



Cedar Rapids Downtown SSMID Commission Minutes

March 27, 2024 | 3:00-4:30 p.m.

Cedar Rapids Bank & Trust

Present: Joe Ahmann, Jon Dusek, Darryl High, Ted Kepros, James Klein, Jake Ryan, Craig Stephan, Joe Terfler, Fred Timko, Dannette Tobin

City of CR Officials: Jennifer Pratt, Dale Todd

Absent: Wendi Cigrand, Graig Cone, Sarah Madsen, Dave Sorg

Guests: Isacc Davis, resident; Jaye Kennedy, Waypoint; Justin Zehr and Tim Kindl, Fun Not Fancy Restaurant Group

Media: Marissa Payne, Gazette

Staff: Jennifar Basett, Peggy Degnan, Doug Neumann, Phil Wasta, Audrey Wheeler, Nikki Wilcox

Welcome, Introductions & Call to Order

Kepros welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m. Kepros introduced new commissioner, Dannette Tobin with Gray Media/KCRG, and asked her to share a bit about herself.

Consent Agenda/Approval of November Minutes

Terfler moved for approval of the January minutes with Timko seconding. January minutes were unanimously approved.

2024 Financial Review

Wilcox stated when the budget was passed in November, it included unallocated funding which was to be updated throughout 2024 as funding decisions are made. The current spreadsheet includes those year-to-date decisions. It will be included with the minutes. Commission members asked that it also be included with the Agenda Packet before future meetings. Wilcox explained January and February are routinely lighter months for SSMID, so not a lot has been paid out as it's still early in the year. **The updated spreadsheet allocates \$7,500 to Placer.AI and \$10k to the Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation mural project, both of which were clarified and detailed since the January meeting. Commission acceptance of these financials includes its approval of those two items.**

With 2023 year-end financials completed, we also now have an exact amount of carry over funding. There's \$161,659 still available from prior years' revenue.

Taskforce Update

Rings explained they are moving ahead with the following committee: Rings (Chair), Klein, Kepros, Dusek, Tobin, Tim Kindl with Fun Not Fancy and Cathy Terukina with Folience. They will meet and report back to this commission by the next meeting on May 29th. At a minimum, Rings said they want to hear from the City and the Economic Alliance and will ask PUMA to come back and see if there's other information we want to consider before we give our recommendation. Klein and Kepros have talked to downtown officials in Des Moines and Dubuque. They have learned there's a mix of organizational structures around the country – some with downtown separate and some with downtown included with the Chamber / Economic Development. In Iowa, more urban communities seem to have it combined. They shared that Des Moines does things similar to us and has had some communications challenges with entities are more separate. Rings will call Brad Segal with PUMA to see what they will provide in regards to support.

Implementation Team Update

Wilcox said the Downtown Vision Plan recommends an Implementation Team to drive progress on the plan. The first meeting of that group included representatives from City Planning, Parks & Rec and Economic Development, VenuWorks and the Downtown SSMID. ParkCR will be added, too, according to Klein.

Rings described the interaction between the Taskforce and the Implementation Team. The Downtown Vision Plan shows a schedule of what goals need be accomplished Year One, Year Two and so forth, and shows what organization/department is responsible for execution. Pratt noted they worked with PUMA on a roadmap developing specific steps that made sense for the way we would operationalize each project. It was recommended members review the [Downtown Vision Plan](#) if they haven't already. Timko asked to see notes from the Taskforce and Implementation meetings.

The next Implementation meeting will be facilitated by Bassett on April 5th. They will function as a working group and will discuss every task. They have already made headway because every decision maker was in the room. It is believed all goals assigned to Year One will get started and some will be completed in Year One.

7th/8th Street Gateway

Wilcox shared this has been budgeted since 2021 and is now finally going to happen. Three years ago, Eye380 and Economic Alliance put in a request for funding from IDOT for clean-up/enhancement of the north I-380 entrance to downtown but were denied due to underground beer caves. After resubmitting, IDOT is giving \$45,700 to the project. Downtown SSMID budgeted \$30K, Med Quarter SSMID is contributing \$15K and Eye380 will contribute \$10K, bringing the total to just over \$100K. The plan for native plants/wildflowers cannot exceed the \$100K we have. Todd Fagan, City Arborist, will obtain three (3) bids and may take the lead on this project.

Terfler asked who would be responsible for maintenance of the area with Wilcox saying we are asking for a low maintenance solution and the SSMID would not have an ongoing cost to maintain it. The City may take care of the area or possibly a third party.

Events Committee

Create Sub Committee

Bassett has received six (6) funding requests already from event promoters such as Blue Sky, Freedom Fest, etc., and she is expecting two (2) more. The Executive SSMID decided to form a sub-committee to handle these requests. The committee is to consist of two (2) SSMID members and two (2) outside downtown stakeholders. Cigrand and Ryan were recommended from the SSMID. Sara Kuennen with Informatics was suggested as a stakeholder candidate. A motion is needed to form the committee and establish a budget. (See Motion on last page.)

Kepros mentioned the overall goal is to get more people involved and to gauge SSMID contributions according to expected attendance/size of event and other pre-established criteria. The SSMID will be treated as an event sponsor and won't be involved in executing the events. Terfler feels young employees need to volunteer and support events.

Establish a Budget

Discussion led to the suggestion to establish a \$65k event sponsorship budget for the new events committee to award. It would operate similar to the Façade Improvement Committee. If the events committee is considering a grant award of \$25k or more, it must first consult with the Executive Committee. (See Motion on last page.)

Waypoint Presentation

Kennedy shared Waypoint started in 1995 and was known then solely as a homeless shelter. She said putting people in shelters extends homelessness, so the best practice is to get people in housing right away. This practice is nationwide and is proving successful. Thus, the shelter is now closed, and they plan to turn the second floor into affordable housing. Matthew 25 is potentially interested in the first floor for a grocery store as this location has been identified a food desert. She stated they have City support. Waypoint coordinates intakes with 20 different agencies which streamlines the process for the organization and the community.

2024 Action Plan Update

Bridge Lights:

Timko and Bassett met with Grace Lighting and learned the cost to completely repair the bridge's lighting system will be \$65K. Bassett shared manufacturer warranty information and said there will be new hardware and wireless communications included, so Bassett can program the lights from her computer. It was agreed to not keep spending money on continuous individual repairs. Dusek feels this cost should be shared with the City, County and Alliant Energy. (See Motion on last page).

Table Tents:

Bassett said table tents will have a QR code which will land on our downtown map. This should help drive traffic to our website. The map is currently being updated so when the QR goes live, it will be up-to-date. Terfler asked if people go to websites to find events anymore, and that led to general discussion about QR codes, social media, etc.

Live Music: – Bassett talked to bars/restaurants saying if they want to have major live music events, the SSMID could potentially cover half the cost. All live music events will go through the events subcommittee for approval.

City MOA and Power Washing

Klein wanted to reinforce to all commission members that the Downtown SSMID does NOT have responsibility to power-wash sidewalks. It is the property owner's responsibility. It was suggested perhaps a letter from the Mayor would help saying something like "help beautify downtown by keeping your properties and sidewalks looking clean and welcoming." Wasta said he sends letters to his Med Quarter District property owners every Spring reminding them of their responsibilities.

Wilcox said the MOA does state downtown has regular power-washings but doesn't specify when. The maintenance team knows the trouble spots and power-washes as part of event preparation such as for Farmers Markets, etc. They've been helping Foundation 2 until the power-washer they ordered arrives.

Kindl shared they have found "sticky stuff" that has been keeping birds away so Bassett will research and include that solution in Substack communication to property owners and stakeholders.

Other Business

Klein announced Wilcox has accepted another position and this is her last meeting. He thanked her for taking the SSMID to a new level since she's been involved. Neumann mentioned Wilcox wanted to stay for this SSMID meeting, so her last day will be tomorrow. Wilcox said a few words and thanked Pratt for the collaboration.

The meeting concluded with members going around the room sharing any news or updates happening within their respective companies.

MOTIONS:

1. Ryan moved to form an event sub-committee with Terfler seconding. The motion unanimously approved.
2. Dusek moved to allocate \$65K to the event sub-committee with Terfler seconding. Motion was unanimously approved.
3. Rings moved to spend \$65K for full repair of the 3rd Avenue Bridge Lights with Klein seconding. Motion was unanimously approved.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 4:31pm
/pd