

Downtown Cheyenne Development Authority

June Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Thursday, July 16, 2020

Board Members: Bruce Heimbuck, Anthony Ortiz, Steve Borin, Jonathan Savelle, Katie Brady, Breck Collier, Astrid, Craig Kerrigan, Sara Weber

Staff: Amber Ash, Haylee Chenchar, Holly Scheer

Ex-Officio: Charles Bloom, City of Cheyenne; Patti Riesland and Julie Tucker, MCPD; Don Herrold, Cheyenne Historic Preservation Board

Public: Danica M Rozinsky, Glen Garrett, Robert Slaughter

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 pm by President Heimbuck.

Introduction of New Board Members: President Heimbuck welcomed the new board members and asked them to introduce themselves. Sara, Katie, and Anthony introduced themselves and shared their backgrounds.

Consent Agenda: Craig moved to approved the consent agenda which was seconded by Breck. Motion passed unanimously.

Director's report: Things are really busy. Holly has continued working on the business database and has identified 570 businesses. The audit is scheduled for the end of August with MHP. Summertime in the Streets was a huge success for the downtown merchants. Amber discussed the impacts on businesses, media coverage, and survey results.

She updated the board on the status of the Re-Ride program. Next week is Cheyenne Days, Legendary Nights. The DDA will have sidewalk sales and promos in conjunction with open container. 90 planters were removed with from downtown with the assistance of CFD.

Amber discussed the WY Cultural Trust Fund grant for History Under Foot and is working on ways to make up the funding shortfall. The pocket park successfully opened. Thus far, \$254 has been expended to open it. We gave \$1,000 sponsorship for this weekend's Paint Slingers event. Picnic tables are supposed to be painted as part of that.

Amber updated the board on the website, highlighting the new blog and the work on the directory. She also discussed the real estate listings that is forthcoming.

We received a \$20,000 grant from Laramie County Economic Joint Powers Board. Amber is working with the WY Arts Council to change it to a community paint by numbers mural due to COVID. We did not receive the AARP community challenge grant.

Amber continues to meet with developers. Project Onyx flies in two weeks and participates in a weekly conference call. She continues to meet with Rev Development. She is working with Steve to identify properties for small businesses that are interested.

Amber participated in the Main Street WY and MI event directors Zoom meeting. The Bell Building CIG application is in the board packet.

Amber answered questions from the board on the pocket park and the CIG/FIP grants.

President's Report: Bruce discussed Forward Greater Cheyenne annual report and explained its purpose to the board. He complimented Amber for her work with the WY Arts Council on the grant. He updated the board on Reed Avenue, noting it could be a game changer. Glen Garrett is working on the technical components of the DDA sign.

City of Cheyenne: The City continues to have a lot of development proposals. Lots of people want to see the downtown expand and take over vacant properties. Charles updated the board on the Hitching Post.

Historic preservation: Don said that the tile is done on the fountain and they want to have a grand opening. Other work remains on the project. The 2020 Christmas ornaments marketing campaign is starting. The ornament this year will feature the Depot and Big Boy train.

DDA initiatives: Amber updated the board on Councilman Laybourn's proposed sidewalk ordinance which will be discussed more fully later on the agenda.

Officer election: Craig nominated Bruce for President which was seconded by Steve. There were no other nominations. Steve nominated Jonathan for Vice-President which was seconded by Craig. There were no other nominations. Astrid nominated Steve as treasurer which was seconded by Breck. There were no other nominations. Steve nominated Astrid for secretary which was seconded by Breck. There were no other nominations. The board approved the slate of officers for FY21 unanimously.

CIG: Amber noted that \$3,944 CIG for curb and gutter for Bell Building was recommended for approval by the Design Committee. Robert Slaughter thanks the committee for their recommendation and support. He invites people to come see it when it's safe. Charles explained the site plan signs and city council unified development code. Astrid made a motion to grant the \$3944 which was seconded by Steve Borin. Motion passed unanimously. Julie with MCPD asked if there was parking with the building and Robert explained that the first floor is private parking.

Banking RFP: Bruce and Amber asked the board to consider releasing an RFP for banking services. Motion by Breck which was seconded by Anthony with no discussion. Motion passed unanimously with Craig abstaining.

Sidewalk Ordinance: Amber discussed Councilman Laybourn's proposed ordinance which would provide \$250,000 for curb, gutter, and sidewalk. This would make curb and gutter the city's responsibility in the District only and the sidewalk would still be the owner's responsibility. Amber will work with the city attorney, Pete, etc to refine the language. Amber asked the board to support this idea. History Under Foot will be coordinated as part of the curb and gutter replacement. The parade route will be prioritized for the first year with special consideration for ADA. This would lessen property owner costs and mobilization. The board discussed the need to maximize owner investment.

Katie moved to support the ordinance contingent on refinement as discussed which Breck seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Future direction of the DDA with Amber: Amber noted that the DDA is vulnerable due to reliance on city funds. The current budget calls for pulling \$250,000 from reserves and budget cuts. This assumes that the City receives the \$51,000 in CARES funding to distribute to the DDA otherwise we'll have to cut further or take additional funds out of reserves. The state has been hit hard with the drop in coal and the distributions to local governments may be reduced or eliminated in the future. We need to look at funding verses just hoping next year things will be better. Operating expenses require at least a \$280-290,000 budget, with the current mill levy at \$365,000. This leaves only \$75,000 for programming.

We need to diversify income streams and be self-sufficient and use the reserves wisely or they will be gone in 4 years. The FIP consumes \$135,000 per year or roughly 1/6th of our budget. It doesn't generate property tax which is what drives the mill levy and our funding. The FIP needs to be examined with ROI and using the money in a way that will increase property values and jobs and expand existing businesses. We can't continue to sustain things that don't return revenue to us.

Amber explained that many of the DDA's functions are Main Street; i.e. the flower pots, pocket parks, banners, etc. These aren't development activities and Amber wants to use the reserves to leverage ongoing revenue. She spoke with Kirk from EDA on potential grant opportunities and eligibility. Amber explained the match requirements, that they would need to leverage the layoffs that resulted from COVID, and the obligation to own the building for 20 years. This would be true development.

She has reached out to the city regarding the Reed Avenue rail corridor and our role in this project.

Steve would like to see a marketplace like Denver Central Market. This would help downtown. We would need to look for someone to donate the property. Katie also likes this idea and finds it sustainable. Craig noted that there are ways to leverage the reserves and have cheap funding for the investments. He has done this before with other nonprofits and will meet with Amber on this. The board supports exploring this. Astrid suggests approaching the owners of vacant buildings.

Amber explained that we are looking for other ways to add income streams. The commercial and residential listings will be a paid option on the site. We are also looking at banner ads and fees as additional income streams. This will not be big income but she hopes it will grow over time.

Bruce noted that we can look at DDA vs Main Street and how to expand the DDA District. Businesses have reached out and asked to be included but this is also more of a demand of our resources. It also could expand our revenue.

Astrid is impressed that we found so many businesses in our borders and wonders how many cars each requires, and how we can get those cars into the garage to open up street parking for business patrons.

Craig suggested a subcommittee to help Amber with this and Bruce agreed once things progress this could be a good idea.

COVID-19: Amber discussed the current office operating procedures in light of COVID and noted that it could be affected by school closures with the proposed rolling tiers. This could make things difficult for Amber and Holly who have small children. Bruce noted that the three staff members are very committed and he defers to Amber. He feels like they're getting their money's worth.

Astrid suggested a TV for the office window to engage passerby or phone initiatives. Amber explained that the phone would be forwarded to staff cell phones and a notice posted to the door. Facebook works very well. Bruce pointed out that the staff's health and safety is important.

Public Comment: Glen Garrett expressed his concerns with pausing the FIP program. He believes that the FIP does have a ROI based on the projects he has worked on and he expects his taxes to go up. FIP spawns more investment by people. This would take a more detailed study to see if the investment and taxes has a payback. It can generate new business and occupancy. He discussed Main Street and the resources on economic development and restructuring available through it. Main Street points to the need for revenue diversity as a 3-pronged approach: private, government, and grants. He said to think of the property owners when you think of the budget. Those are more revenue generating enterprises. Glen noted the rental project has potential. He's intrigued by the idea of a video monitor in the window and pointed to its success at the Hynds. Well placed screens hooked to a computer looping a PowerPoint or similar could convey a lot of information.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:25 pm.