



**Cedar Rapids Downtown SSMID Commission Minutes
November 16, 2022 | 3:00-4:30 p.m.
Economic Alliance Conference Room A**

Present: Joe Ahmann, Jon Dusek, Darryl High, Jeff Janssen, Ted Kepros, Randy Rings, Jake Ryan, Craig Stephan, Joe Terfler

Absent: Wendi Cigrand, Dave Drown, Emily Ellingson, James Klein, Sarah Madsen, David Sorg

Staff: Jessica Komisar, Doug Neumann, Lucy Schneekloth, Jesse Thoeming, Adrienne Tingba, Phil Wasta, Nikki Wilcox

Welcome, Introductions & Call to Order

High welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Approval of September Minutes

Terfler moved approval of the September minutes with Kepros seconding. The September minutes were unanimously approved.

Introduction of Adrienne Tingba & Communications Plan

Tingba, who recently moved to Cedar Rapids in March, has six years experience in digital communications and marketing in a variety of industries including hospitality, skincare, pop culture and tourism. Tingba reviewed the communications plan and direction:

Objectives

- Drive traffic to new Downtown website
- Double Instagram (IG) and Facebook (FB) followers/likes by July 2023
- Develop and regularly update Instagram content highlights
- Create original and audience directed content for IG and FB
- Diverse content
- Maintain e-blast consistency with fresh content
- Develop Substack content to improve direct engagement with stakeholders
- Develop original experience guides and suggested itineraries for Downtown

Content Schedule

- Monthly – Downtown e-blasts, website guides/itineraries
- Weekly – IG posts (2x), FB posts (2x), Substack e-mails (1x bi-weekly)
- Daily – IG stories (3-5 days), FB stories (3-5 days)

New Website Review

Woods provided Commissioners with a sneak peek of the new Downtown website. While it isn't final yet, it is eye-catching and interactive with videos and bright visuals. There will be an interactive business directory map, gallery of images pulled in from Instagram feed, vision plan projects, itineraries for variety of occasions, Commissioner headshots, annual report, housing map, Commission agendas and minutes.

Our Town CR Debrief

Thoeming thanked Commissioners for their support of the Our Town CR visit with Deb and Jim Fallows last month. Commissioners shared their insights from the public event at the library, overall they, and their colleagues, enjoyed the event and was inspirational. Thoeming doesn't know if the Fallows are planning on returning to Cedar Rapids but does know they were very impressed from what they experienced.

2023 Operational Budget

Terfler moved to approve keeping the current tax levy rate at \$2.75 with Rings seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.

High and Thoeming reviewed the proposed 2023 budget. Revenue includes tax levy income, Alliant Energy contribution, and City MOA funds and will be exploring potential revenue options from the County. Expense highlights to note include:

- 7th Street Gateway - \$40k – mowing and trash pick-up, ongoing annual expense
- Race for the Space – no new program in 2023
- Holiday Lights - \$120k – increase from 2022 budget of \$80k, has continued to receive positive community feedback, need City support to keep this annual endeavor a “wow” factor. Potential labor assist from the City and business sponsorships.
- Event Sponsorships – 85k – increase from 2022 budget of \$40k, was a desire at strategic planning session, this budgets for 4-5 new events in 2023 led by the SSMID

Terfler noted the budget is overspending by \$112k. Neumann said the Commission has options and discretion in the “below the line” items, while a lot of the “above the line” items are locked in and committed to. Terfler said he felt we shouldn't approve the budget as is without making some adjustments.

While any additional revenue can be added at a later date, in order to balance the budget it was agreed to reduce the Holiday Lights line item by \$20k, eliminate the \$45k Special Projects line item, and reduce the remaining “Projects, Donations and Other Direct SSMID Expenses” line items by approximately 22%. With this amendment, Ahmann moved to approve the budget with Kepros seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.

Commissioner Updates

Commissioners provided organizational updates.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 4:20 p.m.