



Cedar Rapids Downtown SSMID Commission Minutes
January 26, 2022 | 3:00-4:30 p.m.
Hybrid Meeting

Present: Jon Dusek, Dave Drown, Emily Ellingson, Darryl High, Jeff Janssen, James Klein, Linda Mattes, Jake Ryan, David Sorg, Craig Stephan, Joe Terfler, Fred Timko

Absent: Joe Ahmann

Guests: Mayor Tiffany O'Donnell, Casey Drew

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

Welcome, Introductions & Call to Order

High welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 3:32 p.m.

Approval of November Minutes

Klein moved approval of the November minutes with Sorg seconding. The November minutes were unanimously approved.

Welcome to Mayor O'Donnell

Klein introduced Mayor O'Donnell to the Commission and Mayor O'Donnell gave the Commission insights on her goals and passions as Mayor. Some highlights include:

- Concerned our future workforce won't want to stay here and their families will move with them. Nothing the City is doing wrong, but need to have a clear-cut vision.
- Three buckets of focus – infrastructure (Derecho improvements), accelerate flood control system work, streets (Wright Bros Blvd, Tower Terrace)
- Finding ways to nurture high school students to make sure we have a place they want to stay
- Downtown enhancements – want it to be a district people want to be to work, live and play, walkable/bikeable

The Commission provided other areas of improvement including increasing the number of people Downtown to where we were pre-pandemic, more focus on placemaking (shutting down core intersections for live music, alleyway enhancements), child care facility, filling vacant buildings.

O'Donnell said it takes a group like this, passionate stakeholders, to spark the drive and see things through in partnership with the City.

Economic Alliance – DT SSMID Financial Arrangement

Neumann said we used to review history of the SSMID and the relationship between the Economic Alliance and City to new Commission members, which included a brief financial breakdown structure. While the 2022 Downtown SSMID budget was reviewed and approved at the November 2021 meeting, Neumann reviewed how the budget is broken down:

- “Above the line” expenses include Streetscape Maintenance, Downtown Programs & Initiatives and Professional Services. These funds go through the Economic Alliance
 - Streetscape maintenance – consistent expense that happens year to year, in own category to run through Economic Alliance gives some flexibility for public sector bidding processes.
 - Downtown programs – most variable section, changes a lot from year to year, unspent can be carried over
 - Professional Services – direct staffing is precise number of exact wages and benefits of Thoeming, our two full-time maintenance crew workers, seasonal help and overtime. There is no mark-up and no profit margin for the Economic Alliance. Professional support and overhead include the handful of other Economic Alliance staff members that touch Downtown SSMID priorities. This also includes the depreciation expense on the vehicle and new lift liability insurance.
- “Below the line” expenses include Projects, Donations & Other Direct SSMID Expenses. These payments are made directly from the SSMID and doesn’t go through the Economic Alliance. Tends to be project based and one-time expenses that don’t have extra Economic Alliance staffing or programming behind it.

Dusek said moving past 2022 we won’t always have the \$340k carryover so how do we make that up with priorities and initiatives we want to complete. Thoeming said there are some expenses, such as the projector, that once operational or up and running we won’t have that expense every year. Commissioners asked what the process is to perhaps increase revenue from the City. Neumann said the amount the SSMID receives from the City is laid out in the MOU between the City and SSMID and is negotiated and can change year to year. The City has continued to be a big partner of the SSMID, examples include the façade lighting program and overall Downtown streetlights with Alliant Energy. Neumann added the number we negotiate with the City in the MOU is the value of the streetscape work that if the SSMID did not exist, the City would have to do instead of an overall contribution.

Mattes said she would recommend spending our carryover and completing projects before we ask for more money from the City. Drew suggested if the SSMID wants to negotiate a different revenue number from the City to start forming that ask over the next 3-4 months as the City forms their budget in the November-December timeframe.

Dusek asked how we can get the County more involved from a revenue standpoint. Wasta suggested that is approached as a core district ask and show them an example of how it’s done elsewhere can be helpful.

Armstrong Projector

Thoeming said we now have a contract in place with ImOn to be able to show sporting events or whatever ImOn can broadcast. Thoeming presented two proposals for projector art to the commission. One being AI generated light images/music that play on the amount of people in the area with a sensor. This artist has an exhibit similar downtown Iowa City. The second is a series of Cedar Rapids images and a sexual assault awareness campaign built in.

Mattes said she would rather not have the projector become a PSA billboard and likes images shown but recommends only Downtown Cedar Rapids images, not the whole community so we aren’t distracting people from what Downtown has to offer.

Sorg said while the colored lighting in the first one is interesting, what’s going to stop him is a NFL game. Klein suggested we look into company logo sponsors. Thoeming said advertisements may get dicey as it relates to the City ordinance but he and Caleb Woods with the Economic Alliance will make videos that feature some Downtown businesses at the top of each hour.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 4:38 p.m.