



Cedar Rapid Downtown SSMID Commission Minutes

September 27, 2017

4:00 p.m.

Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance

Attendees: Casey Drew, Darryl High, Dawn Jaffray, Nancy Kasperek, Linda Mattes, Andrew Morf, Randy Rings, Joe Terfler

Absent: Mayor Ron Corbett, Steve Dummermuth Jr., Trish Ellison, Marty Hoeger, Chris Lindell, Anny Lipsky, Jeff Pomeranz, Fred Timko

Economic Alliance Staff: Sherokee Eder, Casey Prince

Guests: JLG Architects, Seth Gunnerson, Anne Russett, Rob Davis

Welcome and Call to Order

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

Consent Agenda

Kasperek moved approval of the consent agenda with Rings seconding. The consent agenda was unanimously approved.

Welcome New Commissioner Darryl High

High introduced himself and provided a brief family/professional background.

JLG Introduction & Q&A

JLG Architects provided a brief history of the work they've done in Cedar Rapids, including past Downtown Framework Plans and studies for Kingston Village and Ellis Boulevard. It was noted that they rarely see clients execute their long-range plans so quickly and completely. Mattes asked what surprised the architects most about coming back to the area. JLG said that the scale of some of the City's projects was surprising to them. A few items on the original list received a lot of pushback, and are now projects being completed, such as the conversion of one-way to two-way streets. Architects said that the redevelopment they've seen is amazing, adding that Downtown felt empty and dull 10 years ago, but now feels vibrant with more retail and residents. In their words, the flood brought opportunity to Cedar Rapids where similar disasters have slowed other communities. It was noted that Cedar Rapids is often held up as a model in their work.

Jaffray made note of how it was interesting that the flood came after the architects' original plan in 2007. JLG noted the benefit that Cedar Rapids had with that plan in place at the time of the flood. Kasperek mentioned a meeting with a Congressman to express struggles and to their surprise the Congressman's perception was to compliment Cedar Rapids' results. Terfler asked how big of an influencer the potential casinos were to the JLG plan. JLG architects said they were still getting up to speed, but that the potential casinos were being considered.

Flood Control System Update

Davis noted that the Master Plan adopted in 2015 was similar to the 2008 plan. A slide highlighting what has already been completed was shown to Commissioners. Davis shared examples of the system's levees, removable walls, and permanent walls. Some fast facts included that the system is approximately 7 miles

long, protects both sides of the river, incorporates aesthetic elements to reflect culture and history, and includes pump stations and detention basins. June 13, 2018 will be a celebration of the completed Northwest Gateway Plaza. Davis pointed out new shutoffs that will prevent river backup through storm sewer into the Downtown. Currently there are pump stations under construction in NewBo as well as the Sinclair basin grading and levee with trail on top. Czech Village is seeing levee work and a new Riverfront Park. Work at Quaker is coming soon.

Davis made note that five more gate systems will be put in the Downtown area in the next 2-3 years. The 8th Avenue bridge will be replaced at a higher elevation, ensuring an additional route over a flood event. Future work at the Amphitheatre will eliminate portable amenities that will be built into the system. Terfler asked from a property owner prospective, who they should be talking to about doing things at their own property. Davis said he would be the point person for that also.

ReZone Update

Russett and Gunnerson reported on progress updating the City's zoning code, a priority of the Envision CR plan. The goal is to modernize the code and to simplify, add clarity, and predictability to it. This will benefit residents and developers. Gunnerson shared that this would be a form-based code, making future decisions about context not just use so that development fits into the neighborhood or district when it is built. Areas to potentially have their own distinct form defined in the code are Downtown, New Bohemia, Czech Village, Kingston Village, Ellis Boulevard, and Medical Quarter, though the City is soliciting feedback for other potential form districts or neighborhoods. A public open house will be held in October. Rings asked about feedback to the process. Russett said that there was a lot of input on types of housing units not in the current code. Rings asked if coordination with JLG's work was an aim, to which Russett clarified yes.

Executive Director's Report

Prince reiterated the welcome of new Commissioner, Darryl High, adding that High had orientation the previous week.

Prince put together an online metrics report, which included e-mail open rates and social media performance. Market After Dark and morning markets' attendance exceeded expectations this year. Food Truck Friday started as an idea at the beginning of summer, and with the help of Economic Alliance Intern, Hunter Gillaspie, and social media advertising, attendance reached approximately 10,000 people from July-September. Prince said it was as simple as live music over the lunch hours, and investing in affordable advertising. Prince noted that the City moved the Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony to align with Small Business Saturday. The Holiday DeLight Parade will be Saturday, December 9th. Holiday lighting, banners, and planters will see additions and improvements this year to give people the sense that Downtown SSMID really went all out. Mattes said she'd like to see bright lighting.

A sidewalk repair bid package awarded by City Council will allow for 9 projects Downtown to be completed this fall in addition to the street conversion and ADA projects already underway. Rings made an inquiry about the sidewalk commitment. Prince clarified that the SSMID has been matching the City and that amount will tentatively be raised to a max of \$50,000 each starting next calendar year.

Prince gave updates on spending in 2017 highlighting that Park CR did not require debt service support, the skywalk connection project was delayed into next year, and a proportion of the façade improvement budget will go unspent as the City's allocation is nearly depleted. Since the intent of the 2017 budget deficit was to start spending cash reserves, Prince proposed alternate projects to be completed in this calendar year including 7 different lighting/façade improvement projects, averaging \$15,000 per project. Project locations include: 3rd St SE skywalks (4 projects), 4th Ave SE ramp (1 project), 1st St SE sculpture (1 project), 1st St SW roof line (1 project). Lighting of facades includes 5 different mural installations and 1 sculpture installation. With the exception of the roof lining project, all other projects include color-changing programmable lighting. Mattes asked Prince if these lights would be both programmable and controlled remotely. Prince provided clarity that 5 of the projects would be controlled by Park Cedar Rapids, one by the City, and one by the

Economic Alliance. Commissioners discussed opportunities to coordinate the look and color of the lighting, such as holidays.

Prince made a recommendation regarding the “wow” 3rd Ave bridge lighting project to bank the 2017 dollars not spent in this calendar year in order to double the budget in 2018 because the cost of the preferred fixtures was higher than originally projected. Those dollars would not be repurposed to an alternate project per the recommendation.

Rings voiced that he would like to make a case to change some of the skywalk project locations to those that would be visible to more traffic. Prince said that while he agreed with Rings’ preferred locations, his hesitation to locate lighting where murals were not already installed was due to the potential of future mural projects on those alternate skywalks altering the lighting requirements.

Rings moved approval to spend up to \$105,000 on 7 lighting/façade projects with Kasperek seconding. No Commissioners were opposed. The motion was unanimously approved.

Prince noted that during the SSMID renewal, something he came across frequently was a lack of knowledge about SSMID accomplishments by property owners. A cocktail hour “annual meeting” update was suggested for the spring. Rings said it was worth a try. Prince noted that the Façade Improvement Grant Committee had just met and acknowledged how exciting their work is. If other Commissioners have interest in involvement beyond commission meetings, please connect with Prince to express your project interest.

Prince highlighted 10-year flood anniversary planning meetings. Kasperek suggested in the future hosting communities that were affected by the hurricanes to show them how Cedar Rapids was resilient during the flood and to help them be so as well. Commissioners discussed how the gateways into Downtown might be more attractive. Prince said he would take that information back to JLG Architects, noting that they had mentioned the same thing but understand a Signage & Wayfinding study was recently completed. There have been verbal confirmations that the same funding partners as the last JLG study would like to participate in this one.

WOW Bridge Lighting Update

Prince detailed the sample light outside of Popoli. Timko and Prince have been working with Public Works on the 3rd Ave bridge lighting concept. The sample light in a larger scale will be suggested. Prince and Timko will meet with the City next week. Mattes suggested taller bases so that snow plows don’t damage the lights.

Other Business & Discussions

Terfler noted that Starbucks just opened in the GreatAmerica building. High said they had officially been in their Downtown Corporate office for a year. Jaffray said UFG has a lot of changes ranging from construction projects to the selling of their life insurance business to a Chicago-based company. Jaffray added that the good news was that no employees would be losing their jobs. Kasperek said that the US Bank sign light will be fixed at the top of their building. Rings shared that TrueNorth’s building is full and they’ve built out parking across the street, adding that they’d be installing rooftop solar panels soon as well. Morf noted that he liked the cleaned-up GTC parking ramp which includes murals. Mattes said Alliant is looking at exterior lighting for their tower.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 5:47 p.m.