



## MINUTES

### **VIRTUAL Monthly Meeting of the Ferndale Downtown Development Authority Board of Directors Meeting**

ONLINE: [HTTPS://US02WEB.ZOOM.US/J/84761641823?PWD=A1VIDLL1EU05TUTHYXRJEMLLCVO0ZZ09/](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84761641823?pwd=A1VIDLL1EU05TUTHYXRJEMLLCVO0ZZ09/) PASSWORD: FERNDALE

PHONE: 312 626 6799 (TOLL FREE) / MEETING ID: 847 6164 1823/ PASSWORD: 86084236

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 27, 2020 @ 8:00 AM**

#### **1. ROLL CALL**

**CALL TO ORDER:** 8:00 am

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Jacki Smith, PJ Jacokes, Sarah Brown, Jerome Raska, Chris Johnston, Janice Semma, Mayor Melanie Piana, Blake Scheer, Nathan Martin

**STAFF PRESENT:** Lena Stevens, Executive Director; Sommer Realy, Engagement Manager; Reilly Coleman, DDA Administrator

#### **GUESTS PRESENT:**

- Jordan Twardy, Community and Economic Development (CED) Director
- Erin Quetell, Environmental Sustainability Planner
- Sheryl Stubblefield, Finance Director
- Jennifer Marr, Ferndale Area District Library Director
- Michael Lary, Special Events Coordinator
- Brian Campbell, Reef Parking
- Rocky Cooper, Department of Public Works (DPW)

#### **2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

*Motion by member Jerome Raska to move 7c to 7a seconded by member Mayor Piana to approve the agenda. **All ayes, motion carries.***

#### **3. PRESENTATIONS**

##### **3.a. DDA Executive Director Updates**

Executive Director Stevens provided an overview of the tasks and outreach the DDA and Ferndale Fixers has accomplished, extended gratitude to Jordan Twardy and Sommer Realy. DDA continues to filter the business COVID-19 line. Director Stevens stated satisfaction with social media and has received good feedback about library courtyard.

Oakland County Recovery Grant remains open until September 14, 2020 and is not to be confused with Stabilization Grant. Businesses must reapply to be considered for new grant (still eligible), however, the maximum reward is reduced based on how much businesses receive in Stabilization Grant.

##### **3.b. Downtown Maintenance Report**

Executive Director Stevens stated the Downtown Maintenance Report is closed out fiscal year 2020 on this contract. The DDA has a 2-year contract with DPW, 6

months are remaining in the contract. The 2020 fiscal year for Downtown Maintenance was budgeted at \$165,000 and came in about \$141,685. Hopefully, we can see the labor intensity go down and use it for more special projects in the future. The remaining \$20,000 fund associated to this contract will be used for planting.

Rocky Cooper, representative of DPW stated they have completed the pop-up park at Berumda and Nine Mile, furniture at the library courtyard and added rainbow lights to the Troy pedestrian alley. They are now focused on trying to keep it maintained and looking fresh.

Executive Director Stevens asked board members how they feel about the hanging baskets?

Member Jerome Raska stated he feels as though the overall flowers and planting look much better this year. Kudos to the DPW for their efforts. It has also been extremely hot this year, so that is important. I feel the baskets on those polls need to be a little bit more substantial, I think they get a little lost. There are a lot of other communities that have more substantial hanging baskets.

Executive Director Stevens asked board members if the hanging baskets are better this year than last year?

Member Jerome Raska said Yes, I think this was the first step in making improvements and we can take it further next year.

Jordan Twardy, CED director said I do not think they have ever looked better.

Executive Director Stevens mentioned that Schiffer Park will be added into our maintenance responsibilities.

Member Mayor Piana mentioned her continued interest in the DDA Board having a tour with the Detroit Downtown Partnership. Executive Director Stevens stated that the next meeting is in two weeks and will discuss with the board at that time.

Member Sarah Brown mentioned the compactor located behind Vester Street businesses is still a concern. Executive Director Stevens stated the trash area will be enclosed at The dot and is the start of all compactor locations being enclosed. New litter and recycling bins downtown are high priority.

### **3.c. Introduction to Parking Manager**

Bruce Campbell director of Reef Parking appreciated the opportunity to introduce himself. He provided some background and pointed out that he is from the city of Kansas City, Missouri, has parking experience in most parking environments, including municipal, on street, and off street, has been involved

in the opening of several new parking decks. Director Campbell looks forward to the opening of The dot and what that means to the City and citizens of Ferndale. He looks forward to working with the DDA board members and answering any questions.

Executive Director Stevens asked if director Campbell is looking forward to the dot. Director Bruce stated he likes the configuration and believes this will allow for easy access, which is not always the case. We are looking forward to utilizing as much space as we can. He will be looking for ways to maximize utilization of space and the area tied to people using the space.

Executive Director Stevens mentioned that information would be rolling out to businesses soon about employee parking permits with the dot. Executive Director Stevens and director Campbell will work together to provide this information consistent and cohesive way.

#### **4. COMMUNITY REPORTS**

##### **4.a. Ferndale Area District Library**

Ferndale Area District Library Director Jenny Marr stated that the library is in stage three with our library reopening plan. Virtual services such as podcasts are still provided to the public. Curbside service is offered seven days a week. It has been busy; providing curation to help people save time and getting books to people. Started an International Collection, with books in Arabic, Spanish, French, and German, possible it will be expanded determined by feedback received. Director Marr announced staff is distributing a class-to-go bag to help people stay busy at home and a new video game collection for circulation will be added. Staff has also been doing print jobs as well, people can curbside pickup 25 pages a day. Working with Ferndale Public Schools on a big push for kids to get library cards. Library will be launching a new subscription hopefully by September 1, 2020 for tutor.com which allows kids to have virtual tutoring sessions online, it also has 24/7 for support with homework help.

Engagement Manager Sommer Realy asked if the library staff has been enjoying the new picnic tables. Director Marr said yes, everyone loves it. A new access panel has been added to the door outside in courtyard offering staff more convenience. Director Marr enjoys looking outside seeing who is using it, and there is a lot of people using laptops and reading books, having their lunch. Library received a grant to redo the WiFi system and it is probable the courtyard will be covered.

#### **5. CALL TO AUDIENCE**

5.a. No audience attendees, all participants are staff

#### **6. CONSENT AGENDA**

##### **6.a. Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Meetings held June 11, 2020**

*Motion by member PJ Jacokes seconded by member Blake Scheer to approve the consent agenda as presented. **All Ayes, motion carries.***

## 7. REGULAR AGENDA

### 7.a. Discussion of Plan Establishing Social Districts in the City of Ferndale, as Proposed by the Directors of Special Events, CED, and the Ferndale DDA

Executive Director Stevens stated the first item up for discussion is social districts. Due to legislation from the state, we are allowed to define common areas within the City. The state provided authorization to this with the idea that there will be more outdoor space available. City Council has provided more opportunities for outdoor seating, eleven businesses have taken advantage of this to date. Director Stevens also conveyed that the local government is responsible for maintenance and operation, however, we can modify or revoke the designation at any time. The staff from the CED department, Special Events Coordinator Michael Lary, and the City Attorney have proposed the working hours would be Monday through Friday 5:00 PM to midnight, Saturday and Sunday noon to midnight. The district application fee is one hundred and fifty dollars and the state fee is two hundred dollars. The cups must be sixteen ounces, display the logo of the business, and can only be used in their designated social district. The DPW department would handle daily trash and litter pickup, however, we would ask the businesses to assist if necessary. The same logic will be applied to furnishings.

Special Events Coordinator Michael Lary further explains that most of the particulars Director Stevens mentioned are based on state law, and there isn't much ability to tweak anything. The bottom line is that any defined common areas must be approved by city council, and if approved, then to the state for finalization. The state fee is mandated by law, while the application fee is to help cover the cost of staff and signage that will identify each common area based on color code. We're proposing seven common areas, however, we could begin with a pilot program of a lesser number. The biggest challenge is regarding COVID-19. Coordinator Lary questioned, how do we do this but ensure people are social distancing and wearing a mask?

Director Stevens asks if Coordinator Lary could speak to how involved the Ferndale Police and Fire Departments have been?

Coordinator Lary states there is a Special Events Committee already in place with many department heads involved. The police department has agreed to patrol as normal to ensure people are following the law. The DPW has agreed to assist with maintenance. There will be a partnership between the City and the licensee to keep the area cleaned and maintained. The licensee owner must also understand the law and what is required, and the staff of the licensee holder must know where their designated location is to ensure the customers remain within that boundary. Alcohol must not be consumed prior to arriving in designated boundary.

Director Stevens offered further support that this process will not be activated all at once, recommended testing two areas first. Suggested the DDA approaches City Council for approval of the entire plan, rather than every time we seek to open another common area. Each area varies in size; however, they

will average in about eight to ten parking spaces. Based on feedback from the community and the CED department, the two starting areas being considered will be the lot on Withington St. and lot number nine. The next steps are to discuss the proposal, reach out to businesses, roll out to council, and make any needed adjustments.

Member Black Scheer asked if we have reached out to other cities for guidance.

Coordinator Michael Lary answered that there has been no verbal communication with other cities, but rather, research from their city council meetings.

Environmental Sustainability Planner Erin Quetell mentioned she previously spoke with Grand Rapids to gain insight on their process.

Member Mayor Piana stated she will reach out to other city managers.

Member Blake Scheer stated he would like to have feedback from additional cities, as he worries that it will be perceived as a form of organized tailgating. He is concerned for safety, liability, and the impression of asking businesses for money when they're trying to survive. It's difficult for businesses to gauge how much product they will need, and they will have to put out a lot of additional money. Member Scheer asked what the security factor is and what happens if someone occupies the space for several hours and when asked to leave they become agitated. Member Scheer stated he believes the DDA's efforts and money could be put toward other ventures.

Member Mayor Piana feels that it is an event without calling it an event and is concerned with the viability of other businesses in the area whose business model stems from events. It would be beneficial to help those businesses host events instead, as there may not be enough public support for what we're suggesting.

Member Jerome Raska asked how participation will be monitored, and whether there will be a reprimand or retraction. This will also be too short of a time frame given the weather and questioned if this event be available in the fall or spring.

Member Nathan Martin supported the idea of a test run and feels that it should be up to the businesses to choose whether to spend money on this. He is interested in knowing more about the DDA's financial input for the initial running.

Member Pj Jacokes mentioned the idea of policing and monitoring and how it could potentially disturb other businesses. Member Jacokes questioned how we will monitor someone's alcohol consumption outside the common area and who is going to manage this if a restaurant is not monitoring the situation.

Member Janice Semma shared J's Penalty Box currently has professional security six nights a week because of various problems. Another point of concern is the expense of liquor liability. Her business has an A+ rating, and to increase the square footage of their licensing, it is a huge additional expense including but not limited to cups, stickers, and staffing.

Member Chris Johnston agreed with all points presented. It is difficult given the uncertainty of the next few months. He questioned, who knows if unruly customers will increase or decrease over time. It is easier to make decisions if we have a basic cost in mind. If a problem arises, we could shut this down very quick. For years, there has been a back and forth idea about Ferndale being a restaurant or retail area, and this will bring more people out to retail. Personally, member Johnston does not want to have an event seven nights a week, but some bars and restaurants probably would.

Member Sarah Brown stated that she has dealt with the issues mentioned and they are not even a restaurant. With the current climate of the world, this is not a place I would want to attend, and it's hard to promote something I don't want to be a part of myself.

Chair Jacki Smith asked how many businesses are interested. The big thing is that if restaurants are interested, we can do a test pilot. Questioned why lot nine has been chosen for one of the first locations as opposed to something close to Nine Mile?

Coordinator Lary stated, lot nine is across the alley from The Loving Touch.

Chair Smith asked if it is too late and how long will it take to execute social districts and common areas. If you need walls on a tent to stay warm, you may as well be indoors.

Director Stevens stated that we want to be clear of not having the answers to all the questions. Regarding furniture and overall environment, it should be somewhere people want to go. A quote from Star Trax has been requested to get things started. There will be a budget impact to the DDA that will extend into next year. We could plan for next spring, but still take this to council for approval, so we do not have to circle back later. The police department is in support of us giving this a try, as they want to do anything that helps to support the businesses. We've held back on reaching out to businesses for interest, so we don't set any expectations.

Coordinator Michael Lary stated that in his research, other state communities' common areas are only active from May to October. The proposal to council could be whether we want this for a certain portion of the year or the entire year. He supports waiting until spring so the licensee holders can understand how this process works and make it a good experience. Another thing we want

to be mindful of is that our Downtown layout is very different from other communities, and we placed the common areas conveniently, so they are easy access points for DPW. They also need to be accommodating to the nearest license holders. In regard to food trucks, you can have food and entertainment consumed in the common areas. However, any common area that is within a special event would be temporarily closed so as not to interfere. Multiple liquor licenses are unable to intermingle in that way. Another important question is how many people are allowed per common area that would have to adjust according to the executive order at the time.

Director Stevens stated there is no need for a vote on this matter, but rather, a much-needed discussion. This feedback will be considered to help establish next steps. The main takeaway is that if we don't start, we will always be too late. It is good to look forward to these options and be prepared to activate them.

Member Raska asked if someone was able to reserve the common area for a private event and should be included in the guidelines.

Coordinator Michael Lary stated that regardless of the type of event, it may need approval through the licensee holder.

Director Stevens stated that the space belongs to the City, so it is not entirely the licensee holders to approve.

#### **7.b. Status Review of All DDA Board Actions in 2020**

Executive Director Stevens mentioned how the meetings and the discussions tend to blend together and will start sharing actions regularly and continue keeping it updated for future reference.

#### **7.c. Discussion of Payment in Lieu of Parking Ordinance**

Executive Director Lena Stevens introduced the discussion of current parking requirements. Parking and affordable housing is well-linked together, as we have housing units that require a parking limit. The CBD (central business district) exemption states that in 2016, the City code was changed so any establishments serving alcohol had to meet off-street parking requirements or submit a payment to City Hall if not met. As discussed at the time, the applications would go to the CED department, then the DDA, and then City Council. Previous feedback concluded that the DDA was not comfortable with this role. The conversation today should be around whether this is a good policy for the downtown region, as there is confusion over who owns this policy and ensures it is enforced. Director Stevens asked the DDA board members for their thoughts on the payment in lieu ordinance and if so, how engaged should the DDA be.

Member P.J. Jacokes claimed this policy was enforced prior to his arrival on the board, however, he was never in favor. It is prohibitive to businesses trying to get a start. We should be fostering new businesses. If we keep making it hard

for restaurants to open, we won't have that variety. When COVID is done, we need to try and attract as many new businesses as we can; this ordinance prevents that from happening.

Member Mayor Piana stated that after four years of this ordinance in place, she feels the DDA and City were trying to solve challenges identified in the retail study. Things have changed and we have direction to make that happen. Former council members thought this would be temporary until the opening of the dot.

Member Nathan Martin stated he also was not on the board at the time of this policy, and never favored having a retail-over-entertainment district. We don't want to force people to give more money before opening a new business.

Member Chris Johnston stated his recollection of the ordinance was that it was intended to give the board an opportunity to approve or deny a new bar or restaurant based on proper conditions. However, it has not been used as well as it could have.

Chair Jacki Smith stated that it is a challenge. When she first arrived in the City with her business, she had to completely re-work her business model. Customers only come during non-bar hours, because during the hours when the bars are open, there is no business. We have dipped into becoming an entertainment district and we will not attract anymore retail. As a retailer, without having some way to support them, they will leave.

Member Jacokes asked if The dot opening will make a difference in relation to the Payment in Lieu ordinance.

Chair Smith replied that right now, there is more parking available due to COVID-19. On the weekends, parking lots are full. People are willing to walk a mile for bars, but not for retail. Chair Smith is unsure if The dot will help.

Director Stevens supported these points and believe it helps to continue conversation. Director Stevens will move forward on the timetable that is laid out here and start discussing this with the planning commission.

Chair Jacki Smith mentioned that there was supposed to be a retail recruitment plan that was never executed.

Member Mayor Piana stated that there was fear with increased rent, as businesses could never go back to be a mom and pop store. Referencing the original data collected is recommended. Parking does not always help immediately; more parking means more traffic. We need to rethink the use of our Downtown.

Member mayor Piana requested to move forward with planning commission to remove the ordinance.



#### **7.d. Approve Recommendations for PPE Marketplace**

Engagement Manager Sommer Realy presented a recommendation on how to spend funds collected in association to the #openinferndale Patronicity campaign. The campaign was very successful, with a grand total of \$21,457. The recommendation is to create a PPE Marketplace for businesses. Member Jerome Raska is allowing us to use his space. Marketplace would open in September starting two days a week. Registered businesses will receive a form to register and select items they need to restock. One-on-one consultations will be available to help businesses navigate through available resources. Custom printed reusable masks will be produced by Woodward Movement. City of Ferndale, the DDA, the Ferndale Area Chamber, Main Street Oakland County, Open in Ferndale, Jim Schaffer and Associates, and more are responsible for making this possible.

Member Pj Jacokes asked if it would be appointment only or if there will be staffing.

Manager Realy replied that she would staff it herself, and if need be, provide special appointments to engage directly with businesses.

Chair Jacki Smith asked what the bucket item is for.

Manager Realy stated it can either hold their cleaning supplies or disinfectant, or simply, store the supplies they order.

Director Stevens adds it was important to consider what would be beneficial for businesses to have. Additionally, we have 100 remaining county PPE kits available for distribution if needed.

Member Sarah Brown asked if it is possible to be included as we move out of the Downtown district.

Manager Realy stated these services are available Citywide to businesses with 30 employees or less.

Director Stevens stated the money given from Main Street Oakland County remains within the DDA district, but other money can go to other citywide businesses. The goal was to have money available for both districts.

Manager Realy added she is happy we can offer this citywide.

*Motion: Executive Director, Lena Stevens set roll call vote. **All Ayes, motion carries.***

#### **9. CALL TO COMMITTEE CHAIRS, BOARD MEMBERS & STAFF (note more than 3 minutes)**

Chair Jacki Smith requested the community is aware of what we have done recently and have them celebrate it. It goes deeper than just providing masks and hand sanitizer. I'd love to see a marketing campaign for this to help bring out feelings of hope and community.

Member Mayor Piana requested a recap for council of everything the DDA has accomplished during this time. A lot of people believe the City hasn't done enough. Something on social media would help. Thanks to Lena and Sommer for everything they've done.

Chair Jacki Smith inquired if there has been an opening date established for The dot.

Executive Director Lena Stevens stated there is not an official opening date established. We are targeting September and how to celebrate with the community. We will talk more about that as it gets closer. We're still getting interest in the retail spaces; however, they are moving in a little slower. The office spaces are on hold. Affordable housing is still in consideration for the future.

#### **10. ADJOURNMENT**

*Motion by member Mayor Piana seconded by Pj Jacokes to adjourn the meeting at 10:04 A.M.  
All ayes, motion carries.*