



Cedar Rapids Downtown SSMID Commission Minutes

March 26, 2025 | 3:00-4:30 p.m.

Cedar Rapids Bank & Trust

Present: Joe Ahmann, Graig Cone, Jared Hanlin, Loren Hartelt, Ted Kepros, James Klein, Sarah Madsen, Robin Sempf, Craig Stephan, David Sorg, Fred Timko, Dannette Tobin

Absent: Jon Dusek, Randy Rings, Jake Ryan

Guest: David Maier, City Council

City Liaison: Jennifer Pratt

Staff: Jennifar Basett, Peggy Degnan, Caleb Knutson, Doug Neumann, Audrey Wheeler

Welcome, Introductions & Call to Order

Klein called the meeting to order at 3:01pm. He welcomed Robn Sempf, Director of Marketing and Customer Experience at Alliant Energy, to the commission and had he tell a little about herself.

Consent Agenda/Approval of January Minutes and MOU

Hartelt moved to approve the minutes and the changes to the MOU with Madsen seconding. The January minutes and executive summary on changes to the MOU with the City were unanimously approved.

Homeless Systems Oversight Presentation

Klein introduced J'nae Peterman saying she was with Waypoint but accepted this position with the City and ECICOG to combat homelessness. Since starting in June of 2024, she has created a landlord/tenant success initiative in partnership with CRB&T, because it is challenging to find landlords willing to rent to the homeless and said this is common across the nation.

Peterman is working on creating a systematic approach to ending homelessness by developing a coordinated entry system and getting people into the system right way. People will only have to contact one place now because the coordinated entry is handled through Waypoint.

Twice a year on the last Wednesday of January and of July, Peterman stated she and her team cover Cedar Rapids and Marion during late night hours to determine how many people are not in shelters. They saw a decrease from 2023 to 2024. The total number of individuals experiencing homelessness in

2024 was 174 (unsheltered and/or in shelters). Unsheltered population in 2024 = 20. She reported numbers are decreasing, while nationwide and other Iowa cities are seeing increases. Peterman attributes the decrease to their Street Outreach Approach and their Advisory Council that consists of people who have been in homeless situations. Often times, the homeless don't feel valued or worthy and sometimes they're not willing or able to comply with shelter rules. They've found people do want services, but there is a lack of adequate resources to meet increasing needs. Individuals need long term case management for physical and mental challenges, but decreases in funding are creating chronic homelessness. Thus, Peterman's team is trying to intervene beforehand to prevent homelessness. Funding has been coming from pandemic relief dollars which will end in September. Therefore, CRB&T is partnering with them to target a prevention system. Literal homelessness has decreased by 35%. Children experiencing homelessness decreased from 26% in 2019 to 7% in 2024. The current initiatives are:

- Landlord and tenant success
- Live Experience Advisory Council
- Community Care Team
- Street Outreach Team

Referral link: ce@waypointservices.org The team will respond in 12 hours and start a service plan on an individual. Plan to start next week when winter weather closes.

Subcommittee Updates

Downtown Location: RFP was sent out and they have received three responses thus far.

Marketing & Public Relations: A Kirkwood student is now a committee member as well as a Kirkwood Professor.

Race-for-the-Space: Knutson shared they now have members of the SCORE Chapter in Cedar Rapids on board to be mentors, Expert/Celebrity judges and an Application Review Team have both been selected. He said they are seeking existing businesses who want to expand, Newbo shop owners and start-ups. He also mentioned a business in Iowa City that wants to expand in downtown Cedar Rapids. Knutson also shared a tentative timeline with a tentative date of August 13th as the day to announce the winner during a special Race-for-the Space happy hour event at a location TBD.

Other updates were given in regard to funding opportunities for the Trolley. The trolley is going to be used for ImpactCR's Foodie Crawl and during Five Seasons Fit (5SF). Also, they're in the process of establishing a summer schedule.

Implementation Committee

Knutson said we need to do a better job of communicating our story. The City has created a communications calendar.

Vacant Properties

Partnering with the City because they have resources to determine Leakage & Void analysis through Sightseer, and then he'll meet with the City's retail consultant to produce a strategy.

Commission Terms

- Hartelt to become Chair starting January 1st because Klein becoming Chair of Policy Board. Kepros to remain Vice Chair of SSMID.
- First terms expiring on June 30, 2025: Ted Kepros, Sarah Madsen, Randy Rings
- David Sorg expires June 30, 2025. His replacement from OPN is Landon Burg.

SaPaDaPaSo

Reporting delay for 2025 attendance. St. Patrick's Day parade doubled from 5K to 10K when moved to official St. Patrick's Day of the week in 2024.

Project Updates on Vison Plan

Beautification

- Repairs on 3rd Avenue bridge will be done in phases, so only half of bridge to be shut down.
- 3rd Avenue planters to serve as borders to the new parking lot at the corner of 1st Street and 4th Avenue NE. Planting beings in mid-May.
- There are 50 Big Bellies downtown. A service rep is coming next week so he and Bassett will walk around town and evaluate.
- Seasonal Staff – a waterer will return this summer and we'll have a maintenance intern from Kirkwood.
- A change in placement of the Cedar Rapids Sign is needed for it to be in proximity to an existing ADA ramp on Mays Island. Sign to be installed by June 15th. Sign Size = 9 ft. X 27 ft.

Events and Programming

- 5 Seasons Fit (5SF) will occur June 22-28. Bassett showed two possible logos.
- Downtown walking group meets at 12:15pm on Mondays at corner of 2nd St. and 2nd Ave.
- Bike to Work Week: May 10th – 17th.
- "Sip Local Saturdays" is starting. It will support coffee shops.
- Pop-up Art Gallery: display artwork in vacant buildings/windows

Marketing

- Projector will show upcoming events.
- Sponsorship form is on the website now with a live ticker showing how much money is left to donate.
- Madsen suggested having a QR code for businesses to display in their windows so people could scan it to find out what is going on downtown.
- Collaboration on the kiosks because Czech Village is also interested in them.

Other

- The City has installed 70 cameras around town to read license plates.
- Extend SSMID boundary to include Casino. Per Neumann, the process should start July 1, 2026 to go into effect on July 1, 2027. Pratt said the Casino could make a voluntary donation in 2026 and then formally contribute in 2027.
- The *Young Creatives* could possibly reinvent and manage Uptown Friday Nights in Greene Square Park per Bassett.
- Knutson to walk around downtown Friday, April 4th, with mascot, Mr. Shucks, to promote Kernel's baseball in partnership with downtown.

Action Items

- Klein said to invite Cale Henderson and/or Katie Curtis from Community Development Innovation Council to SSMID meetings.
- Invite Police to give a mid-year update.
- Klein asked Degnan to send calendar invite for tentative Race-for-the-Space event on August 13th.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:22pm.

/pd