



Cedar Rapid Downtown SSMID Commission Minutes
March 25th, 2020 | 4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Conference Call

Present: Emily Ellingson, Darryl High, Dawn Jaffray, James Klein, Linda Mattes, Matt Miller, Randy Rings, Craig Stephan, David Sorg, Joe Terfler, Fred Timko

Absent: Dave Drown, Andrew Morf

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

Welcome, Introductions & Call to Order

Mattes welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Approval of January Minutes

High moved approval of the January minutes with Klein seconding. The January minutes were unanimously approved.

COVID-19 Downtown Impact Support Plan

Thoeming said he would like to utilize 20% of our reserves, which is approximately \$100k, for some sort of a Downtown business support plan for businesses in the categories of bar, restaurant, retailer or services (i.e barber or salon). Thoeming said there are about 60 businesses in the SSMID boundary that fall into one of those categories. The original thought was to give each of those businesses \$1-\$3k but Commissioners didn't think that would move the needle much for most businesses. Neumann said in 2016, the SSMID gave small businesses recovery grants of up to \$5k, though many took less than that amount, and our goal was to help cover payroll expenses and inventory loss at the small business level. Businesses had to show us their loss of payroll or inventory and we made that threshold bar quite low for participation. Neumann said he could find the details to that program if the SSMID wants to consider something similar.

Timko suggested a "Groupon" type of program where businesses offer 50% off and we would sell them until our funding runs out. Mattes noted that it might not get evenly distributed that way. Thoeming said Downtown Iowa City will be implementing a gift card program where a consumer purchases \$X amount from a downtown business, they will receive a gift card for \$X to use at any other downtown business. Timko asked if we did a similar program, would we do it now or would it be geared toward recovery? Ellingson said she likes the idea of doing it now. Jaffray said she likes the idea of putting money into this program now but potentially saving some to use on the back end. Mattes would like to form a sub-committee to work on the details of this program and to get it moving. Rings, Mattes, High, Timko and Klein volunteered to be part of the committee. Mattes made the recommendation to spend \$100k to support downtown businesses during the pandemic. Ellingson motioned to approve the recommendation with Rings seconding. The recommendation was unanimously approved.

Updates from Commissioners

Mattes and Alliant – 1,700 office employee are currently working from home with the exception of a 50% rotation for call center and dispatch employees. There are approximately 120 employees who are at home due to travel quarantines, no day care, or in some way, got exposed but nobody has been diagnosed with the virus within the company. (Note: on Friday 3/27 our first employee was diagnosed with COVID-19 in Cedar Rapids) Alliant is not disconnecting, charging late fees or reconnect fees.

Stephan and Iowa Brewing Company – last week had to layoff taproom staff and 2/3 of business is gone. They are down to a handful of managers and made a big leap this week to start a home delivery service. The first day had 12 deliveries and with exposure from the media there were 38 deliveries today but they are unsure how long they can maintain that.

Terfler and GreatAmerica – out of approximately 600 employees, 20-25 are still in the office and the rest are working from home. They have communicated to employees they will remain on payroll and will keep them busy. GreatAmerica provides finance when purchasing equipment and they have been seeing equipment sales decline during this time. Terfler said he feels good about where they will be when this is said and done and there are no employees that have indicated they have been diagnosed with the virus.

Timko and Down to Earth Development – the real estate side of businesses has held up so far and they will be moving forward with a \$4M project as soon as they receive the permit. Popoli is currently doing curbside pick-up and has changed their menu to include family style dinners. They are seeing about 10% of what's normal in daily revenue.

Klein and CRB&T – it is currently too early to tell as their performance is dependent on their clients and key industries who are already hurting such as retail and hospitality. They have a 90 day loan referral program that will be put into action later this week or early next. They had a great first quarter but unsure how the second quarter will turn out.

Ellingson and Lynch Dallas – they are staying busy, most employees are working from home but they do have shifts established for those that go into the office. They are continuing to move forward.

Miller and Select Structural – as part of the design community, they are often involved in the front end of construction projects and they are still seeing local projects breaking ground this Spring and Summer which is a positive. Miller is optimistic that when this does pass, they will be full throttle back in action.

Sorg and OPN – they have about 105 across 4 locations working from home with Cedar Rapids and Des Moines having the biggest offices. Most projects are moving forward, and some are on hold. They are reaching out to employees for check-ins and they did a companywide Zoom call and told them to order take-out dinner for their families on OPN. Sorg has been supporting local restaurants by selecting one per night with his family. OPN will also be moving forward with hiring 3 full-time soon to be graduates.

High and High Properties – not seeing much stress yet on residential side but seeing some from local businesses who were forced to shut down. Some employees are working remotely, and some are in the office in shifts.

Jaffray and UFG – 1,200 staff across the country and 600 are in Cedar Rapids. 75-100 of the Cedar Rapids employees are working at any one time in one of the six buildings, most are working from home. They are practicing social distancing and hand washing/sanitizing and don't have anybody infected at this point. Some financials including stocks and investment portfolio has taken a hit.

Rings and TrueNorth – all 300 employees are working from home with only 6-7 employees rotating through the office. They have been fortunate to have a plan in place from flood experience. No employees have tested positive and they are fortunate they haven't seen any direct impacts other than a lot of questions.

Neumann and The Economic Alliance – our work is all about you and we continue to be here for our members. Most events, programs and services have changed but it its place has been one to one outreach which has shown to be effective. We have done outreach to almost every member and have had some substantive conversations. Continue to stay coordinated with the cities of Marion, Hiawatha and Cedar Rapids on mass communication messages. Neumann said if anybody needs help with the different loans available or assistance programs to reach out to Mike Lukan or Laura Thomas as they are our subject matter experts. We are still fully staffed and went through with the new hire of Ellie Evans, Event Planner. Moving forward with logistic preparation for the Farmers Market though we are aware there may be date changes that need to happen. The Downtown parking board agreed to waive monthly parking fees for April and will be enforcing on-street for ordinance issues. Randy asked if there is a spot online where we can get better visibility to the restaurants that are offering take-out. Neumann said we do still have the Dine, Dwell, Do list that's Downtown

focused but the changes are extremely fluid at this point. Jesse said there is a new Facebook group focused on local restaurants offering take-out and curbside to-go (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/238242870660873/>) Rings asked if we could get that linked on our site. Neumann said we could get that included easily, it just might not be the easiest to find.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.