



**Cedar Rapid Downtown SSMID Commission Minutes**  
**January 27, 2021 | 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:** Jon Dusek, Emily Ellingson, Darryl High, Dawn Jaffray, James Klein, Linda Mattes, David Sorg, Craig Stephan, Joe Terfler, Fred Timko

**Absent:** Joe Ahmann, Dave Drown, Matt Miller, Andrew Morf

**Staff:** Jessica Komisar, Melissa McCarville, Doug Neumann, Jesse Thoeming, Phil Wasta

**Welcome, Introductions & Call to Order**

High welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m.

Thoeming announced Klein has joined the Downtown SSMID executive committee effective immediately.

**Approval of November Minutes**

Terfler moved approval of the November minutes with Dusek seconding. The November minutes were unanimously approved.

**Branding Project Update and Next Steps**

Through our previous RFP process, the branding sub-committee has been working with de Novo for the process of re-branding Downtown which includes a new logo. The initial logo concept was presented to Commissioners at the September 2020 meeting and Ellingson said that we are now looking for final discussion/approval of the logo and the roll-out plan that de Novo has outlined. At the September 2020 meeting, some Commissioners voiced their concerns about the “R” in the logo not being defined enough and that continued to be a concern at this meeting. Dusek moved to approve sending the current logo back to de Novo for edits based on suggestions with Klein seconding. The motion was unanimously approved. Thoeming will communicate concerns and suggestions to de Novo and will circle back with Commissioners either electronically or set-up a special meeting to approve.

de Novo provided the breakdown of costs and items for the roll-out plan which includes an internal roll-out of a launch kit to businesses and partners (\$2,925), a public event roll-out (\$7,129) and items following the public roll-out (\$77,500) Timko moved to approve the outlined roll-out plan with Ellingson sending. The motion was unanimously approved.

**All District Summit Outcome**

Leadership from all three SSMIDs first met in April of 2019 to share various objectives and priorities. Their next meeting in October of 2019 provided an opportunity to brainstorm core district collaborative projects. A handful of ideas came from that meeting:

- Bike/Pedestrian Loop – this idea took off with a lot of steam and after more research, it would be about 4x the initial projected cost.
- Public Art/“Selfie Spots” – important to be multi-generational and appeal to younger and older crowds
- Transportation – bus system that would continuously circulate through the districts
- Child Care – interest in being more involved with the MedQuarter’s child care initiative as it would have an impact across all districts

- Marketing – how to create a pull to Cedar Rapids from surrounding communities as a tourism focus

Since that last meeting, Thoeming has also expressed interest in adding all-district programming focused on the future of commercial real estate. At the January 2021 meeting, it was determined that Thoeming, Neumann and Wasta were to put a few more details on each of these ideas and take them to Commissioners to gauge their interests and then bring back to the full group for next steps.

### **Downtown Gateway Project**

High reminded Commissioners we have approved \$200k for a gateway initiative. High said there have been preliminary conversations with Jeff Pomeranz who was in favor of the Downtown SSMID participating in this effort and discussions with Jennifer Pratt and the Department of Transportation to start the initial phase of Downtown exit clean-ups. Timko asked how many gateways there are to Downtown. Thoeming said according to the JLG study there are 7 gateways, 4 of which are in the boundary lines of the official Downtown SSMID from the interstate and other streets. High said we would be interested in upgrading all of them but starting with the ones most visible off of I-380. Sorg recommended we incorporate plans for 1<sup>st</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> West to ensure our gateway plan for that exit area are in-sync with that development. High told Commissioners they will see a request to spend dollars when that time comes but right now, it's only preliminary conversations.

### **WOW Project Update**

As a reminder, this project includes a projector located on 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue to display light art and hopefully eventually events or films on the side of the Armstrong Center. The WOW committee had tabled this project last year because the purpose of this project does not promote social distancing and the committee was concerned about the optics from Downtown stakeholders and the community but feel like it is time to reengage. Thoeming said we have made a good-faith deposit of \$5k to Sound Concepts and the total cost will be around \$62k and we will need to obtain a right of way permit from the City due to underground drilling which would give us 1 month to get the work done. The consensus of Commissioners is to get the permit in motion and get the projector installed and the group can decide at a future meeting when it would be a good time to officially launch and turn it on.

### **Downtown Public/Private Art Options & Ideas**

Last year the Visual Arts Commission had selected and approved an artist duo from Switzerland for our 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave parking ramp mural that will be facing Hazzard County. The mural will celebrate ConnectCR. Due to COVID travel restrictions, the project has been put on hold but will resume when it's safe to travel. Thoeming said there are other mural concepts that he has in mind for 2021 including a celebration of healthcare heroes and a community spirit "We Are CR". Timko suggested we look into reengaging our alleyway study and possibly do a mural there. Sorg, Mattes and Stephan volunteered to be a part of the public art subcommittee.

### **Business Support**

Although the app wasn't able to roll-out, Thoeming is happy with the current progress of the Downtown CR Dollars program. We are closing in on \$60k of submitted and approved receipts and have given another \$1k cash injection for some businesses who we have ran out of gift cards for. The program was scheduled to end January 31 but it has been extended to March 31. Thoeming said if there are issues that arise with the current program, himself and Komisar hit the ground right away to get those resolved for the consumer and with the app version, Thoeming's concern is even if we have a perfect rollout, we would be asking staff at participating businesses to take care of issues at the time of use. Terfler asked how many dollars the SSMID has contributed at this point. Thoeming said we have contributed around \$38k - \$1k for 34 businesses, some of which have received another second \$1k injection. Thoeming will keep Commissioners updated on the current program and provide a summary after it is concluded.

Klein asked how our Downtown businesses have fared compared to other metros of our size. Thoeming said The Gazette ran a story on 5-6 business owners and got the feeling that 2020 wasn't as bad as what they had feared and contributed a lot of that to our community's local first mindset. Dusek said there will be a release of funds for bars and restaurants through the Iowa Finance Authority as well.

### **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 5:20 p.m.