



Cedar Rapid Downtown SSMID Commission Minutes

April 26, 2017

4:00 p.m.

Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance

Attendees: Jon Dusek, Steve Dummermuth Jr., Dawn Jaffray, Chris Lindell, Linda Mattes, Jeff Pomeranz, Randy Rings, Joe Terfler, Fred Timko

Absent: Mayor Ron Corbett, Casey Drew, Trish Ellison, Marty Hoeger, Nancy Kasperek, Ann Lipsky, Andrew Morf

Economic Alliance Staff: Sherokee Eder, Doug Neumann, Casey Prince, Julie Stewart, Melissa McCarville, Phil Wasta,

Guests: John Stineman, Lt. Cory McGarvey, Jen Winter, Doug Laird, Sandi Fowler, Jasmine Almoayed, Jennifer Pratt.

Welcome & Call to Order

Timko welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

Consent Agenda

Lindell moved approval of the consent agenda with Terfler seconding. The consent agenda was unanimously approved.

Tax Reform Advocacy Strategy

Neumann introduced Iowa Chamber Alliance Executive Director, John Stineman, adding that tax reform and tax credits are an important issue and one of the biggest challenges the Economic Alliance will take on.

Stineman provided a history of the Iowa Chamber Alliance. Of the 50 states, Iowa is ranked 40th in tax code complexity. He also reminded those in attendance that the last session saw a bill introduced to limit and/or eliminate tax credit programs. It's unclear what the 2018 state budget will look like, but regardless the tax reform discussion will happen.

Stineman said simplification is not as easy as it looks and could result in taxes on things that were not previously taxed. The business community needs to be engaged. Stineman said it will be important to have the ability to sell reform aspirations to the public and give cover to elected officials who want to do the right thing.

Timko asked about the revenue shortage. Stineman explained that part of the shortage was uncertain, but also that the agriculture economy is in a low. Stineman said he was under the impression that the governor's office intends to put forward a reform proposal.

Lindell asked if property taxes were in alignment with tax reform. Stineman suggested that the state will not take on both at once.

Downtown Survey Update

Laird informed the Commission that he intends to proceed with the survey started last year. Timko asked how the surveys would be distributed, adding that they had a list of property owners. Laird said he would gladly take the list, and the hope was to put feet on the ground and talk to people whose properties include office space.

Downtown Police & Public Safety Update

Lt. Cory McGarvey introduced himself to the Commission and provided detail to the boundaries under his jurisdiction as well as crime statistics.

The late night bar patrons and homeless population continue to be a challenge for Downtown Cedar Rapids, as in any city. McGarvey said the homeless population finds downtown attractive because of the bus system, library, skywalks, bars, and alleys. Officers hand out business cards to the homeless with helpful information on shelters and food programs.

Jaffray asked how the floods impacted the crime rate. McGarvey clarified that during the time of the floods (2008 and 2016), the crime rate actually went down. Rings asked what all went into a geographic “beat” study. McGarvey explained that studies are based on number of calls, number of officers sent on calls, where calls are located, and time spent on calls.

McGarvey also passed around a photo of Charles Wilcox, who has stolen from downtown businesses, and has been arrested several times. Prince will share the photo of Wilcox with the group.

3rd Street “Good, Better, Best” examples and estimates

Winter updated the group on new streetlights. As of right now, the only new streetlights installed are in front of the CRST Center. The city has funding in place to begin replacing the rest of the Downtown lights. Winter said she anticipates this will be a 2-3 year process. Pomeranz asked how far along the agreement was. Winter clarified that there would be a meeting with Alliant the following week. On a related note, Alliant has purchased the lights for their block.

Winter then turned to 3rd Street and expressed she would like to gauge SSMID investment and involvement interest in ideas above and beyond what will already be happening which is currently limited to the new streetlights and a resurfacing and restriping in the coming years. Some example renderings of 3rd Street as a signature street were shown. Dusek expressed if the signature street was a serious thing, we need to think big. Dusek also expressed he felt the bike lanes were unnecessary because of the amount of stop signs. Rings expressed the importance of 3rd Street as a connector for vehicle traffic. Dusek said he felt the JLG plan should revisit the signature street concept and encouraged Commission members to look at this as real estate developers, thinking big.

Pomeranz said he liked the concept of the JLG plan. Prince said he was in the process of getting next step information from JLG. Mattes responded to Winter’s original question and articulated that this Commission is very interested in being directly involved in and potentially investing in a signature street concept.

Executive Director’s Report

Prince referenced page 8 of the agenda packet containing the Executive Director’s Report and offered to answer questions and provided a brief update on a training he’d just attended. Shirt designs for Market After Dark were passed around and Commission Members voted on their favorite. Prince noted that Darryl High would be appointed as a new Commissioner and if other Commissioners felt like they wanted another “onboarding,” they were welcome to join the orientation when scheduled. Prince shared that Rings had helped draft updates to the Commission’s Memorandum of Agreement with the City and now Fowler and her team were working on the matrix that differentiates City and SSMID responsibilities. Mattes requested fliers for Food Truck Fridays. Rings asked if there was an option to limit all trucks to locations like Greene Square. Prince noted that current permit holders aren’t limited to certain locations but that feedback will be shared with the City to review their ordinance for next year.

WOW Investment Update and Discussion

Timko reported that a sample light was to be viewed the next night. Those interested should meet on June 29th at 9:00 p.m. in front of TrueNorth. Timko asked Winter who they would start the conversation with about having special lights on the 3rd Avenue bridge, adding that the lights weren't very heavy. Winter clarified the conversation would start with her. More research would need to be done to ensure they wouldn't cause structural damage or distract drivers.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 5:33 p.m.