

Downtown Development Authority

Regular Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 12, 2014
Noon, Council Chambers



City of South Haven

MISSION STATEMENT: The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is to be a leader in helping to fulfill the City of South Haven Municipal Plan; through planning, funding, and development of projects within the DDA District which promote, encourage and contribute to the overall economic growth and development of the community.

1. Call to Order by Olson at 12:00 noon.

2. Roll Call

Present: Braun, Burr, Marcoux, Maxwell, Olson
Absent: Whiteford, Zuckerman

Also present: Brian Dissette, City Manager; Wendy Hochstedler, Finance Director

Newton arrived at 12:05 p.m.

3. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Marcoux, second by Braun to approve the February 12, 2014 Agenda as presented.

All in favor. Motion carried.

4. Approval of Minutes – October 2, 2013

Motion by Marcoux, second by Burr to approve the October 2, 2013 Regular Meeting minutes as written.

All in favor. Motion carried.

5. Interested Citizens in the Audience Will be Heard on Items Not on the Agenda

None at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

6. DDA will be asked to consider approval of outdoor seating furniture at 402 Phoenix and 403 Phoenix.

Regarding a question about the height of the table umbrellas as it relates to pedestrian safety: the draft Outdoor Sidewalk Café License Agreement require umbrellas to be no lower than seven feet (7') above the sidewalk.

Motion by Marcoux, second by Maxwell to approve the outdoor seating furniture for use at 402 and 403 Phoenix Street.

All in favor. Motion carried.

7. DDA will be presented with the Proposed Fiscal Year 2014-2015 Budget.

Davidson explained that getting the Kentucky Avenue project done is a priority this year and referenced an ordinance passed in May of 2013 that parcels will be removed from DDA2 by July 1, 2017.

In response to a question by Olson regarding the Kentucky Avenue project time line, Davidson noted that fall 2014 is the projected start time with completion in spring of 2015.

Davidson stated that the Kentucky Avenue project and Wi-Fi are the projects for this budget year. Burr noted that almost all of the DDA funds will be spent for those projects leaving a year to catch up. DDA funds have budgeted for conduit and fiber optic cable installation for the Phoenix Street project. Burr stated that the DDA cannot afford to do any more projects in FY 2014-2015.

Marcoux asked what impact the bridge had on DDA money. Hochstedler noted that DDA involvement was the money provided in 2013 for engineering.

Discussion ensued regarding the time line presented to the DDA during discussions and whether or not the merchants were led to believe that the parking lot on the Baar property was on the "fast track". It was reiterated that the DDA does not have the funds to develop the Baars building in FY 2014-2015. It will be a priority in FY 2015-16.

Dissette pointed out some financial pressures related to the DDA and observed that City Council has adopted the DDA Plan Ordinance which removes parcels in DDA2 and revenues will be reduced. The DDA has committed to Kentucky Avenue reconstruction. Dissette noted out that in the next couple of years, the funding will be available to convert the Baars property into parking. Dissette noted that borrowing could be explored but reminded the board of the debt recently issued to the DDA.

Marcoux stated the DDA was presented with plans and there was discussion on how to maximize the number of spaces to be placed on the Baars property. Since the parking project has to be delayed, the DDA should be able to use this time to maximize the number of spaces. Dissette stated that the engineering department and DDA will be working on that together.

Regarding a question about the demolition of the Baars building, Dissette explained that the city has leased the building to a local merchant who is using the space for storing product which provides some minimal revenue to the city. Dissette noted that the building is in good enough shape that there is no other issue driving its demolition. Marcoux expressed satisfaction that revenue is coming in during the waiting period.

8. Board Comments

Burr: Informed that the State of Michigan acquired the land at Blue Star Highway and Black River Road and explained that the state is going to put in a campground on that site in addition to amenities for the trail. This project, Burr noted, will result in more investment by the State of Michigan in terms of recreational facilities. Burr spoke with the Department of Natural Resources people in Lansing this morning and they are still planning to pave the trail from the State Park to the City of South Haven, which will coincide with the city paving from downtown to the old Bohn Aluminum site, where the trail becomes state land. Burr explained that it is quite encouraging that the State of Michigan did acquire the property and are going to make a substantial investment.

Dissette reported that asbestos abatement has been approved on the former Baptist Church site, and abatement expected in mid-March. The State will issue a contract for demolition and by early April demolition should begin. Burr noted the asbestos shingles on the exterior have to be removed pre-demolition. Dissette said there is also underground storage for fuel underneath the building; this building is going to cost about \$350,000 to take down and the city is thankful for the blight grant money provided by the state.

Dissette said the city was able to get this project funded through Kinexus; an invitation was sent out to communities for removal and abatement of blighted downtown properties. Dissette noted that it has been a slow process due to there being multiple lien holders as well as the requirement for the Construction Board of Appeals to rule the building as blighted and a dangerous building, with a call out for demolition. The property owner will not be facing any liens on it. If so, the city would have had to lien the property from general funds or Downtown Development Authority funds. Dissette pointed out that once the abatement and demolition is complete, this will become a very valuable property. Dissette reported that according to the owner's representative, there is already an individual prepared to buy it.

Dissette explained that one year prior to the reconstruction of Williams Street the city allowed snowmobiles to go all the way to the new parking lot on Huron Street, via Williams Street. Once the new road was in place, the city designated The Depot parking lot for snowmobile parking. Dissette pointed out that the city has worked with snowmobile clubs in the past so snowmobilers will know where they are permitted to go, however the snow has been so deep that snowmobilers have been pushing a little further. The police are trying to educate people to stop where they are supposed to stop (at the Depot).

Dissette outlined the routes as posted on the city website. Dissette noted that while the Van Buren Trail has not been maintained since it was a railway, this year the state placed a sand base and cleared debris and snowmobilers saw a new route and took it. The city has received complaints from south side residents about snowmobilers riding through residential neighborhoods. After questions, Dissette said the Van Buren Trail runs by American Twisting. Dissette said city staff put up barricades and signs in an effort to notify snowmobilers "please do not ride your sleds through residential neighborhoods".

Burr noted the studs on the snowmobiles' tracks cut into the sidewalks and the asphalt both of which are brand new. That is one of the reasons the city stopped snowmobiles from coming any further into town. Dissette stated he would love to welcome snowmobilers further into town but noted there is a balancing act with keeping residents in neighborhoods happy and maintaining the infrastructure. Dissette suggested this issue will be coming back to the DDA and to City Council for further discussion.

9. Director Comments

Davidson: \$7,100 has been spent in the month of January for downtown snow removal.

Dissette: The city just acquired a new patching machine which is timely because when plowing is done the patching will begin. Credited City Council for blessing the city with a hot-patch machine whereby extremely hot patch will be placed into the hole in combination with a wand that vibrates and packs down the patch resulting in a more flush patch that will likely last much longer than the cold-patch previously used.

Davidson: The Phoenix Street project continues to move along; tries to keep communication flowing. Olson remarked that she has been told that retail sales have gone down but most have attributed it, at least in part, to the weather.

10. Adjourn

Motion by Maxwell, second by Newton to adjourn at 12:31 p.m.

All in favor. Motion carried.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Marsha Ransom
Recording Secretary