



Cedar Rapid Downtown SSMID Commission Minutes
July 22, 2020 | 4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Zoom

The Downtown SSMID Commission met virtually in regular session. Those present are listed below. The meeting was held as an electronic regular Commission meeting because a meeting in person was impossible or impractical due to concerns for the health and safety of Commissioners, staff and the public presented by COVID-19.

Present: Joe Ahmann, Jon Dusek, Emily Ellingson, Darryl High, Dawn Jaffray, James Klein, Linda Mattes, Matt Miller, David Sorg, Joe Terfler, Fred Timko

Absent: Dave Drown, Andrew Morf, Craig Stephan

Guests: Casey Drew – City of Cedar Rapids, Bryan Potts – App Developer

Staff: Ellen Bardsley, Jessica Komisar, Jesse Thoeming, Phil Wasta

Welcome, Introductions & Call to Order

High welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m. High introduced Dusek and Ahmann and welcomed them to the Commission.

Approval of May Minutes

Klein moved approval of the May minutes with Terfler seconding. The May minutes were unanimously approved.

Downtown App/Marketing/Rally C.A.P.

Thoeming said during the March meeting the Commission voted unanimously to use \$110k of reserves for a Downtown business support program for bars, restaurants and retailers. During the May meeting, the app concept was presented as the vehicle for consumers and businesses. Once a consumer spends \$100 at a participating Downtown business, they would receive \$50 to spend. Thoeming said he is happy to report Apple has accepted the Downtown CR Dollars app and development is underway within the Google Play Store for Android users. Once both apps are live, we will work with KCRG for quick how-to videos for consumers and businesses and begin marketing. Thoeming introduced Potts, the developer that has created the app to review how it works.

Potts said there are 2 “versions” of the app – one for consumers and one for businesses – but both live in the same, singular app.

- Consumer – register with first and last name and phone number. The consumer will then receive a SMS code to verify their phone number, once received they will sign in with their phone number and it will take them to the home page where it shows their current incentive balance. To submit a transaction, the consumer will take a picture of the receipt through the app. Once the receipt is approved on the backend, the consumer will be able to see their balance and a QR code that will be used for the business to scan when using incentive dollars. Ahmann asked if there is any way a consumer could duplicate a receipt. Potts said the system won’t allow to duplicate a transaction number so as long as the admin stays consistent in entering a transaction number a receipt shouldn’t be duplicated.
- Business – register with name, number, business name, e-mail and business address. They will receive a SMS code just like the consumer to verify the number. The business will have the option to scan the consumer’s QR code using the phone’s camera application, once the scan is taken it will show the consumer’s remaining

balance. The business will then enter the transaction into their point of sale system as a coupon. Potts said all transactions and deductions to the consumer's balance is in real time. The business will also receive a real time ACH transfer from a separate bank account that has been set up for the SSMID dollars.

- Admin Portal/Backend – Once we receive the picture of a receipt, the admin can click on the image, scroll over it to confirm the total amount, enter how much the receipt is for and a unique identifier such as a transaction number and then hit approve. Thoeming said we will have between 48-72 hours to approve a receipt.

Thoeming said there will be 40-50 business that will fall under the category of service provider, bar, restaurant, café that we hope to get signed up for this app. Ahmann asked how long a consumer has to use their incentive dollars Thoeming said we had discussed having the deadline be the end of 2020 in order to get money back into Downtown businesses as soon as possible. Thoeming said the maximum amount per customer would be spending up to \$500 for a total of \$250 in incentives. Mattes said she doesn't care if a consumer uses a gift card to make a purchase at a business but doesn't think the consumer should be able to use their rebate to purchase gift cards – Commissioners agreed. High asked what the timeline is. Thoeming said we have KCRG lined up for the videos and need to allow another 2-3 weeks for approval from Google Play Store and ideally to launch Labor Day weekend. Bardsley said we would market the app in the EA report through the CBJ and other e-blasts to those who have signed up to receive Downtown news.

Commissioners discussed if the 50% rebate is too rich and if it should be lowered. Terfler suggested it could be 50% the first 60 days and then decrease it to a 25% rebate or adjust accordingly. Doing so would make SSMID dollars go further. Dusek suggested a 33% rebate to extend our dollars.

Ahmann asked how a consumer knows when the program has ended. Thoeming said messaging will be front and center with the caveat that we aren't sure how long it will run for. Ellingson said it would be good to send a notification to consumers well in advance once we see our funds getting lower. Potts said there are multiple ways to go about this including a push notification or note in the Play Store. Terfler said we could have a disclaimer that appears when a consumer registered that says something along the lines of the program exists as long as funds are available.

Timko motioned approval of launching the program with a 33% rebate with the maximum of \$250 in rebates to a consumer with Ellingson seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.

Masks for Downtown Businesses

Thoeming said he connected with Gary Ficken with Bimm Ridder Sportswear - a sports apparel company who has lost 90% of their business due to COVID - to produce masks for Downtown businesses. Timko said he likes the idea and would be in favor of providing them to businesses to hand out to their servers instead of giving to customers. Ellingson agreed and said that we can't make servers wear the masks but at least we would be providing them with the option. Mattes also liked the idea and said we could keep the design simple and generic such as "I heart CR" or something similar. Klein asked if there is a budget line item for this, Thoeming said there isn't but we could take it from several other line items such as Race for the Space or programs and marketing as we have only spent 33% of the budget YTD. Terfler said if we spent \$10k that would get us 2,300 masks. Jaffray said she liked the black mask as it would make whatever our design will be pop more, commissioners agreed to go with black masks. Klein recapped and asked Thoeming to order 5k masks and hand them out to Downtown businesses. Klein motioned for approval of this expense with Mattes seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.

SSMID's Role with Recent Downtown Issues

Thoeming said there have been recent safety concerns from Downtown businesses. One being the Veoride bikes and scooters being left on the sidewalks. Businesses have asked if they can be deactivated at midnight and City leadership said they would discuss with Veoride. Thoeming said Lt. Robinson with the CRPD is looking at a Downtown camera expansion along 2nd Ave and 3rd Street as those businesses have been seeing an uptick in loitering and violence. Thoeming said Lt. Robinson is still working on the costs but suggested this might be something the SSMID can assist with and be a part of. Timko asked if there is a law that bars and restaurants have to have some minimal camera coverage and if we could offer them an outdoor camera, we could get a lot of sidewalk coverage. High said CRPD will gather more information and costs and can present at a future meeting.

Updates from Commissioners

Timko said he is happy to see future activity in the area with the Beach Boys coming to the amphitheater on August 21 however the restaurant businesses has still been a challenge. Their biggest tenant in Kingston Village is ImOn and they are not back in the office yet so the area is losing their foot traffic during the day.

Mattes – Alliant has decided to keep their current plan of working from home through the remainder of the year. They still have call center and dispatch employees in the Downtown office. United Life in the tower has returned but not in totality. The Alliant Credit Union which was on the ground floor of the tower has cancelled their lease.

1st and 1st West Briefing

Ahmann said the typical process includes the submittal of the proposal, selection and developer agreement. Because it's a multi-phase and multi-building project, an additional step was added of having a term sheet which spells out the basics and what the developer anticipates, their timeframe, what building will come first, etc. Ahmann said from the time the project started in November of 2019 and to being submitted at the end of February 2020, the world has drastically changed and has in return, changed the process. They have been looking at the original proposal and talking with businesses that had previously committed to find out their current commitment level and so far, they have been pretty strong. The biggest problem right now is the timeframe as it has slowed down a little and will need to take a step back and figure out what will make the project better in the long-run. Ahmann said there is a big push to reduce parking in projects like these which doesn't always make sense for customers or businesses. Ahmann said he hopes the first part of the project can start next Spring/Summer. Sorg said there is a strong commitment from the design team to do something unique and play off what has been done in Kingston.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 5:25 p.m.