Czech Village New Bohemia SSMID Meeting Minutes
October 18, 2018 | 8:30 – 10:00 a.m. | Alliant Energy Classroom at the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library

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

Absent: Lijun Chadima, Pam Lewis

Guests: Kathi Nelsen – community member, Jennifer Pruden - Czech Village New Bohemia Main Street District

Economic Alliance Staff: Ron Corbett, Jessica Komisar, Melissa McCarville, Doug Neumann

Welcome and Call to Order
Byers welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m.

Approval of Consent Agenda
Holdcraft moved approval of the minutes with Jelinek seconding and all in favor.

Budget
Neumann stated the proposed budget reflects the two main priorities that were decided on as a group: Streetscape and a Strategic Communication Plan. Parts of the budget Neumann clarified:

- “SSMID Tax” line item comes directly from the City and the “Other Revenue” line item consists of voluntary contributions
- To make sure we don’t lose track of the Czech Parking Lot set-aside fund, that is now separated into its own line item
- “Streetscape Maintenance” includes the maintenance, labor and operations
- “Projects” includes the banner program and any other projects that come up that we want to invest in

Neumann suggested changing the review cycle for financials to ensure financials are available each month and in time to be properly reviewed. For November meeting, for example, the commission will review the September financials because October might not yet be completed from the City. The commission also requested footnotes at the bottom of each month’s Profit and Loss, which will show the total funds available for:

- Czech Village Parking Lots (currently $2k from prior years, plus another $1k we’ll move at some point from FY 19 budget)
- Capital Improvement Fund (currently $5k from 2018 budget)
- Undesignated Funds (all other carryover cash in the account on June 30, 2018)

Shaffer stated he is opposed to spending the $5k that is budgeted for Communications, as he believes that should be a role of the Mainstreet program. Others agreed with Shaffer that the SSMID communications plan should not duplicate the Mainstreet communications but that communications different from Mainstreet are essential.

Holdcraft moved to approve the FY 2019 budget with Piersall seconding. The motion passed 6-1 with Shaffer opposed.
Communications Plan
McCarville took into account the feedback from the last meeting to provide updates and suggestions for the Strategic Communication Plan:

- Statement of Purpose has been updated
- Plan has been built out to provide more examples and ideas
- The audience has been identified as property owners and SSMID stakeholders. If we don’t share the work that this commission is doing, when it comes time for property owners to buy into the tax again, they might not fully be invested if they don’t know what that money is being used for.

Neumann said this would be something that would add value beyond what Mainstreet currently communicates. For example, the Brownfield grant program awarded Richard Sova $600k for his New Bohemia housing project. Communications to developers about deadlines and project rules that lead to major grants like this could be a sweet spot for SSMID communications. Communications related to advocacy about state level public policy is another example. Shaffer felt that because Mainstreet already has a process and mechanism in place to communicate, that perhaps the SSMID could provide content and help improve what Mainstreet does. Holdcraft stated we need to be independent in this effort and if our stakeholders do not hear from us, we will not exist in the future. Shaffer stated when he signed on to the SSMID, he believed the money he was giving would be used for more tangible projects, not communications. Byers added that he believes communicating to our stakeholders is tangible if it is benefitting them. Neumann stated that the goal with the communications plan is to enhance what Mainstreet provides and to work with them. If we merely duplicate what’s already out there, we’ve failed to have a true strategic communications plan. If we enhance and improve what out there, then that’s a win for everyone.

In the example e-mail from Holdcraft, she noted we are taking a different angle on items that Mainstreet already is reporting about. For example, Mainstreet might communicate about an event coming to the district but our communications would go deeper than that and discuss street closures and what property and business owners need to be aware of. Byers shared he had a conversation with Jennifer Pruden about our communication plan and he stated there was no pushback from her at this point, but both of them wanted to make sure we are all on the same page.

Byers asked for a motion to ask the Economic Alliance for a specific proposal on the costs and process for carrying out the proposed strategic communications plan. This motion only asks for a proposal; it is not approval to move forward to spend any money. That would come in response to the Economic Alliance proposal.

Holdcraft moved approval of Byers’ suggested next step. McClain seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

Banner Program Update
Holdcraft presented a draft of the Banner Program guidelines that she and McClain worked on and stated that it is somewhat based on the Downtown Banner Program. The actual costs for the banner installation and dismantle is approximately $10 per pole. Holdcraft added we do not include the cost of printing banners and the amount we would charge includes install and dismantle. Piersall asked how the Downtown District manages the program when people want to purchase a portion of an area and not put banners on all poles. Holdcraft stated they do it by block as they have more blocks than the Czech Village New Bohemia district does. In the drafted guidelines, it is stated, “Organizations are welcome to keep their banners in our storage facility at no extra cost.” Neumann questioned what this storage facility is and Holdcraft asked if this is something the Economic Alliance could assist with and added if they are not able to store banners, we could strike that from the guidelines.

Neumann voiced the concern for allowing for-profits to have banners in this program as it raises a host of issues. The majority of the commission agreed with this concern and thinks we should only stick with allowing non-profits to participate in this program, at least to start. We can always add to the program later. When discussing costs for the program, Piersall stated we should be paid in advance to avoid non-profits skipping out on payment. Byers noted that
after the SSMID pays the Economic Alliance for labor and other costs, the remainder of the payment would go to the SSMID. Neumann confirmed the Economic Alliance would do it at cost with no mark-up. Holdcraft asked if this should be a quarterly or monthly program and the commission believes it should be quarterly as that option allows less administrative work for us.

Piersall asked if there are banner quality standards? Neumann stated there are specs for other district banners including the size, needing to have a certain type of grommet and double-sided vinyl, etc. When we receive an inquiry from a non-profit, that is when we would send them these specs. Shaffer asked if the Czech Village Association wanted to have their branded banners installed, would they be able to and what would they have to pay and who has the legal authority over these light poles where the banners are located. The assumption is that the SSMID will control the banner program throughout the District, but Byers will reach out to the City to be sure it’s clear who “owns” the poles.

**Overall, there was no approval needed at the time as there are more details that need to be finalized and will be reviewed at next month’s meeting.**

**Winter Planter Update/CVA Request**

Neumann and Komisar shared the four options for winter planters in NewBo. These planters have four separate compartments and the options vary on number of evergreens and greenery in each compartment. Option number four was the popular choice among the commission which includes a tall evergreen in one of the compartments and greenery in the other three compartments in 10 of the planter boxes along 3rd street in NewBo. This option will cost the SSMID $2,100.

Lewis proposed in an e-mail to Komisar if the SSMID would be able to cover the expense of the Economic Alliance providing labor to install and dismantle holiday decorations in the Czech Village. These decorations consist of garland and one wreath on approximately 28 light poles. The Economic Alliance would be able to provide one maintenance crew employee to do this labor and estimate it would be done in one day and would charge $30/hour.

**Holdcraft moved approval of option number four for winter planters and the installation and dismantle of Czech Village decorations with McClain seconding and all in favor.**

**Ron Corbett Presentation**

Corbett shared with the commission that his work with the Economic Alliance is in Economic Development which has three buckets: 1) entrepreneurs/start-ups 2) maintaining existing businesses and industries and 3) business recruitment. Corbett stated he primarily focuses on the second bucket and believes this is where communities will see the majority of their growth. There is an active pipeline of projects in our community at this time including the $46M Collins Community Credit Union HQ, $73M Paramount Lot Tower, $51M Former Guaranty Bank Building, and more.

Corbett added to be completely flood protected once the flood system is in place, that opens up more opportunities for this district and encouraged the SSMID to begin communications with larger companies within the district, such as Cargill and Ingredion, to show them the value in participating in the SSMIDs efforts. Piersall stated when the SSMID was originally formed, we never thought those companies would want to be a part of it, but now that the SSMID is more established, what kind of leverage can we use to open up that conversation? Corbett gave the example of housing and how developing more housing in our district gives their employees a place to live that’s close by. Corbett also suggested using the SSMID’s political connections to the City as there will always be items that Cargill and Ingredion will want from them but it’s important that we give them a vision and a reason why they should be supporting this district.

Corbett stated if the SSMID wants more of a long-term planning discussion in the future to let him know.

**Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:11 a.m.