Czech Village New Bohemia SSMID Meeting Minutes
February 21, 2019 | 8:30 – 10:00 a.m. | Alliant Energy Classroom at the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library

Present: Craig Byers, Lijun Chadima, Jessalyn Holdcraft, Stephanie Jelinek, Pam Lewis, Chad Pelley, Ana McClain, James Piersall, Bob Schaffer

Absent: Pam Lewis, Bob Schaffer

Guests: Scott Kruger, Kathi Nelsen

Economic Alliance Staff: Jessica Komisar, Melissa McCarville, Doug Neumann, Audrey Wheeler

Welcome and Call to Order
Byers welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

Approval of Consent Agenda
Holdcraft moved approval of the December minutes with Piersall seconding. The December minutes were unanimously approved.

Holdcraft moved approval of the November financials with Piersall seconding. The November financials were unanimously approved.

Communications Plan Update
McCarville stated the Communications sub-committee met in January to discuss the details of the communication plan that was approved by the commission. This sub-committee consists of McClain, Holdcraft, Lewis and Chadima. McCarville stated the sub-committee didn’t change much but did decide on some details. Facebook will be the social media platform used with 1-2 posts per week. The creation and design of a new logo is a lower priority for the sub-committee and will revisit at a later time. The first priority project will be the 2018 Annual Report. This report will be sent out via mail to businesses and property owners in the district prior to them receiving their tax bill. Another communications project is to create the e-mail list for those who will be receiving electronic communications, which is being worked on by Komisar. McCarville explained that it’s illegal to send mass emails without opt-in permission from the recipient, so we need a process to get people to agree to the emails. It is legal to get permission by sending an e-mail from a personal e-mail address or by sending a note from Craig when the Annual Report is mailed directing them to the opt-in page on the Economic Alliance website.

McCarville shared a rough draft of the 2018 Annual Report in order for the commission to get a feel for type of content, layout, color and size. Below are items to edit, remove, keep or add to the report, based on discussion and ideas of the Commission:

Remove/Edit
- Remove “Fiscal Year” from the front page
- Boundary map on the back is helpful but try to make it more prominent
- Tri-fold layout is nice but possibly go bigger than 8.5” x 11”
Keep/Add

- Allocation of breakdowns in percentages
- Listing SSMID commission members
- Achievements and what to expect
- Testimonials/Quotes, specifically regarding the banner program
- Economic Alliance becoming the SSMID’s fiscal agent
- Photos from 2018 – Pratt stated the City Communications Team would be happy to let us use any of their images

Connect CR Discussion
Byers stated he is part of the steering committee for the Connect CR project and wanted to discuss with the commission if the SSMID would be willing to donate funds to the project. Byers initial thought was to give $5k for the next 5 years. Holdcraft stated she is torn on this decision because there are possibly other projects in the district that would like funding from the SSMID, but they feel like they might not have the permission to request it and that it could set a dangerous precedent. Neumann asked what level of giving would get the SSMID name on the bridge because it could be an important list for the SSMID to be included on for purposes of understanding its role in the district. Byers stated he believes it is at $15k. Neumann stated he doesn’t believe that either of the other SSMIDS would be donating to this project but that the Downtown SSMID is looking at the connection between the two anchors which runs through Downtown, and possibly doing their own kind of project such as a mural or lighting. Pratt suggested hosting a fundraiser and invite property owners in the SSMID in coordination with the Connect CR steering committee. Piersall stated $5k for 5 years does seem like a large percentage of our potential revenue. Pelley added he doesn’t know if there are other projects on the horizon of this magnitude and believes it will be a bigger draw to more people than the locals. Pelley stated if we don’t donate, it might reflect poorly on the district.

Byers stated he will find out what the different fundraising levels are in the meantime. No decision was made at this meeting regarding donating to the Connect CR project as Byers will do more research on what the fundraising levels look like and potentially bringing in a different steering committee member in order to remove himself from the discussion to avoid a conflict of interest.

Façade Improvement Program Potential
Neumann said he and Byers received an email from Jasmine Almoayed with the City of Cedar Rapids who serves on the Downtown and MedQ SSMID Façade Improvement Committees. This program gives property owners who want to make visible, front-facing enhancements to their buildings grants in order to complete those projects. Examples of what’s been done in the other two districts are signage, lighting, historic renovation and preservation. The grant amounts are at $10k max and the City would match the SSMID’s contribution. The application process has already been established and the rules could be identical to the other districts which would make this an easy program to get up and running. Neumann stated the SSMID’s budget that has been set does not have this program included but by early Fall, we will be discussing next year’s budget and what we want to be a priority.

McClain stated Mainstreet has a component of this same type of program. Kruger confirmed they do provide a building improvement grant which includes a committee with architects to do pre-designs. The maximum for these grants are around $60k but the majority of the projects that have been completed have been closer to $5k. Kruger added this could be a good opportunity for the SSMID to match what’s already being matched by the City. Neumann stated this is a good topic of strategic conversation that should be brought back up late Summer/early Fall and have more discussion with Kruger on how we can work together.

Commission Terms
The commission reviewed their current terms. The following individuals’ first three-year term will be expiring in June of 2019: Byers, Jelinek, and McClain. It was determined that we need to amend our bylaws to state commission members will serve no more than two 3-year consecutive terms and to state the commission is to include 9 individuals. The only
exception made to the two 3-year terms is for those who’s first term when the commission was created wasn’t a full 3-years.

Other Business
Neumann stated in order to forecast for future meetings and agendas, if you have big picture ideas and want to plan for guest speakers, presentations, etc. to send to Komisar. Chadima stated people ask if the SSMID is responsible for the snow removal in the district. Neumann stated the streetscape items the SSMID is in charge of is winter decorations in planters, watering of planters and the banner program. The Downtown SSMID has taken to funding the efforts of snow removal from the crosswalks in their district and this are conversations we could grow into.

Neumann stated there are ongoing conversations with Cargill and Ingredion. Ron Corbett with the Economic Alliance has taken some of the lead on the effort with Cargill on a weekly basis. Byers stated he was included on a meeting with Cargill and said it was good to listen to them on what their railyard project looks like. Byers added after their project hopefully gets approved, the SSMID can get some support from them.

Holdcraft discussed the ongoing safety concerns on 12th Street and how there are no plans between now and late 2019/2020 to make it safer for pedestrians to cross and navigate. The big push for this plan is to get a crosswalk installed this spring. The pop-up crosswalk from Mainstreet that connected NewBo Market and the Geonetric building did show some success as drivers were slowing down. Neumann wondered whether a four-way stop might be recommended there, as it has for numerous downtown intersections. Pratt stated she can follow-up with the traffic department in the interim on ways to improve this issue.

Mainstreet Exec search
Kruger stated Mainstreet has received approximately 40 applicants for their open position and hopes to narrow that down to the top 5 or 6. Best case scenario is to have this process complete by mid-March.

Adjourn
The meeting was adjourned at 9:53 a.m.