



## **Cedar Rapids Downtown SSMID Commission Minutes**

**January 24, 2023 | 3:00-4:30 p.m.**

**Cedar Rapids Bank & Trust**

**Present:** Joe Ahmann (zoom), Wendi Cigrand, Jon Dusek, Darryl High, Ted Kepros, James Klein, Sarah Madsen (zoom), Jake Ryan, Dave Sorg, Craig Stephan, Joe Terfler, Fred Timko

**City of CR Officials:** Mayor Tiffany O'Donnell, Jeff Pomeranz, Jennifer Pratt

**Absent:** Graig Cone, Randy Rings

**Guests:** Jennifer Howell, Eastbank Venue

**Media:** Marissa Payne, Gazette

**Staff:** Jennifar Bassett, Peggy Degnan, Doug Neumann, Audrey Wheeler, Nikki Wilcox

### **Welcome, Introductions & Call to Order**

Klein welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m. He had Fred Timko introduce himself as a returning commissioner to this SSMID. Klein noted Graig Cone will also be joining this commission but was unable to attend today.

### **Consent Agenda/Approval of November Minutes**

Dusek moved for approval of the November minutes with Terfler seconding. November minutes were unanimously approved.

### **Downtown District Program Manager Introduction**

Klein introduced Jennifar Bassett as the Downtown District Program Manager and she gave a summary of her past work history and ties to Cedar Rapids.

### **Downtown SSMID Appointments**

High and Terfler have terms that will be expiring June 30th. New commissioners will be starting July 1. Klein said to contact him if anyone has someone to recommend. Wilcox said there is one seat open that Dannette Tobin, General Sales Manager at Gray Media, is interested in filling. Klein is meeting with her soon and they expect her to submit an application.

### **Façade Improvement Grant Recipients**

Klein shared that CRB&T has taken advantage of this grant. \$10K is the maximum amount any one project or building can receive through this program. The SSMID granted \$5K this year to the lighting of the Foundation2 building and \$5K to the lighting of the *Together We Bloom* mural. The City will reimburse the SSMID \$10K (\$5K for each project). Thus, Wilcox stated \$10K out of the \$15K annual allotment has already been spent. Timko reminded the group it is not just for lighting. Wilcox asked if SSMID wanted to increase our amount from \$15K to \$25K to match the City's allotment? (See Motion on last page)

### **Task Force vs. Implementation Team**

A third party, PUMA, has been hired to make sure we get to the best outcome when figuring out how the SSMID should be organized. Klein stated it should take 90 days to get a Task Force up and running. Wilcox clarified the difference between the Task Force and the Implementation Team saying the Taskforce is the governance of the SSMID and the Implementation Team will ensure the work on the vision plan moves forward. The Implementation Team consists of: Jennifer Pratt, Hashim Taylor, Bob Hammond and Bill Michael from the City of Cedar Rapids; James Klein, Downtown SSSMID; Nikki Wilcox and Jennifar Bassett, representing the Downtown District; and Mike Silva, CR Tourism. Looking at late February/early March to meet and then will meet each quarter and provide updates. Klein said numerous other people will become involved as plans progress.

### **2024 Financial Review**

Klein showed the 2024 budget that was passed in late 2023. Since the year has just begun, an updated budget with expenditures listed was not provided. Moving forward, a financial review with updated budget numbers will be shown at every meeting. Klein noted that the majority of the budget is already allotted, but the SSMID has \$336,654 left in discretionary income to invest towards implementing the Downtown Vision Plan.

### **Part-time Seasonal Laborer**

SSMID has three Full-time employees (Bassett and two maintenance persons) included in the budget and plans are to hire a seasonal labor person, like in the past years, to water the planters. This temporary part-time position will pay \$15/hour (averaging 25 hours/week for the 16 weeks) from May–September. Thus, it would cost between \$6K-\$7K and is already budgeted. It was decided to hire a person, but no other changes to labor/staffing will take place until we hear from the Taskforce. It was noted SSMID owns the water truck.

### **Placer. AI**

Placer AI is the industry leader for providing hard core data by tracking cell phone locations. It will show how many people attend an event and can show where people go afterwards. Thus, it could be used to track how many people are back-to-work downtown along with other information; and would be useful for many things including business and talent attraction. Klein feels this could provide value to SSMID taxpayers because it provides real data which could help run their businesses better. MedQ has already shown an interest in partnering and cost sharing. Mayor O'Donnell feels we will need to be clear about privacy invasion. Madsen said we must have a policy in place, so Wilcox is going to reach out to others who are already using it and find out what they have in place. Pomeranz will find out if the City is already using something similar and mentioned they have hired a retail consultant. The downtown investment would be up to \$7,500.

### **2024 Action Plan**

Bassett shared she is looking at streetscape and beautification on a day-to day basis and went through the Action Plan. She will include a gentle reminder in the Substack reminding property owners of what they are responsible for in regards to snow removal and property upkeep.

She shared social media has increased by 33% in 10 weeks since bringing on the social media contractor, Carissa Johnson, to manage social media. Eblasts will continue to be sent to the community third Wednesday of the month. Substack will start on February 1<sup>st</sup> and will be sent every month going forward. She discovered many downtown stakeholders don't know what the SSMID is or does, so she will define for readers and will provide more of what the SSMID is working on downtown. Klein emphasized increasing communications is a high priority for this SSMID.

Bassett plans to meet with every downtown owner and to talk with tenants. She also mentioned the *Welcome to DowntownCR* sign atop the Five Seasons ramp will take 6-8 weeks for completion.

Wilcox walked through potential projects of the Action Plan. **The commissioners chose the following items for Bassett to start working on and to report an update at the March meeting.**

- Self-watering planters – order 12, check on lifespan/warranties, and choose exact locations.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue bridge lights - figure out a plan to either fix with the correct equipment or completely replace.
- Gather trolley information - the goal is for the trolley to run between the core districts.

- A 50/50 split for the cost of live music with bars/restaurants (give report on bar/restaurant interest at March meeting)
- BlocktoberFest - work with Stephan to figure out alcohol services.
- Tear-off tablet.

### **Other Business**

- Dusek would like an Annual Meeting for property owners and tenants. (Bassett to get information on what an annual event for stakeholders would look like.)
- Wilcox mentioned \$23,800 will be paid in July for the YMCA sidewalk repair, coming out of the \$30K budgeted.

### **MOTIONS:**

1. A motion was made to increase the Façade Improvement Grant allotment to from \$15K to \$25K and included striking the following language “reimbursements cannot exceed \$100 per linear foot of building frontage in the project” from the Downtown Façade Improvement Program document. Kepros moved to approve with Sorg seconding. Motion passed unanimously.
2. Motion was made to order 12 self-watering planters. Planter quote = \$499/each with this discount price good until January 31st. Sorg approved motion with High seconding. Motion was unanimously approved.
3. Motion was made to pay VenuWorks \$15K for name and logo placement. Timko approved motion with Terfler seconding. Motion was unanimously approved.
4. BlocktoberFest – Motion tabled.

### **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 4:36 pm.

/pd