



**Cedar Rapid Downtown SSMID Commission Minutes**  
**November 18, 2020 | 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:** Joe Ahmann, Dave Drown, Jon Dusek, Emily Ellingson, Darryl High, James Klein, Linda Mattes, Joe Terfler, Fred Timko

**Absent:** Dawn Jaffray, Matt Miller, Andrew Morf, David Sorg, Craig Stephan,

**Guests:** Casey Drew – City of Cedar Rapids

**Staff:** Jessica Komisar, Anne Laugen, Doug Neumann, Jesse Thoeming

**Welcome, Introductions & Call to Order**

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

**Approval of September Minutes**

Mattes moved approval of the September minutes with Klein seconding. The September minutes were unanimously approved.

**FY '22 Levy Rate Approval**

Ellingson moved approval of keeping the \$2.75 levy rate for FY '22 with Terfler seconding. The motion was unanimously approved. Komisar to send an e-mail to Drew.

**2021 Budget & Priorities**

Thoeming presented the draft 2021 budget which included 2020 budgets and 2020 projections. Highlights include:

- Starting cash balance - \$653k
  - Reserves plus approximately \$83k overage from 2020 operating budget
- Streetscape maintenance – \$85k
  - 20 big belly trashcans – compact 10x more garbage and recycling and alert the team when they are at capacity. This budget is full lease - \$20k for the next 4 years, will be an ongoing budget item. Will still have City expense of emptying once per week but we wouldn't have as much overflow for our team to pick up as frequently.
  - 15 benches – purchased 70 at the time, but there are a few gaps we want to fill
- Parks, sidewalks & greenspace - \$50k
  - Met with public works engineer in the spring and identified sidewalks Downtown that are priority for repair for a 50/50 split between the SSMID and the City. \$75k total of repairs and we will pick up half (\$37k) and the rest of the budget is for Willis Dady partnership.
- Program amenities - \$100k
  - Incentive dollars for Downtown CR Dollars program
- Direct staffing - \$265k

- Funds for Thoeming, Dennis, Evan and Jim. Numbers will be finalized through Economic Alliance human resources manager in the next week or so. Increase due to moving Willis Dady partnership allocation.
- Professional support & overhead - \$125k
  - Funds for marketing and operational support for Downtown
- Branding & marketing - \$50k
  - Will be accounted for in other line items such as signage & wayfinding and banners
- Direct SSMID Expenses
  - Downtown WOW project - \$60k
    - High tech projector that will be installed on 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave to project light art images or videos on the Armstrong building
  - Parking system - \$40k
    - Parking system has been devastated by COVID and the Derecho and occupancy levels rapidly declined, making it difficult to make the debt payment to the City of Cedar Rapids. The SSMID at one point made contributions of up to 90k to the parking system but we kept it the same as last year and wanted to have the conversation on how the SSMID might help Park CR. Terfler said it's hard for him to know if this amount should be higher or lower without a sense of a plan or presentation from Park CR. High said this will be an item that would come back to the full commission with a formal ask and approval. Mattes said we shouldn't always be the reserve for the parking system but she is comfortable with \$40k.
  - Special projects - \$80k
    - Prior to pandemic we met with the Visual Arts Commission and they selected an artist duo for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave mural which was going to be our public art project for the year but with the pandemic, travel plans didn't work out. They have every intention to come as soon as it's safe to do so.
  - Signage & wayfinding - \$150k
    - Part of new brand, 18 locations at \$8,300 per sign
  - Grant programs - \$10k
    - Façade improvement program hasn't had traction in the last few years but have received an application from the Iowa Realty building for similar lighting technology as the Alliant Tower.
  - Gateways - \$200k
    - Another component to brand rollout strategy, will need to identify locations. They are costly but they are a positive amenity in districts across the country. High said this has been talked about for years and is an item that would come back to commissioners in a more defined way to approve.
  - Additional program support - \$20k
    - Looking to give it as additional support for the Economic Alliance

Mattes motioned to approve the 2021 draft budget with Timko seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.

### **Update on DT CR Dollars**

Thoeming said we have pivoted on the Downtown CR Dollars App and have created an online submission form housed on the Downtown website. The name, logo and philosophy is all the same. A consumer will submit \$150 worth of receipts from participating Downtown businesses and once approved on the backend, will receive two \$25 gift cards from participating business. Thoeming said we took the \$110k in reserves for the initiatives and gave \$1,000 to participating businesses for 40 \$25 gift cards. This program will run through January 31<sup>st</sup>.

### **Business Updates**

High – High Properties – was part of webinar this morning through the Economic Alliance and heard ESCO Group talk about importance of mental health during this time and High related it back to their employees and residents. Need to take the time to check in on everybody and be more patient.

Timko – Down to Earth Development – Popoli will be closing December 19. They have relied on corporate dining and catering events. Some restaurants might be holding out for more PPP support but customers still aren't eager to come

through the doors. Other than the restaurant, the new building will be complete mid-March and ImOn will be taking over the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of People's Bank building.

Ahmann – Ahmann Companies – A lot of people are still going out and doing things that they would normally do pre-COVID and that is causing issues and spread. Having some cases at the office that contributed to personal choices that affected others. Trying to be conservative while budgeting. NewBo residential occupancy rates are staying strong and have signed some small leases in the NewBo area. Up to 7 new leases in the Fountains area, 2 finalized leases in Peck's Landing. As for 1<sup>st</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> development, they have moved forward with revised concepts based on what the City and engineers are doing for flood control but now they are hearing other opinions from consultants. Working hard at re-tooling uses and getting some good headway. Meeting again on Tuesday with the City to show rough concepts and hoping to have plans complete before April so we are ready for any State assistance.

Ellingson – Lynch Dallas – moving along, business is more based on general need instead of economic conditions so they continue to have plenty of work. Office is open to staff but not public.

Klein – Cedar Rapids Bank & Trust – 50% staff in office. Thankful for being able to give back to community and partnering with Trees Forever and the City of Cedar Rapids for a tree drive in the fall and planning on one in the spring. Working with Greater Cedar Rapids Foundation and United Way on a revolving loan fund and working with FEMA to make sure there are no duplications. Has seen a lot of personal growth this year.

Dusek – Armstrong Center – holding out on office tenants, lost 1 fairly good sized one due to COVID. Have picked up a few small tenants. Food Court is full – One More Bite, Gringos and Mix. Good place to get take out or spread out. Trying to be optimistic and that by June/July have vaccine readily available and change attitudes.

Mattes – Alliant Energy – continue to have majority of office employees working from home.

Terfler – GreatAmerica – 550 employees Downtown pre-COVID and are at 80 right now. GreatAmerica is firm believer on having people together and it has been tough on their culture. Think that post-vaccine there will be more flexibility on working from home but majority will come back to office. GreatAmerica finances businesses when they acquire equipment and those purchases are at a much lower rate and financing is down 15%. GreatAmerica hasn't laid anybody off. Prior to COVID, they did some work on a second GreatAmerica building and that was put on hold but hope that when things return to normal that can be revisited.

Drown – Gibbs Lamb Drown – 10 employees in the office, 2 have contracted COVID but it seemed it was at a time where they were out of the office and it didn't spread to other employees. Not as busy with commercial deals but industrial market is chipping away steadily. Trying to be accommodating to tenants with rent concerns and have been sympathetic to landlords and loan modifications.

Drew – City of Cedar Rapids – essential workers such as public works, streets, police, fire, are still coming in but admin work is being done from home. Buildings aren't fully open yet. As cases increase, City employees that have contracted COVID aren't getting it from being at work but from family members or social outings. Drew said March through end of October had as many cases as November 1 through now.

## **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 5:10 p.m.