



**Cedar Rapids Downtown SSMID Commission Minutes
September 28, 2022 | 3:00-4:30 p.m.
Economic Alliance Conference Room A**

Present: Wendi Cigrand, Dave Drown, Jon Dusek, Emily Ellingson, Darryl High, Jeff Janssen, Ted Kepros, James Klein, Sarah Madsen, Randy Rings, David Sorg, Craig Stephan, Joe Terfler

Absent: Joe Ahmann, Jake Ryan

Staff: Jessica Komisar, Doug Neumann, Jesse Thoeming, Phil Wasta, Nikki Wilcox

Welcome, Introductions & Call to Order

Ellingson welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m.

Approval of May Minutes

Madsen moved approval of the July minutes with Dusek seconding. The July minutes were unanimously approved.

BLOCKtoberfest Recap

Thoeming provided a recap from the September 16 Blocktoberfest which took place primarily in the intersection of 3rd Street and 2nd Avenue and in partnership with the Fun Not Fancy restaurant ownership group. Highlights include:

- 2,959 paid attendees
- \$14,780 raised for local non-profits
- \$37k spent in expenses, \$35k sponsored by DT SSMID
- Already talks and interest of doing more outdoor music/events Downtown next year. Commissioners agreed that it will be important to move it around (Kingston, by Iowa Brew Co, etc.) to keep it fresh
- Commission discussed quantity of events next year and felt that three-four would be sufficient.
- Thoeming has been in talks with Freedom Festival for a potential dual partnership and to kick off their celebrations
- Important to send a memo to all Downtown bar/restaurant owners if they have interest in "hosting" or being a part of the partnership similar to the Fun Not Fancy group, to reach out. This will help spread the love to other stakeholders.
- Ellingson added we need to be clear on duties of a partnership – branding, sponsorship, what are expectations, etc.
- **Commissioners to tap into their organization's teams for event task force members**

Race for the Space

The Race for the Space finalist event had approximately 100 people in attendance at The Harmac to learn more about the three finalists: ExCel Childcare Services, KETO Kitchen and WeDream Cyber Café. Judges included Ellingson and Stephan alongside John Osako, Melissa McCarville and Maurice Davis. Each finalist had 10 minutes to present and 10 minutes to answer questions. It was a unanimous decision amongst all five judges that the grand prize of \$20k towards one of the Race for the Space Downtown locations/buildout and other perks was to be awarded to KETO Kitchen. The other two finalists won \$10k – to also go towards a Downtown location and a one year lease. Wilcox said Darcel with

ExCel Childcare has already been approached by other businesses, which is encouraging to hear. It will be important to follow the success of KETO Kitchen and document his progress as a way to market this program if it repeats itself.

Alleyway Project Status

Klein and Madsen provided an update from the conversation with UFG and Alliant regarding the alleyway behind UFG. UFG has sold the building on 1st and 1st to the City to be used for training and will be used 24 hours a day, with automobile traffic in the alleyway. It would be a major liability to attract people to this alleyway when its in use and important it stays open for training purposes.

Thoeming presented a rendering video of the alley between US Bank and the parking lot in front of TCR. The rendering shows this space being turned into an entertainment area with seating options, lighting and artwork under the skywalk and into the parking lot. This alley was chosen for the rendering because of the work that has been done on the other side of 3rd Street towards Bricks. Thoeming said the costs from November 2021 for this project was \$240k. Commissioners discussed this project in depth including type of seating and how to combat public safety issues similar to Greene Square.

Next, Thoeming presented images of the alleyway next to Pub 217 that goes behind Need Pizza and Rock Bar which is by far one of the more unsightly alleys Downtown due to the high usage of it from the restaurants and their debris and grease. Thoeming received a bid from ABC disposal to consolidate the dumpsters to 4 very large receptacles on both sides for daily pick-up. The other phase of cleaning this alley up is to work with Miron Construction to repave it, with the understanding that the City would reimburse for it on the back-end. Dusek added it will be important to consider grease traps. There are four property owners that touch this alley that would need to be included in conversations regarding the repaving. Dusek said the disposal upgrades will be starting in the spring, after meeting with bar and restaurant owners.

Dusek moved to approve Thoeming to go to the City with repaving request sooner than later with High seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.

Communications Position

Thoeming shared the job description for the part-time Downtown Communication Specialist. Duties would include coordination, planning and management of Downtown content on social media platforms, website and electronic communications, develops and manages marketing strategy for social media, assist with coordination of Downtown events and programming and more. The Economic Alliance communications team would still be responsible for design and press releases. This position would be at around 20 hours per week with a \$25k salary. Once approved, the job description will go public for applicants.

Klein moved to approve the job description with Sorg seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.

2023 WOW Project

Thoeming said pre-pandemic, the Commission was in discussions about a light-up Downtown sign on the back of the Roosevelt, facing I-380. One of the hold-ups of the project back then was upgrades to the façade. Tuck-pointing work has begun and is supposed to be cleaned up around the holidays. Thoeming received a quote from Nesper signs for an illuminated Downtown Cedar Rapids logo sign for around \$90k. Terfler asked if we have received other bids for this light and if not, he recommended doing so. Commissioners discussed putting the logo on the building and if the logo changes in 10 years and wanted to brainstorm other things to put on the backside of the building.

After discussion of re-establishing the WOW Committee, it was determined that there is some duplication amongst several committees including WOW, gateways, alleyways, events, etc. all vying for the same dollars and agreed it would be most effective to combine into one Committee for these types of big and bold projects. **This committee will include Sorg, Jansen, High (specifically for gateways), Kepros, Rings and Toby Olsen (OPN). Commissioners still encouraged to spread the word to their teams to get non-Commissioners involved.** Ellingson said she would like to be included on the

invites if she's able to attend from the Chair perspective. Once the budget is finalized, the committee will know how much to spend and can better prioritize these several projects that have been discussed.

Commissioner Updates

Commissioners provided organizational updates.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 4:46 p.m.