



Cedar Rapids Downtown SSMID Commission Minutes
May 25, 2022 | 3:30-5:00 p.m.
Economic Alliance Conference Room A

Present: Jon Dusek, Emily Ellingson, Jeff Janssen, James Klein, Jake Ryan, Craig Stephan, Joe Terfler, Jeff Pomeranz

Absent: Joe Ahmann, Dave Drown, Darryl High, Linda Mattes, David Sorg, Fred Timko

Guests: Sarah Madsen - UFG

Staff: Jessica Komisar, Julie Kraft, Jesse Thoeming, Phil Wasta, Nikki Wilcox

Welcome, Introductions & Call to Order

Ellingson welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 3:33 p.m., and welcomed Madsen who will be joining the Commission in June introduced herself.

Approval of March Minutes

Klein moved approval of the March minutes with Stephen seconding. The March minutes were unanimously approved.

It's Go Time II

Thoeming said with the success of It's Go Time in September 2021, he was encouraged to look into round two and bring in a captivating speaker to bring insights into our community. Thoeming was pleased to announce the award-winning journalists and authors of the book "Our Town", James and Deborah Fallows, will be coming to Cedar Rapids October 24-26, with a community event on October 26. Our Town was turned into a HBO documentary, and while it's not a confirmed or for-sure thing, we are hoping we leave a good impression on them and we could be featured in their HBO sequel. Outside of the community event, there will be a smaller group dinner and community tour during their time here. Thoeming said the current vision for the event would be panel style similar to It's Go Time last year.

Gateway Master Plan

7th and 8th Street Entrance

Thoeming reminded Commissioners that the SSMID contributed to the clean-up of the 7th and 8th Street gateway off of I-380 as it's one of the main entrances into Downtown. Thoeming applauded High for leading the charge on working with a landscaping firm and Iowa DOT to get that area picked-up and mowed and looks a lot nicer but we are ready to do more with it. Thoeming presented a quote and drawing proposal from Hugh's Nursery and Landscaping on how to take that area to the next step in beautification with trees, bushes, plantings, etc. The one cost that wasn't included is fence removal. The quote from Hughes is approximately \$50k, which is not planned in the budget for this year but would be divvied out by both Downtown and Medical SSIMDs and potentially the Eye-380 group and DOT. Thoeming said he will also be applying for the State of Iowa Living Roadways Grant, which he feels confident about and was encouraged to apply for by the DOT. Dusek asked about ongoing maintenance costs, Thoeming said that's one component that still needs to be ironed out.

Klein asked if we receive the grant and we move forward with this, can Hughes get it done this year. Thoeming said they can and if we don't get the grant, we would just keep it mowed and trimmed for now.

Klein moved to approve Thoeming applying for the grant and the Downtown SSMID to contribute alongside other partners with Dusek seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.

Confluence Master Plan

Thoeming presented gateway structure/lighting concepts from Confluence. Thoeming said some of the concepts tie in the Downtown branding colors and others tie in Cedar Rapids cultural colors/patchwork. Feedback from the Commission was to make sure the design and colors look appealing but are long term and can withstand the changing aesthetics of Downtown over time. Madsen included with the cultural tie-in, there have been three key groups identified, which excludes everybody else represented in our community. Thoeming said the goal is to have the master plan done by July and receive input from the Commission on moving forward. Thoeming said High is the only one on this committee and would like a few others to support. Janssen volunteered, Klein suggested Sorg, who was not present. Thoeming will follow-up with him. Dusek suggested having non-Commission members on the committee as well, Janssen recommended somebody from a local sign company could be helpful.

SSMID Committees

Thoeming reviewed current committees and their members and how to bring more ideas and perspectives to these groups.

- Façade Improvement: Mattes, Sorg, Brooke Fitzgerald
- Alleyways: High, Timko (who will be rolling off the Commission next month)
- Gateways: High, and newly added Janssen and possibly Sorg, Wasta to represent for only the MedQuarter 7th and 8th Street project
- Executive: High, Ellingson, Klein, Mattes, Timko

Terfler moved to approve allowing each Commissioner to invite a company representative to serve on a committee with Ryan seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.

Strategic Retreat

Thoeming said there are a lot of big picture projects/initiatives that the Commission needs to revisit (Linn County partnership, river activation, music events, Mays Island, the next ConnectCR, etc.), but there often isn't enough time during a regular meeting and proposed a separate strategic planning retreat. Thoeming said he envisions a 3-4 hour session led by a facilitator to dig deeper into these ideas. Komisar will send a poll to get an end of June date selected that works for the majority of the Commission.

Other Business

Thoeming and the Economic Alliance team has been hard at work on the new Downtown website. The current landing page is somewhat buried within the Economic Alliance website so this new one will be standalone and vibrant. Komisar will be asking Commissioners for their headshot to be added to the website.

The Race for the Space landing page and application went live on April 27 and applications will close June 30. At this time there are 3 applicants, all local-based. The selection committee from the Community Development Innovation Council will review and score applications in July, with a "Final Four" event in August to determine the winner. There will be a Race for the Space booth at EntreFest on June 10 to gain more interest and community awareness.

Summer plantings are going in this week, Thoeming said to be on the lookout for a "wow factor" at the DoubleTree flowerbed. Thoeming added the Fix Salon building mural was approved last fall and will start in about two weeks.

Commissioners provided business updates.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m.