



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

**January 22, 2025 | 3:00-4:30 p.m.**

### **Cedar Rapids Bank & Trust**

**Present:** Joe Ahmann (zoom), Graig Cone, Jon Dusek, Jared Hanlin (zoom), Loren Hartelt, James Klein, Jake Ryan, Craig Stephan, Fred Timko, Dannette Tobin

**Absent:** Ted Kepros, Sarah Madsen, Randy Rings, David Sorg

**Guest:** Jeff Pomeranz, City of Cedar Rapids

**City Liaisons:** Jennifer Pratt and Noah Zeker

**Staff:** Jennifar Basett, Peggy Degnan, Caleb Knutson, Phil Wasta, Audrey Wheeler

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

Klein called the meeting to order at 3:02pm. Knutson introduced Hartelt to the commission. Klein asked him to tell a bit about himself and his background. He is employed with CRST.

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

Timko moved to approve the minutes and the changes to the MOU with Cone seconding. The November minutes and changes to the MOU with the City were unanimously approved.

The MOU will be presented to the City Council on Tuesday, January 28<sup>th</sup>.

### **Budget Planning & Action Planning 2025**

Knutson presented the final 2025 budget. Changes he noted were as follows:

- Added \$50K for public and \$50K for private sector contributions.
- Vehicle maintenance reduced to \$18K because of purchasing a new truck from McGrath with a price reduction in exchange for their branding on truck.
- Race for the Space - \$30K with an additional \$10K from EA = \$40K.
- Professional overhead decreased to \$78K from \$135K. (Knutson has been hired)
- May's Island = \$75K
- Live music to remain at \$65K. The Events Committee will determine how to allocate.

- Trolley to run during Freedom Festival and next holiday season with \$30K as a placeholder. Bassett reported ridership was 115 riders on the busiest day this winter. If trolley runs to other districts in the future, those districts should contribute per Knutson.
- \$151K for discretionary funds, such as other vision plan priorities like programming of Greene Square Park.
- Carry over is \$131K.

Klein feels this is a good budget. Dusek mentioned he'd like to see the activation of 3<sup>rd</sup> Street be next on the round of projects.

Dusek moved to approve the 2025 budget with Timko seconding. The 2025 budget was unanimously approved.

## **2025 Action Plan Update**

### Programs & Projects:

Knutson began with complimenting Bassett for all she accomplished in 2024. He said they'll probably reach \$100K in sponsorships/fundraising this year. He mentioned Bassett has already received a few people reach out to her regarding the Façade Improvement Program, so she'll continue to pursue this.

A new week-long event will take place in downtown this summer, 5SeasonsFit, will focus on health and wellness. This event will activate May's Island and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. Also, they're getting ready to place Cedar Rapids sculpture/sign. Timko would like it to be more than just a sign so there was discussion about trees and lighting that are also planned. The sculpture will be made of 12 gage steel. ACME will in-kind the labor and fixtures and DC Taylor will in-kind the lighting. Timko and Dusek asked about lighting inside the letters.

Knutson said he's had people reach out to him interested in being expert judges for Race for the Space. Because the previous Race for the Space winner has gone out of business, the next winner will be connected to mentorships to help them be successful. Dusek recommended looking for an already established business who may want to expand downtown, since it would ensure a better chance of succeeding. Knutson mentioned entrepreneurship is strong in the Black and Latino communities.

The Eye 380 Board has dissolved but we have the DOT grant, so the plan is to move forward with beautification of the gateway to downtown. Knutson stated he has recently met with Bolton and Menk.

Knutson stated a need to better communicate downtown's story by having more interaction with the media. Therefore, a press release about Hartelt joining the SSMID is being done. Also, Knutson and Bassett sat down with CBJ last week and have been on Everyday Iowa-KCRG-TV9. Knutson has had a conversation about doing a downtown podcast. They are coming up with a communication strategy and will be making the website (downtowncr.org) more user friendly and will figure out how to leverage Placer AI. An example was given: the average stay at Quarter Barrel is 100 minutes and 60 minutes at Cliff's Dive Bar.

The Annual Report will include quotes from Klein, Knutson, state-wide players who attended the Downtown Conference in Cedar Rapids this past year.

Other items mentioned:

- Filling vacancies downtown.
- Collaborating with NewBo/Czech Village to have people cross 8<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Concert series/live music at Kingston Yard (Cone) and Iowa Brewing (Stephan).
- Following the music census report.
- Approach Rotary Clubs about sponsorships.
- Should we have an Annual Meeting of some sort?
- Marketing Plan is forthcoming.
- Leverage to have more black professionals downtown – D9 Black Greek organization.

Knutson thanked Zeker for tracking the vision plan projects. He said 18 items have been accomplished the first year, giving thanks to the Implementation Committee.

#### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 3:54pm.

/pd