Mission Statement: The Mission of the Wixom DDA is to coordinate the efforts of businesses and residents to promote the growth of the downtown area for the community's benefit.

Vision Statement: The Wixom Downtown Development Authority is to provide a friendly, welcoming downtown which will enhance and honor our history while promoting cultural, business and recreational opportunity that attract businesses and residents.

Approval of Agenda:

MOTION by Board Member Meredith and second by Mayor Beagle to approve the Meeting Agenda.

VOTE: MOTION CARRIED

All in favor.
None opposed.

Public Comments:

No public comments

Approval of Minutes:

MOTION by Board Member Cheney and second by Mayor Beagle to approve the January 25, 2022, DDA Regular Meeting Minutes, as presented.

VOTE: MOTION CARRIED

All in favor.
None opposed.

Correspondence:

None

Executive Director's Report:

Executive Director Cloutier commented on the highlights.

Wednesdays in Wixom was, again, successful this year. They were able to surprise thirteen patrons so far. Next week is the last Wednesday for Wednesdays in Wixom. The Promotions Committee will be evaluating this program and will be looking at ways to make this program fresh for next year.

The Main Event will be held on May 5, 2022. This is Main Street Oakland County's yearly awards event taking place at the Strand Theatre in Downtown Pontiac. It is an evening with all the Main Street communities from across Oakland County to celebrate their achievements. The Promotions Committee is reviewing the awards selection that we are eligible to participate and will submit the necessary paperwork for consideration. Executive Director Cloutier asked the Board Members to mark their calendars for this event to have Wixom well represented. She will provide more information when it becomes available.

Executive Director Cloutier thanked the Board Members who turned in the 2021-22 Board Member Partnership forms and dues. She asked the Board Members to turn in their forms as soon as possible, if they have not already done so.

Executive Director Cloutier indicated there were multiple grant opportunities available for downtown businesses. She passed along the information to all the downtown businesses. This is an ongoing effort to help businesses recover from the impact of the pandemic. Downtown businesses have been provided a list of the upcoming events through September. This will help the downtown businesses to be better prepared and, hopefully, will increase participation.

Old Business:

A. Executive Director Contract Extension

Chair Willett indicated as of March 16, 2022, the DDA Executive Director's (Laura Cloutier) contract will expire. It is, currently, a part time contract position. Through conversations with Executive Director Cloutier, City Manager Brown, and herself, Chair Willett proposed to extend the current contract to June 30, 2022. This would put all contracts moving forward on a fiscal year schedule. This extension would also allow more time to fully assess the request for a longer contract, full time status, and increase in compensation to the Executive Director based on the increase scope of work given with the increase of budgeted TIF that will be allocated to the DDA.

MOTION by Mayor Beagle and second by Board Member Cheney to approve the extension of the Executive Director Laura Cloutier's, position from March 31, 2022 to June 30, 2022.

VOTE: MOTION CARRIED

All in favor.
None opposed.

B. DDA Annual Public Meeting

Executive Director Cloutier indicated under PA 57 of 2018, the DDA is required to hold two public meetings per fiscal year to showcase the investments, projects, and goals to the businesses and residents that contribute to the TIF. It was proposed to hold the public meetings on April 26, 2022 and November 22, 2022.

MOTION by Chair Willett and second by Board Member Meredith to approve the April 26, 2022 and November 22, 2022 to schedule the annual DDA public meetings.

VOTE: MOTION CARRIED

All in favor.
None opposed.

C. Committee: Design

The Design Committee is has been working on creating a façade and signage grant program as indicatives the DDA can offer to downtown businesses. Also, the proposed signage at the end of the Michigan Air Line Trail is being researched and will be presented at a future meeting.

Vice Chair Rzeznik indicated during the last board meeting, there was discussion of signage for the Trail. She was not presented at the January DDA meeting. Board Member Meredith suggested having signage to promote specials for the downtown businesses to tie in with the Michigan winter proposal. Vice Chair Rzeznik asked if this could be done to fit in with the existing signage and have a QR code to make changes.

Vice Chair Rzeznik commented the Committee has been discussing goals for the future and putting budget numbers together. She thought it was important to have a session to discuss the budget as a board.

Mayor Beagle indicated the budget meeting with City Council would be held possibly the beginning of May.

Vice Chair Rzeznik indicated one of the main goals is the beautification of the downtown including maintenance and cleaning. The Design Committee is interested in having an Earth Day clean up of the downtown. Earth Day is April 22, 2022. The Committee would like to coordinate with community volunteers and DDA Board members to participate in the clean up.

Vice Chair Rzeznik asked if there were dumpsters available to dispose of garbage. She indicated Drafting Table would be willing to have garbage disposed in their dumpster. Board Member Garmo indicated they could use his dumpsters as well. Vice Chair Rzeznik asked to allocate \$400 max to spend on Earth Day supplies.

MOTION by Chair Willett and second by Mayor Beagle to approve the budget, not to exceed \$400, for supplies for Earth Day cleanup for downtown Wixom.

VOTE: MOTION CARRIED

All in favor.
None opposed.

D. Committee: Promotions

The Promotions Committee has been working on Sip n Stroll, the Junction re-grand opening, and the Main Event awards.

Executive Director Cloutier indicated the Committee has been meeting twice a month. Sip n Stroll will be held on March 16, 2022.

Board Member Guzowski commented the Sip n Stroll events have had good turnouts. Registrations are not, typically, taken.

Board Member Guzowski suggested having a meeting with the committee members to start an ambassador program with the downtown businesses to educate the business owners on what is going on with the City, have a phone number to contact, and if they have any questions. Chair Willett indicated they have talked about this during Economic Vitality meetings. It is on their list of items to do; have a questionnaire specific to the business and do quarterly visits. Board Member Guzowski indicated the feedback is the business owners were asked too late, which is why they developed the schedule of events for the year to help them plan. The Board Members are conscientious that the businesses are short staffed.

Chair Willett indicated we should promote on the signage and posters to support the local businesses.

E. Committee: Economic Vitality

Assistant City Manager Benson provided an update from the Economic Vitality Committee. At the last meeting, their focus was on creating goals for the 2022-23 fiscal year.

Assistant City Manager Benson indicated the Economic Vitality Committee were trying to think of ways to do business retention visits within the City as a whole; creating a program to meet with every business. Other things included incentives. There is one vacancy downtown; the Heath building that has been vacant for a while. He indicated they will be working with Economic Vitality on some recommendations for programs; being open to new ideas for projects.

Assistant City Manager Benson also brought up the idea of an incubator space for new small businesses. There could be short term leases, small businesses, etc., to start their business and help them grow into a larger space.

F. Committee: Organization

There is no report from the Organization Committee for the February 22, 2022 DDA meeting.

New Business:

A. DDA/City Services Cost Sharing

Chair Willett commented the DDA uses on a regular basis, and since its inception, city services such as police, fire, DPW, etc., all of services and administrative services the DDA uses to run the DDA. The DDA has not paid for these services.

Assistant City Manager Benson discussed and reviewed the report of several topics which was included in the packet. He indicated the first topic is an overall background of the DDA and how it relates to the City. The DDA is a sub-component of the City and the largest part comes from the City tax captures that are dedicated to the District along with Oakland County. Assistant City

Manager Benson stated the downtown is unique because of the large residential component, which is unusual for downtown DDA district; not bad, but unique.

In the analysis, Assistant City Manager Benson evaluated and discussed extending the DDA plan. If it was extended right now, the plan is open to add new activities and changes in laws and policies. It would also increase the capture. Right now, the capture is 100% of Oakland County's taxes on all of the new homes that were built since 2003.

Assistant City Manager Benson proposed a concept of 5% to the City in terms of taxable value, geographics. They applied 5% value to specific items related to the DDA such as salaries, wages, office staff, public works, financial administration; then proposed 50% of community services that are downtown specific.

Chair Willett indicated she met with City Manager Brown regarding the budget numbers. She did not have an issue with the contributions, so long as the DDA could co-brand, partnership to show where the money is being spent. We are one team, but we have to show what the DDA is doing.

Assistant City Manager Benson indicated we are doing a good job of bringing everything together; we are one team, all working together. The City would like to allow the DDA to continue to do meaningful projects. The City thought this proposal was a fair compromise.

Chair Willett indicated this would be part of the DDA budget planning meeting.

B. Joint Board Meeting

Assistant City Manager Benson indicated the City Council was looking at March 21st or 23rd to hold the Joint Board Meeting. After a short discussion, it was decided that March 21st would make the most sense for the meeting. He indicated he would talk to the Planning Commission to confirm this date as well. There would be an email sent out. The goal is to talk about development.

C. DDA Plan – Update and Alternative

Chair Willett indicated we can vote on the DDA Plan during the March meeting to extend the DDA plan and/or reconvene in 2026 or 2027 due to the potential for the DDA to lose a substantial amount of funding over the next few years.

Chair Willett stated there are about ten steps in the DDA plan update. She suggested for the Board Members to understand which makes the most business sense for the DDA. There are businesses that may or may not see what the DDA has done and could opt out. We need time to generate more business, retail, etc., and economics in the downtown to help all of the businesses currently, as well as new businesses.

Assistant City Manager Benson indicated it may be in our best interest to wait, policies may become friendlier towards larger captures opposed to the more current policy.

D. Capital Investments and Opportunities

Chair Willett indicated Economic Vitality has been working on ideas to generate more business downtown. She indicated she spoke with City Manager Brown and it was discussed that the DDA has the ability to purchase property. The Heath building has been empty for a long time. The DDA has some options to, potentially, buy the building, update it, and sublease it; potentially, get grant money, etc. These are some ideas that will be discussed in the budget session. The barn project was discussed again in reference to moving the barn and the cost to move it. Chair Willett indicated they are waiting until the pathway went through, so that people would stay downtown, walk around, enjoy the gardens, etc. The east retail is another option. Invest in the east retail and talk to developers for long term leases. There are a multitude of different options.

Assistant City Manager Benson indicated this could be done as partnerships with the City as well, where the City and DDA could continue to leverage funds. The City has land acquisition funds they have been using for the area around the west side of the street and Air Line Trail.

Chair Willett indicated she is in favor of doing capital improvements for the downtown. The DDA is here to impact the long term success of the downtown and the City.

Executive Director Cloutier indicated downtown Sparta won an award for their incubator space. They outfitted shipping containers, included a park, stage, fire pit and retail stores.

Information:

A. Downtown Business/News/Events

2022: February 23, 2022 – Wednesdays in Wixom

2022: March 16th – Sip n Stroll – Ladies Night Out

2022: May 5th – The Main Event

2022: May 7th – Derby Day Race

Public Comments:

Ms. Deanna Magee, Director of Community Services/Parks and Recreation commented she spoke with the Parks and Recreation Commissioners regarding including a Commissioner to join the DDA Design Committee. She indicated walking path bids would be received this week and she hoped to take the bids to City Council on March 8, 2022. The key component is to move forward as quickly as possible.

Vice Chair Rzeznik commented the playground is critical in the grand plan for the whole area. The playground would be a destination. Director Magee indicated the walking path has been in the plan for three years and needs to move forward to use CDBG funds.

Executive Director's Comments:

No comments.

Board Members' Comments:

Vice Chair Rzeznik thanked Assistant City Manager Benson for the report and discussion regarding the DDA Plan Update and Alternative.

Adjournment:

MOTION by Vice Chair Rzeznik, second by Mayor Beagle to adjourn the meeting. This meeting of the Wixom Downtown Development Authority was motioned and adjourned at 8:55 a.m.

Mona Freiburger
Recording Secretary