

**DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**  
**April 6, 2023**  
**APPROVED MINUTES**

Chairperson Mark Sochocki called the Informational Meeting to order at 8:01am.

Present: Chairperson Mark Sochocki, Committee Members John Milan, Jeff Mossel, Chad Nastoff, Charlene Nowlin, Bob Patterson, Paula Robison, Clinton Zimmerman

Also present: Director of Public Works Heather Bowman, City and DDA Treasurer Carla Staffen, Downtown Business Association (DBA) Director Josh Pyles, Director of Community Development Michelle Stenger, Deputy Clerk Karen Manoski

**GENERAL BUSINESS**

Mark Sochocki opened the Informational Meeting to discuss the goals and directions of the DDA for the coming year. At the January meeting there was discussion on replacement of historical direction signs welcoming people to Big Rapids. Bowman said the GFWC reached out, interested in helping. The DDA approved \$25,000, and the City Commission has approved \$50,000. Chris Cosper, FSU Architecture Professor has been contacted to possibly have FSU students design signs as their fall class project. Mossel suggested asking the welding program about the possibility of building an entry way.

Goals:

1. Sochocki asked the status of having a DDA director; Pyles said Mark Gifford does not see the benefit to having one but is open to discussion.
2. Zimmerman suggested grants to upgrade or fix facades on businesses downtown. Some of the facades are crumbling and very expensive to fix.
3. Mossel suggested the group continue to support efforts to make downtown look nice, twinkle lights, flowers, etc.
4. Fill open spaces downtown; form a recruiting committee to include The Right Place, the Chamber, and the DBA to draw businesses downtown. If Gotion comes to Big Rapids this could impact downtown greatly.

TIFF money to be spent on flowers, signage, twinkle lights, and marketing to recruit businesses downtown.

There being no further business, Chairperson Mark Sochocki declared the Information Meeting adjourned at 8:15am.

Chairperson Mark Sochocki called the Regular Meeting to order at 8:15am.

## **ROLL CALL**

Sochocki, Milan, Mossel, Nastoff, Nowlin, Patterson, Robison, Zimmerman  
New member Chad Nastoff was welcomed to the board.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mossel moved, seconded by Zimmerman that the minutes of January 5, 2023, regular meeting be accepted. Motion passed unanimously.

## **FINANCIAL REPORT**

Pyles stated Double up Bucks given at the Farmers Market will change this year; previously when they spent \$20, they got a \$20 match, it will now be spend \$10, get a \$10 match. This is the maximum amount to be given per day.

Carla sees no concerns as of today regarding the DDA's funding or budget.

**PUBLIC COMMENT** – None

## **BUSINESS**

**Welcome Signage** – discussion was held during the Informational Meeting

### **Donation Requests**

Two donation requests were submitted after meeting materials were sent; discussion was held on these now as Mossel had to leave the meeting early.

Pyles asked for \$5,000 on behalf of the DBA. DDA gave the DBA \$5,000 last year; the money was spent on radio ads. Their plan is to spend \$3,500 with Hearst, who will create a promotional story covering downtown and the businesses, will run for 4-6 weeks, and can be used on social media. The remaining \$1,500 will be split between three radio stations for ads in June (100.9), July (103.9), and August (97.3).

The Convention and Visitors Bureau shares all promotional materials created by the DBA.

Milan suggested the board donate \$8,000, with \$3,500 being spent on the Hearst campaign and \$1,500 each to be spent on ads with the three radio stations listed above.

Milan moved, seconded by Nowlin.

Yeas: Milan, Nowlin, Robison

Neas: Mossel, Sochocki, Nastoff, Patterson, Zimmerman

Motion denied

Pyles asked if the DBA must ask for the \$5,000 annually or if they can secure multiple years with one ask; Sochocki said it must be an annual ask.

In the matter of the \$5,000 donation to the DBA

Mossel moved, seconded by Patterson.

Yeas: Sochocki, Milan, Mossel, Nastoff, Nowlin, Patterson, Robison, Zimmerman

Neas: None

Motion passed unanimously.

The second request is from Larisa Draves on behalf of Big Rapids Community Tennis Association (BRCTA). BRCTA is asking for \$1,500 to purchase a storage shed for the new tennis courts in Hemlock Park to be used by BRCTA and the high school and middle school tennis teams. Chad Nastoff said Leadership Mecosta is looking for a project to fund; he will present this ask to their group Thursday, April 13. It was decided to table this request until the July meeting when Nastoff reports back from Leadership Mecosta. Mossel is going to update Larisa Draves.

### **Downtown Paving**

Bowman stated the City used marijuana funds to pave the parking lot behind Red Fox Market and the alley behind Jet's Pizza last summer. There is approximately \$90,000 left to be used this summer to pave the parking lot south of City Hall. The bids came in at approximately \$115,000, the project has been approved by the City Commission.

Paving will not be done on a Friday, if they pave on a Tuesday the Farmers Market will move across the street for that day. Parking is limited during the Farmers Market; Bowman will work with Public Safety to discuss replacing islands in the lot with additional parking spaces.

### **Farmers Market**

Pyles said there are new vendors, all but two of the previous vendors are returning. Friday's Farmers Market begins on May 5 with Tuesday's beginning May 23. Friday hours are 9:00am-3:00pm; Tuesday hours are 10:00am-3:00pm. There is a vendor meeting April 21, 2023, 10:00am at City Hall.

Mission Point is sponsoring again this year.

Promotions this year will include the zinnia give away, kids day, Spectrum Health, Health Fair.

Pocket Park Concerts and the Summer Concert Series have been scheduled.

There is discussion to do a Merchant Market on Saturdays in the City Hall parking lot; this would feature entrepreneurs' and be set up like a farmers' market. Possible pitch contest where prize money would be awarded to first, second, and third place winners to use as start up money for their business.

## **Downtown Flowers**

Bowman said the greenhouse reached out yesterday, the plants are growing and on track for delivery at the end of May. Bowman will reach out to Artworks to have the banners changed out at the same time.

## **MDOT Paving Tentative Schedule**

<u>STREET</u>	<u>START DATE</u>	<u>COMPLETION</u>
Perry Avenue	05/08/23	05/18/23
State Street	05/22/23	05/25/23
Maple Street & Third Avenue	05/30/23	06/06/23
Northland Drive	06/06/23	06/15/23

## **Other Business**

Robison stated the Band of Locals is meeting to discuss the art and craft festival that used to be held in Hemlock Park Labor Day weekend. This festival is now being held on North and South Michigan Avenue. The group is already getting vendor applications; if you know of anyone interested please let the Band of Locals know.

Mark Sochocki is retiring, this is his last meeting with the DDA. The group thanked him for his many years of participation and leadership and wished him well on his next chapter.

Next meeting is Thursday, July 6, 2023, at 8:00am.

There being no further business, Chairperson Mark Sochocki declared the Regular Meeting adjourned at 8:55am.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Manoski  
Recording Secretary