



**Cedar Rapid Downtown SSMID Commission Minutes
November 28, 2018 | 4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance**

Present: Casey Drew, Dave Drown, Emily Ellingson, Darryl High, Chris Lindell, Linda Mattes, Matt Miller, Randy Rings, David Sorg, Craig Stephan, Joe Terfler, Fred Timko

Absent: Dawn Jaffray, Andrew Morf

Guests: Jon Rouse – Park Cedar Rapids, Whitney Kraus – United Fire Group, Michaela LeClair & Jeff Morrow – Anderson Bogert, Jennifer Selby - City of Cedar Rapids

Staff: Ellen Bardsley, Jessica Komisar, Melissa McCarville, Jesse Thoeming, Phil Wasta

Welcome, Introductions & Call to Order

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

Consent Agenda

Timko moved approval of the consent agenda with Lindell seconding. The consent agenda was unanimously approved.

Parking Update

Rouse provided the commission with an update from ParkCR including:

- 2018 is projected to be the most profitable year with a \$1.3 million net operating income
- Maintenance projects completed include concrete, expansion joints, elevator replacements, skywalk updates, drain replacements, system-wide painting, and more
- New projects include 12 electronic vehicle charging stations in partnership with Alliant Energy, license plate recognition system fine-tuning, discounted rooftop parking, art installations, technology trials, new mobile payment provider which will be launching December 3rd
- Citation revenue down by 8%, net revenue is projected to be up by 12-15%
- 2018 was one of the busiest years for event parking revenue

Rouse stated that off-street parking occupancy is at some of the highest numbers it has been with 80-90% occupancy.

Mattes asked if the new hotels that will be coming Downtown will provide their own parking or if guests will be expected to utilize our ramps. Rouse stated there will be some on-site parking and some will need to use our ramps. The majority of the parking will be during the evening in which our ramps will have plenty of availability. ParkCR will be able to coordinate with the hotels to determine transient vs. monthly parkers. Terfler asked at what point do we start the discussion of another ramp. Rouse stated those conversations are already taking place.

Rouse reviewed on-street occupancy survey information which shows where the key areas are where people are parking. Ideally, occupancy would be at 80% to ensure turnover for businesses however there are several areas in the core of downtown and on the west side that are at 85% or higher.

Rouse presented the outcome of a new technology pilot that began a couple of months ago. Sensors were installed in the road at some parking spots and can relay real-time information for each spot. You can see if a spot is available, how long a vehicle has been in the spot, and much more. This trial has been successful and leads to a bigger conversation

about becoming a smart city. Theoretically, this information would be pushed out to the public so individuals coming downtown would know where the available spots are at.

Terfler stated the lack of secure bike parking has become an issue for some and asked if this is an initiative that employers or the Downtown SSMID could help move forward. Rouse stated there have been discussions around this concern, but nothing has come of it yet so having more groups involved could assist with pushing it forward.

Lindell asked what the life expectancy is on the 5 Seasons ramp. Rouse stated they just put over \$1 million into the ramp and there is still more that needs to be done.

3rd Avenue Update

LeClair stated the 3rd Ave Construction Project will create a consistent 2-way network from the bridge to 19th Street. The majority of the work will be from 1st to 5th Street and will include:

- Mill and overlay
- Bump outs and ADA compliant sidewalk ramps
 - 3rd Street will not get bump outs, but ramps will be made ADA compliant
- 4 quadrant gates at the railroad crossing
 - This is different than the medians at 2nd, 4th and 5th Avenues
 - Railroad will come in and install the gates
 - 3rd Avenue at the crossing will likely be closed for a portion of time during the installation
- Removing brick crosswalks at 2nd Street
 - This will require 2nd Street to be closed for a portion of the work

2019 Budget & Tax Rate Approval

The commission discussed the possibility of replacing benches downtown in 2019. Mattes stated we could work with the City to find out if they require a certain style that we would have to use. Sorg added that whichever style of bench we choose to present to the City, it would be best to match and speak the same language as the style of the street lights. Based on Thoeming's research, if we purchased 100 benches at \$358 per unit, that would cost the SSMID approximately \$40k and that is based on an estimate on how many benches there currently are downtown. The commission agreed that whatever bench style is chosen, it needs to be a style that will be low-maintenance that will last. It was also discussed that replacing trash cans could be another possibility. Thoeming stated he has been researching options for new trash cans as well.

Mattes stated we do have flexibility in the proposed budget, but the City Council has talked about the importance of maintenance and beautification projects and that we need to contribute to projects that will improve our district. Rings motioned to approve the budget with Timko seconding. The budget was unanimously approved.

Rings motioned for approval of keeping the tax rate at the maximum of \$2.75 per \$1k with Lindell seconding. Keeping the tax rate at \$2.75 was unanimously approved.

Branding Initiative

Kraus, who is a project manager with the corporate marketing team at United Fire Group, provided the commission with a presentation on their thoughts on how Downtown should be branded as. The largest obstacle their team ran into during this process was how to incorporate the different districts such as NewBo, Czech Village, and the MedQuarter. Kraus suggested we distinguish Downtown and the other district as "Greater Downtown" and brand Downtown as the "Central District." Kraus also presented logo options based on this concept. Alliant Energy and Great America submitted logo ideas based on the district remaining being called "Downtown".

Mattes stated the commission needs to assign a sub-committee to discuss if we want to rename our district and if so, then to what and if we want to change the logo. Rings, Sorg and Ellingson agreed to be part of that committee and Thoeming will lead the organization and communication of the future committee meetings.

WOW Project Committee

Mattes stated we have had a lot of discussions about murals, art sculptures and alleys and it would be best to create a sub-committee to review 2-3 project options and bring the information to the full commission with more details. High, Rings, Timko and Sorg agreed to be part of the WOW Project Sub-Committee and Thoeming will lead the organization and communication of the future committee meetings.

Other Business

Mattes shared with the commission that Alliant has gone paperless and would like to see the same efforts for this SSMID. The commission agreed to go paperless next year and to bring laptops to the meetings to review agenda items. Komisar will send agenda packet information as individual attachments instead of a combined PDF moving forward.

Mattes stated the executive committee has been drafting guidelines for what executive members can approve without the entire commission present. It was recommended that it would be anything up to \$25k. The guidelines will be passed at the next meeting.

The commission agreed that bi-monthly meetings from 4-5:30 p.m. at the Economic Alliance works well and the Economic Alliance will send calendar invites by the end of the year.

Bardsley provided an update for the 2nd Downtown Sucks video that focused on Events. Bardsley stated there are two more videos to be released as part of this campaign and she is projecting the Small Business video to launch mid-December which will be targeted more towards just Cedar Rapids and the Working video in January which will have more of a workforce attraction goal and will be targeted to other areas besides Cedar Rapids. Bardsley stated the Events video gained more views than the first video which was about Housing. The commission requested performance numbers from the Events video which include the following:

Video Launch + Advertising

- Posted on Sunday, September 16
- Uploaded on Facebook and Instagram and posted on Twitter via video platform Vimeo
- Social media advertisements placed on Facebook and Instagram
- Facebook ads targeted both within Cedar Rapids and outside of Cedar Rapids in the MSAs of Dubuque, Waterloo, Des Moines and Ames
- Instagram ad targeted inside Cedar Rapids

Video Views

- Facebook unpaid – 27,312
- Facebook paid, inside Cedar Rapids – 19,486
- Facebook paid, outside Cedar Rapids – 97,583
- Instagram unpaid – 318
- Instagram paid – 9,865
- Twitter, via Vimeo – 3,341
- **TOTAL: 157,905**

Viewer Demographics

- In the first video about Housing, the largest amount of views came from Women aged 25-34 across all platforms.
- This time around, there was a bit of a shift. On Facebook, the largest amount of video views come Women aged 18-24. On Instagram, Men aged 18-24 were the most popular audience with Women aged 65+ representing the second largest amount of video views.
- Similar stats not available on Vimeo or Twitter.

Social Media Platform Growth

- Facebook likes from Sept. 15 – now: 11% increase
- Twitter followers from Sept. – now: 15% increase
- Instagram followers from Jan. – now: 42% growth

Website Results

- Landing page, DTCRSucks.com, refreshed with relevant Downtown events facts and figures like number of event venues, attendance of 40,000 at Market After Dark, etc.
- Page views from Sept. 16 – now: 547
- Average time on page: 2 minutes 13 second

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 5:35 p.m.