



VIRTUAL Monthly Meeting of the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Board of Directors
Downtown Development Authority Meeting
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11 2021 @ 8:00 AM

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PASSWORD: FERNDAL
PHONE: 929 205 6099 (TOLL FREE)
MEETING ID: 874 3890 7850

1. ROLL CALL

CALL TO ORDER: 8:02 am

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jacki Smith of Ferndale, PJ Jacokes of Pleasant Ridge, Sarah Brown of Ferndale, Jerome Raska of Ferndale, Janice Semma of Ferndale, Chris Johnston of Ferndale, JeDonna Dinges of Ferndale, Mayor Melanie Piana of Ferndale

MEMBERS ABSENT: Nathan Martin

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

GUESTS PRESENT:

- Jordan Twardy, Community and Economic Development Director
- Justin Lyons, Planning Manager
- Michael Lary, Director of Special Events
- Jenny Marr, Director of the Ferndale Area District Library

2. ELECTRONIC MEETINGS POLICY ADJUSTMENT

a. Acknowledgment of the City of Ferndale Electronic Meetings Policy

Executive Director Lena Stevens reminded the Board of the current state law regarding the continuance of electronic meetings, as recognized by Ferndale City Council in their previous meeting. The law requires designated time for audience participation to allow public comment for connection.

3. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

a. Election of Officers

Executive Director Lena Stevens provided an overview of the Board election process. It is written in the by-laws that the Board appoints four officers every two years, including a Chair, a Vice-Chair, a Secretary, and a Treasurer. The minimum membership requirement includes eight members plus the Mayor, which is the Board's current level of operation. It is not required to recruit more members but encouraged. The Board is looking to recruit a residential member of the Downtown but has not yet appointed anyone from the TIF or Downtown district. The Chairperson is the main point of contact who walks everyone through the meetings. The Vice-Chair shares partial responsibility with the Chair and serves as the backup person in the Chair's absence. The Secretary serves as the main point of approval for the meeting minutes; however, this position has

not been activated in recent years. The Treasurer is responsible for tracking all funds and reports in absence of the Executive Director. This particular position would be helpful for check and balance to serve as a backstop for financial procedures. The positions are for years but can be flexible. Director Stevens encouraged everyone to speak on levels of interest.

Member Jacki Smith stated the time spent as Chair enhanced the perception of the DDA and life itself. The Treasurer position also educated on how to create a treasury report. It's not a huge commitment of time and is very worth it.

Member Chris Johnston offered help whenever available. Noted that the DDA's growth is impressive and that is due to the leadership.

Member Janice Semma expressed support for Member Jacokes as Chair and Member Johnston as Vice-Chair. They would work well together.

Member Jerome Raska supported Member Semma's nominations.

Mayor Melanie Piana offered additional support for the previous nominations and looks forward to working with the Board in the continued growth of the Downtown and pandemic recovery.

Member PJ Jacokes expressed his gratitude in consideration of the Chair position and to potentially work alongside Member Johnston. Has been on the Board for a long time and watched the previous Chairs lead with grace.

Member Sarah Brown stated interest in being considered for the Treasury position.

Motion by Member Jerome Raska, seconded by Member Janice Semma to nominate PJ Jacokes as Chair, Chris Johnston as Vice-Chair, and Sarah Brown as Treasurer. Secretary will be determined at a later date.

AYES - Mayor Melanie Piana, Member Jerome Raska, Member JeDonna Dinges, Member Janice Semma, Member Jacki Smith, Chair PJ Jacokes, Vice-Chair Chris Johnston, Treasurer Sarah Brown.

All ayes, motion carries.

b. Introduction to New Member JeDonna Dinges

Member JeDonna Dinges introduced herself to the Board. Member Dinges is the owner of Margaux and Max, a Downtown clothing business. The business is seven years old, having begun online from home. The business has operated from their retail space for a year, however, had to close a week after the grand opening due to COVID-19. The store is currently operating as a one-person business given the pandemic. The community has been very supportive, and Dinges is very thankful for the opportunity to serve on the Board.

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Member Jacki Smith, seconded by Mayor Melanie Piana, to approve the agenda as presented.

AYES - Mayor Melanie Piana, Member Jerome Raska, Member JeDonna Dinges, Member Janice Semma, Member Jacki Smith, Chair PJ Jacokes, Vice-Chair Chris Johnston, Treasurer Sarah Brown.

All ayes, motion carries.

5. PRESENTATIONS

a. 2020 Downtown Business Retention/Loss Report

Executive Director Lena Stevens stated the DDA has been working with Main Street Oakland County (MSOC) to collect business statistics. The timeline has changed a lot since last year.

Engagement Manager Sommer Realy provided a report of the Downtown's business openings and closures. The presentation provided a list of business closures and developments in 2020, sorted by quarter and type of business – including retail, restaurant, and specialty.

Director Stevens added the consideration that although some businesses may have closed, some have relocated within the City of Ferndale. Thinking of Ferndale as an ecosystem be helpful. The relocated businesses are still contributing to the economics of Ferndale. Overall, the data is positive. While continued impact on the businesses is expected from the pandemic, new spaces like The dot will help contribute to new developments as well.

Treasurer Sarah Brown stated that CrossFit HCS relocated from their Downtown location to another location within City limits, therefore, staying within the ecosystem. There is a new business moving into the old location which should be added to the data.

Mayor Melanie Piana asked if a percentage could be developed regarding businesses closing after the pandemic to assess its impact.

Director Stevens stated a separate report can be made, but it may be difficult to distinguish given the margins.

Member Janice Semma stated there is an additional business in development Downtown above the Bags and Beads retail space. This information will be confirmed.

Manager Realy expressed her gratitude toward the Ferndale community, particularly the hardworking business owners who continually volunteer time and operate without the guarantee of customers.

b. Update from the Executive Director

Executive Director Lena Stevens provided current updates for 2021. A lot has happened since the last meeting in December 2020. Ferndale has been selected by the Detroit Institute of Arts' Inside Out Program, as coordinated by the Ferndale Arts and Culture Commission, to bring art pieces to Downtown. More to come on this project. The DDA also executed the snow removal contract with DPW with positive feedback reported. This was not promoted publicly to test the process. The DDA will continue to track expenditures at the end of the year to assess the contract continuation. Snow removal at The dot is not a part of this contract; its focus is sidewalk and pedestrian infrastructure. Unbox the Holidays went extremely well. Many forms of advertisements were utilized. Several businesses reported it was the best marketing in Ferndale thus far. An area of future focus will be how to redesign the Downtown website to incorporate a continual list of businesses and no longer utilize specialty websites. The PPE Marketplace is temporarily closed; however, Engagement Manager Sommer Realy has ensured business have necessary supplies. There is still minor funding available. The County Restaurant Relief Phase One Program kicked off unexpectedly the week before Christmas and a memo with details was provided to the DDA Board of Directors and the City Council. Phase Two funding was applied for last week, which includes mini-grants of \$2000 for businesses who have either already invested in patio spaces or are seeking to. The application will require receipts from previous purchases or quotes for future purchases. The selection process will be based on a lottery system to avoid bias and allow for quick decisions. Additional funds will go into the Open in Ferndale Business Promotion Pilot for restaurants and advertising.

Chair PJ Jacokes extended thanks to Director Stevens and Manager Realy for the holiday events.

Member Jacki Smith echoed PJ's sentiments, additionally citing the PPE Marketplace. Very few cities provided anything close to what Ferndale did.

Vice-Chair Chris Johnston stated the delivery of PPE supplies was the bright part of the day. It is well organized and well run.

Member JeDonna Dinges echoed the Board's gratitude and appreciation for the DDA's efforts.

c. Budget Update

Executive Director Lena Stevens stated the typical budgetary process includes a budget presentation in January and a follow-up discussion for approval in February. This is not feasible, partially due to the cancellation of the January meeting, and partially due to the transition of Board members. The executive budget will span over three years. Temporarily, there will be a placeholder budget submitted to the City and there will be a special meeting on Wednesday, February 24 at 8:00 a.m. to gather additional thoughts and feedback. There will be no votes required at the meeting, but a quorum is helpful. The budget can be reviewed and amended on a need-basis at a later date.

Member Janice Semma asked if the window decals at The dot were purchased by the DDA.

Director Stevens stated it was a joint effort between the DDA and the Community and Economic Development Department (CED). CED purchased the design work while the DDA purchased the printing. It was an executive decision to utilize this funding from the printing budget.

6. COMMUNITY REPORTS

Reports from community organization representatives in attendance, including but not limited to Ferndale Area Chamber of Commerce, Ferndale Area District Library, 8 Mile Boulevard Association, etc.

- a. Jenny Marr, Director of the Ferndale Area District Library provided an update. The building is still closed. Curbside service, delivery, and free printing are still being offered. The public has shown a lot of initiative in applying for library cards. There is a lot of virtual programming, including story time, podcasts, and live music concerts. They are also providing activity bags with crafts. Four board members have been re-elected. There is currently one vacancy and applications are being accepted right now. There are also a lot of new plans for January to be announced later.

Executive Director Lena Stevens stated she is willing to discuss any additions or modifications for the courtyard as they prepare for the spring season. Outdoor spaces will be very important for the foreseeable future.

7. CALL TO AUDIENCE

- a. No call to audience.

8. CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Approval of November Minutes
Motion by Mayor Melanie Piana, seconded by Treasurer Sarah Brown to approve the consent agenda as presented.

AYES - Mayor Melanie Piana, Member Jerome Raska, Member JeDonna Dinges, Member Janice Semma, Member Jacki Smith, Chair PJ Jacokes, Vice-Chair Chris Johnston, Treasurer Sarah Brown.

All ayes, motion carries.

9. REGULAR AGENDA

- a. Woodward Moves Update & Letter of Support
Executive Director Lena Stevens stated the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) is in the process of repaving Woodward Avenue. The City of Ferndale and Ferndale DDA have asked to provide assist with the project to implement new changes and incorporations. The City of Ferndale and the City of Pleasant Ridge are collaborating on a request for a TAP grant to cover the repaving improvements. Community and Economic Development Director Jordan Twardy and Planning Manager Justin Lyons

provided an overview of the project.

Planning Manager Justin Lyons stated the topic of Woodward Avenue has been an ongoing conversation, including different areas such as safety, mobility, and climate change. This project is not a new recommendation; it has been pushed forward with community feedback and additional recommendations from previous and current planning officials. The current layout of Woodward Ave. only allows for 6% for sidewalks, which causes the potential for safety issues, noise problems, disability concerns, and potential collision.

Treasurer Sarah Brown asked if there is a mandatory minimum requirement for mediums.

Manager Lyons stated he is unsure about this requirement due to MDOT's general disinterest in moving curbs and mediums for drainage reasons. There are short-term and long-term visions for this project. The City must pay for anything beyond basic work. This is why the grant is necessary; it is an opportunity for the future. MDOT plans for a larger project within the next ten to fifteen years, however, this time frame is dependent on additional factors.

Member Jerome Raska stated removing lanes on Woodward Ave. is a concern as this will force additional traffic to Hilton Road. Therefore, there should be an additional plan for Hilton Rd. If a lane must be moved, thus providing additional sidewalk space, retail space could be extended.

Manager Lyons agreed that I-75 and Hilton Rd. will see more traffic during this project. The main concern is that Hilton Rd. is not the best alternative for pedestrians, so future plans will be implemented to address this. Sidewalk cafes could benefit pedestrians by shortening crossing times. However, it would be challenging to complete that within this current project timeline with MDOT; it would need to be long-term.

Community and Economic Development Director Jordan Twardy stated the City will work with MDOT to assess what can be reprogrammed into the existing space. This may include bigger café space, but for the time being, more immediate physical reconstruction areas in the short-term phase. The redesign of the road will set proper traffic behavior. The main tradeoffs for reprogramming will be determined by what the City can afford.

Mayor Melanie Piana stated data will be needed to be provided as part of the approval process. A Transportation Impact Analysis (TIA) may need to be conducted on Hilton Rd to assess a traffic increase or decrease. The expectation is less than a minute of travel time for cars, compared to the safety of people. The reprioritization of human safety should be considered over travel time.

Director Twardy stated the issue of capacity on Woodward Ave. is what is noted. There is plenty of capacity to work with. It won't be a huge shift.

Manager Lyons stated Woodward Ave. currently has an eight-lane capacity of 100,000+ vehicles but only reported use of only 42,000. There were 800 crashes between 2016-2018 and 230 in 2019. There is reported discomfort with the lack of crosswalks and the long crosswalk wait times. MDOT requires looking at the level of service with cars. Their study supported that the reduction of one lane would meet their requirements while providing an adjustment of crossing times.

Treasurer Brown stated the amount of parking on Woodward Ave. is already a problem. It is also not recommended to bike into Royal Oak or Eight Mile with the current layout. The short crosswalk durations force people to sprint or walk freely across the street to not have to walk further away from their destination. Even though crosswalk duration is important, more crosswalks are beneficial.

Manager Lyons stated this is an aspect still being pushed for but may need to be a long-term scenario due to the amount of necessary support from staff and community members.

Mayor Piana compared the process to the NASA space re-entry window. The project must be done at a certain time with proper resources to be successful. With the lack of funds, total reconstruction can't happen – only resurfacing. The TAP grant will help assure the best improvements possible.

Director Twardy reminded the group that all amenities are interconnected, not just singular. Bike lanes will help slow traffic down, which will create a slowing of the environment. Community feedback is being stitched to assess how well amenities can work together.

Manager Lyons stated other communities are supportive of the suggested layout.

Treasurer Brown asked what Royal Oak's discussion has been around this project.

Manager Lyons stated Royal Oak has more traffic volumes to consider. The focus is on Main Street and Washington Avenue first, while also considering safer points of connection at the zoo. Ferndale can help set an example by working with MDOT.

Mayor Piana stated the goal is to elevate Woodward Ave. between all communities. Due to a previous ballot initiative, there has been no coordinated effort since 2016. Transit went into the background for many reasons.

Manager Lyons stated this project will be discussed at the upcoming City Council Meeting on Monday, February 22, 2021, to get support to apply for the grant. The notification of approval would be sent in June or July. The City would then work with MDOT to approve design documents. 2022 is the targeted timeframe for the resurfacing. More meetings will be held for specific scheduling areas.

Member Jacki Smith stated this needs to be voted on right away as City Council needs support to make their vote. These processes are frequently rushed because they need

to go right to City Council. In the future, it would be beneficial to have more review time so as not to agree with things that may backfire later. The timing is stressful.

Director Stevens stated the reasoning for this rushed timeframe was in part because of the January meeting cancellation but also the quick nature of the project.

Manager Lyons stated the City Council meeting will be held on Monday, February 22, but the grant submission can wait until Wednesday, February 24. The Ferndale DDA is welcomed to submit letters of support until this date.

Director Stevens added the budget meeting is also on February 24, so if needed, the board can temporarily pass and vote at that meeting.

Member Smith stated there is so hesitance to vote on this matter, but the timing should be addressed in future endeavors.

Mayor Piana stated this project is a big deal with a lot of complexities. The DDA's blessing is important and needed.

Chair PJ Jacokes stated the letter of support is essentially stating the DDA's support of the project, not an approval of a specific design element.

Treasurer Brown asked if the letter is to approve the grant only, or the design as well.

Director Stevens answered it is inherent to the support of the reduction of a lane, but it is not a confirmed feature.

Motion by Jacki Smith, seconded by Chris Johnston to approve the letter of support for the City of Ferndale and Pleasant Ridge TAP Grant Application.

AYES – Mayor Melanie Piana, Member Jerome Raska, Member JeDonna Dinges, Vice-Chair Chris Johnston, Chair PJ Jacokes, Member Jacki Smith.

NAYS – Treasurer Sarah Brown, Member Janice Semma

Quorum met, motion carries.

b. Social Districts Management Maintenance Plan

Executive Director Lena Stevens reminded the Board of social districts. There was general interest in this idea during the previous discussion. A state law was passed to allow municipalities to create spaces for outdoor alcohol consumption. This topic is being reapproached with a streamlined plan. There will be two common areas, one east of Woodward Ave. and one west of Woodward Ave. The public can purchase drinks from businesses within that district and must stay within that space; they cannot travel between each district. Additional management will be provided by Ferndale Police and DPW, particularly with litter and disorderly conduct. This project is set to roll out in early April with a report to City Council in July. The licensing is from the Michigan Liquor

Control Commission. Once underway, the project cannot be shut down at a moment's notice but can have a public hearing for changes or elimination. Businesses must apply to be a part of the program and will need to communicate with the DDA for user agreements, rules, signage, and supplies. The districts will be branded as "PATIO Zones", standing for "pay and take it outside." The applications are not out yet, but there is significant interest. Board support is needed to take the project to Ferndale City Council, then the Michigan Liquor Control Commission, and finally to businesses.

Chair PJ Jakes asked if the park at Nine Mile Rd. and Bermuda St. was included within the districts.

Director Stevens stated it is not included because the land is private property. This project only applies to public properties.

Vice-Chair Chris Johnston asked how successful the park at Nine and Bermuda has been so far, and what budget will be delegated for this project.

Director Stevens stated the popup park has been a massive success. It is being utilized at many different times a day, especially when the weather is nice. Restaurants also had food trucks stationed in the space. This will probably be utilized more in the warmer seasons. Business owners have also approached the DDA about potential rentals for events in the space. The budget for the social districts is currently in development. The existing contract with DPW does include litter control but may need to be adjusted for overtime. The main concern is with the Police Department. A conversation about enhanced community policing should be held at a later time. The DDA and the Chief of Police are currently communicating about the DDA paying for the cost burden of overtime shifts.

Vice-Chair Johnston clarified what the Board is voting on regarding the social districts.

Director Stevens stated the Board is voting on the Management Plan as provided in the agenda. This includes how the project will be branded, the DDA's level of responsibility, a list of qualified businesses, how the security will be run, and other administrative functions.

Vice-Chair Johnston asked if the voting would occur prior to the costs being confirmed.

Director Stevens stated there is confidence the funding is within the budget. Costs can be considered as the process continues.

Vice-Chair Johnston stated there is cause for concern. As a previous festival operator, people will likely bring their own products. The benefits for businesses are not high. Additionally, there is a concern for the spread of COVID-19, which can't be overlooked. There are too many unknown factors.

Treasurer Sarah Brown referenced the current map and asked if people will be in trouble if they are within certain gray areas.

Director Stevens stated there will be no penalty – that was due to a mapping issue. The public maps will be much easier to understand. The Police Department’s goal is to educate before providing citations.

Treasurer Brown stated there is a concern for the type of crowds that this event may attract.

Member Jacki Smith stated the majority of people at Downtown businesses have been respectful thus far. People need public interaction. This is a safer option while simultaneously supporting businesses. The job of the DDA is to find who needs support and help them.

Chair Jacokes provided support for the project. Allowing people to socialize safely outside is better than inside. The outside concerns and funding seem manageable.

Director Stevens emphasized the importance of the July update. The entire project can be reviewed and discussed at that time. The best way to move forward is to try with the best knowledge possible.

Member Janice Semma asked who is insuring the liquor liability.

Director Stevens stated the City of Ferndale insurance agents have reported there is no need for additional insurance.

Special Events Director Michael Lary stated the insurance provider has reported there is no increase in liability insurance. It operates on the same level as if there were misconduct inside a business. Based on research from additional municipalities that have already conducted a similar project, there are no reports of any incidents that involved a police presence. No community has had an incident report thus far.

Mayor Piana stated there are positive feedback and interest from residents, and it is being perceived as a recovery tool.

Motion by Treasurer Sarah Brown, seconded by Member Jacki Smith to recommend the Social Districts Management and Maintenance Plan to Ferndale City Council.

AYES – Mayor Melanie Piana, Member Jerome Raska, Member JeDonna Dinges, Member Janice Semma, Member Jacki Smith, Chair PJ Jacokes, Treasurer Sarah Brown.

NAYS – Vice-Chair Chris Johnston

Quorum met, motion carries.

c. Date Selection for Annual Strategic Planning Session

Executive Director Lena Stevens recommended this item be moved to an email poll format.

Chair PJ Jacokes approved the recommendation.

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

- a. Executive Director Lena Stevens expressed her gratitude to the Board for sharing concepts and offering opposing viewpoints during today's meeting.
- b. Member Jacki Smith expressed her gratitude and appreciation for her role as Chair in previous years.
- c. Chair PJ Jacokes expressed his thanks to the Board for trusting him in the role of Chair. He will help the DDA be the best it can be.
- d. Mayor Melanie Piana thanked Chair Jacokes for stepping up and to Member Smith for her service.
- e. Vice-Chair Chris Johnston echoed thanks to Member Smith, who brought more to the position than anyone else before. Looking forward to working alongside Member Jacokes and other Board members. The main concern with the social districts project is regarding COVID-19 and the future, but ultimately, still wants the event to succeed,

11. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Member Jacki Smith, seconded by Vice-Chair Chris Johnston to adjourn the meeting at 10:41 A.M.

AYES – Mayor Melanie Piana, Member Jerome Raska, Member JeDonna Dinges, Member Janice Semma, Member Jacki Smith, Chair PJ Jacokes, Vice-Chair Chris Johnston, Treasurer Sarah Brown.

All ayes, motion carries.