



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

**July 24, 2024 | 3:00-4:30 p.m.**

**Cedar Rapids Bank & Trust**

**Present:** Wendi Cigrand (zoom), Jon Dusek, Ted Kepros, James Klein, Randy Rings, Craig Stephan, David Sorg, Fred Timko, Dannette Tobin

**Absent:** Joe Ahmann, Graig Cone, Jared Hanlin, Sarah Madsen, Jake Ryan

**City of CR Officials:** Jennifer Pratt and Noah Zeker

**Guests:** Lt. Michelle Omar; Cedar Rapid Police Dept., Isacc Davis; resident

**Staff:** Jennifar Bassett, Peggy Degnan, Doug Neumann, Phil Wasta, Audrey Wheeler

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

Klein welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m.

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

Sorg moved for approval of the May minutes with Kepros seconding. The May minutes were unanimously approved.

### **Lt. Omar with CRPD**

Michelle Omar is a lieutenant with the Cedar Rapids Police Department and has been with them for 21 years. She talked about some issues with the bar crowd on 3<sup>rd</sup> St. drinking in cars and blocking the sidewalk. Because of so many fights, they have posted signage making it illegal to park in the 200 block of 3<sup>rd</sup> St. from 9:00pm until 6:00am. Thus, the crowd has moved elsewhere. PUB 217 was closing at 11:00pm on Saturday nights to reduce problems, but has since gone back to being open until 2:00am because they feel safer now. Timko asked about ride-alongs. Lt. Omar said contact her and she can get a ride-along scheduled with an officer. Contact Bassett for Lt. Omar's contact information. Regular patrolling does not include foot patrol exception for special events like the Farmers Markets. Bike patrol depends on staffing. Homelessness is an ongoing issue the police deal with, but if a homeless person is on a City bench, there's nothing they can do about that. Omar said gun crimes are down, but there will always a drug and homegrown gang problem.

### **Downtown Executive Director Search Update**

The position has been posted and The Overture Group says they have had good interest so far. In August, they will present three candidates for interviews. Neumann reminded commission members on the selection committee (Ahmann, Kepros, Klein, Neumann, Pratt and Rings) to submit their "homework assignments" which was to list the top project(s) they would want the new hire to work on their first six months and to list five characteristics/skills they should possess.

### **New Space for Downtown SSMID**

Both Klein and Neumann have done some site tours, but there's not a lot to report yet. It's likely we'll wait and have the new executive involved in this decision.

### **2024 Financial Review**

Neumann clarified the three separate leases for Big Bellies. The City made a contribution to the first set, and the SSMID

has made contributions in several years. To keep the budget impact steady here forward, the annual cost has been calculated to about \$72k annual through 2032. While there's a lot of detail to the calculations, it generally comes out to about \$2k per can per year, which the SSMID should know if they elect to fund more.

Dusek inquired about the \$50K in the budget for private sector contributions. Neumann said the Economic Alliance has committed to fund that if other donations are not received. No one has actively sought funding from companies yet, and it's uncertain whether that will happen this year. But the revenue will be there for the SSMID regardless.

Several commission members noted that the City has committed to contribute to the new space and Executive Director position.

Dusek asked how priorities are determined for sidewalks. Bassett said she communicates to the City what sidewalks need attention and work is to begin in the Fall. Sidewalk repair is a shared cost between the SSMID and City. The City and SSMID do a walk around together and it has been a cooperative procedure.

## **2024 Action Plan Update**

### Interactive Art

- **Sculpture:** Bassett has been in contact with a Chicago company, You Are Beautiful, and would like to place a sculpture on Mays Island. She feels this would be a great way to connect both sides of the river, and because of Big Grove and Pickel Palace have activated more foot traffic on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue bridge now. She has spoken with the City and is on the Art Commission's agenda for August. Bassett mentioned the sculpture is made from plywood and plastic, size 6 ft. x 30 ft. or 8 ft. x 20 ft. and would cost \$50K plus installation. A rendering would cost \$15K, so Sorg offered to have his firm create the drawing free of charge. The downtown maintenance team will handle the upkeep. Timko recommended **looking for a local manufacturer to construct the sculpture**. Rings suggested obtaining sponsorships that could be listed on the sides/ends of the sculpture.
- **Pavement Art:** The group liked the idea of bike lanes being emphasized with pavement art. Kepros and Rings mentioned placing signage to compliment it at certain stops along the lanes. It also could be a way to connect and distinguish the districts by having a certain color or design designated for each district.

### Marketing & Brand Recognition

Bassett has rack cards to place around downtown and has purchased banners to be hung when the SSMID sponsors bands at Kingston. She also talked about the community art project that will be done during Market After Dark and hopes to be able to display the artwork somewhere downtown.

### Events Sub-Committee Update

The SSMID has sponsored a handful of events which were listed in the agenda packet. **If anyone has people that want to be part of this sub-committee, contact Bassett.**

### Parking Pilot

A pilot program has been instituted with the Chophouse which they will validate a customer's parking for 2 hours and ParkCR will then bill the Chophouse, so parking could be free for a customer.

### Beautification

- **Big Bellies:** Bassett reported 10 new Big Bellies will be delivered and installation will start next Friday, August 2nd. There is a system in place identifying what old iron cans to dispose of and those that are showing wear. She would like to add three on the 1st Ave SW sidewalk and two more to 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue SW and have the remainder placed around downtown. Bassett and the Big Belly consultant to look at cans together next Friday.
- **3rd Avenue Bridge Lights:** All lights are working but they need new antennas which are to be installed on Monday, July 29<sup>th</sup>. The nine poles are programmed through the end of August.

- **Race-for-the-Space Update:** The Community Development Innovation Council wants to start promoting Race-for-the-Space in 2024 with the contest taking place in 2025. They are deciding what kind of business they want downtown. Dusek would like to recruit an established business and not a start-up. Timko would like to have a service company because they would likely have staff work in the office. Bassett shared Iowa City leases a space to a business on a short term/temporary basis. She also reported The District is now open, Lush Salon opened on 3<sup>rd</sup> St. and a new restaurant will be going in where Barrell House was.

### **Other Business**

Projector: Bassett is working with 10 bands to get music videos/photos to put on building. There is a regular rotation of what is shown. Rings asked if we have the ability to do live events. Bassett will look into it, but it relates to whether ImOn can transfer rights to Blue Sky/projector operator.

Great America/Plaza Pavers - Pratt said conversations are taking place between the City and GreatAmerica now because of flood control. Rings wants to be notified when pump station and 8th Street Bridge work begins since it will impact downtown.

JazzFest – Because Cobble Hill decided not to take part this year, Rings offered the TrueNorth parking lot and would like to include ChopHouse to take Cobble Hill's place. Bassett to discuss with the promoter and ChopHouse soon as the event is only one month away.

### Getting Employees to Return to Office

Discussion took place about getting more workers downtown. It was suggested to talk to other companies to get them to have their employees return to work downtown. Tobin said her salespeople are all back in the office but she had to find fun and creative reasons to get them to want to come. Placer AI shows downtown traffic is up 12% and Dusek shared monthly parking is up 25%, as reported yesterday at the Parking Board meeting.

### New/Closed Businesses

Bassett reported a new restaurant, The District, is open, Lush Salon opened on 3<sup>rd</sup> St. and a new restaurant will be going in where Barrell House was. Abbe Health has moved into the former Stamats building on 5<sup>th</sup> St SE. This commission would like to have any new tenants and closed businesses be part of the meeting agenda going forward.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 4:31 pm.

/pd