



**DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY BOARD**

February 16, 2021

A regular meeting of the City of Petoskey Downtown Management Board was held through Zoom from virtual locations on Tuesday, February 16, 2021. The meeting was called to order at 7:05 P.M. and the following were:

Present: Chairperson Ben Slocum  
Gary Albert  
Dan Harris  
Noah Marshall-Rashid  
Brittany McNeil  
John Murphy, Mayor

Absent: Robin Bennett, Marnie Duse and Jennifer Shorter

Also in attendance were Downtown Director Becky Goodman, City Manager Rob Straebel and Downtown Promotions Coordinator Andi Symonds.

**Approve Consent Agenda Items**

Downtown Management Board members discussed the first item of routine business, the January 19, 2021 regular meeting minutes; acknowledgement of bills since January 19, 2021 that totaled \$26,232.18; the January expense and income reports as prepared by the Downtown Director. Upon motion made by Harris and seconded by Marshall-Rashid the consent agenda was approved. All in favor.

**Approve Request from City staff to Contribute Funds for Pennsylvania Park Sidewalk Widening Project**

Staff reviewed agenda memo, stating that a project that has been included in the CIP for a number of years is the widening of the sidewalk that borders Pennsylvania Park from its current 10' width to 14'; that the plan is the final element of the Greenway Corridor plan section that is located in Downtown; and that the widening of the sidewalk will be a definite asset to downtown by attracting a cluster of restaurants offering sidewalk dining and will also provide outdoor dining and seating opportunities in general. The Downtown Director further reported that Parks and Recreation Director, Kendall Klingelsmith, is currently writing a grant to the Land and Water Conservation Fund for \$150,000 to help pay for this \$300,000 project. The fund requires a 50% match (\$150,000) and the proposal is to split the matching funds three ways (\$50,000 City General Fund, \$50,000 Electric, and \$50,000 DMB). The DMB contribution would come from the Parking Fund. The Downtown Director further added that there is precedent for the DMB spending money in this fashion as the Board contributed \$85,000 to the purchase of the railroad right of way in 2011 and \$150,000 toward the cost of the new restroom facility in 2018. It was the recommendation of staff that the Board discuss this expenditure and vote to approve or not approve in support of the grant.

Board member comments included concerns about a recent change in the concept plan that included bump outs and seating walls that run along the sidewalk and were perceived to be an impediment to the flow from the building fronts to the greenspace. Another comment expressed that a pathway should be constructed from the Elks Parking Lot middle entrance plaza through the park as it has become a well-used path for pedestrians.

The City Manager stated that the grant deadlines would not allow time for working through the details of the concept before the application deadline.

A motion was made by Marshall-Rashid to contribute funds up to \$50,000 to the City of Petoskey's Pennsylvania Park sidewalk widening project with the caveat that the final plan would be vetted by the Design Committee and finally approved by the DMB. Seconded by McNeil. All in favor.

### **Review Summer Event Viability as Recommended by Downtown Staff**

Staff stated that three retailers were unfortunately missing and excused from the meeting and that it would be preferable to have everyone at the table to contribute to the discussion, suggesting that it might be preferable to limit any decisions about cancellation to the Downtown Live event which is new and which will require the most cost and planning. The Downtown Director went on to say that, decisions to hold or not hold events have become politically charged and any cancellation of an event is criticized by the public, many of whom will criticize if events are actually held. Because Downtown Live is a new event and would require massive promotion to give it a solid start, staff and the Events Committee recommended that the event not be undertaken this summer.

Board member comments included support for making this a non-issue by simply not holding Downtown Live; Mayor Murphy suggested that the City General Fund contribute to holding this event in the future as it is intended for the enjoyment of the community more than assisting with the economy; that some version of Sidewalk Sales needs to happen this year; and that a public art exhibit would encourage people to circulate.

Staff took temperature of the room to be that the direction given would be to pass on initiating Downtown Live in 2021 and to reboot it in 2022.

### **Reports by Downtown Management Board Committees**

**Marketing and Events Committees** – Symonds reported that the reports were in the packet and reviewed the highlights of Winter Weekend which was deemed successful according to merchant reports and foot traffic. The cold weather contributed to keeping the sculptures intact and staff was encouraged about the “placemaking” style of the event and will work to expand on that in coming years.

**Parking Committee** – Director Goodman stated that free parking had ended on February 1. All parkers were given a warning notice through the handheld software before they were given an actual ticket. She further reported that she and the City Manager had met with the County Administrator about the proposed parking platform at Division and Lake Streets. The County staff is in favor of working together on the project but will need to make some financial decisions regarding their priorities. Creative financing will need to be implemented. Committee meeting notes were included in the packet.

**Beautification** – Director Goodman reported that there has been a lot of heavy snow that will mean some large snow removal bills will be coming in and that there will also be a substantial snow blower repair bill to pay.

Façade grants were rolled out and there is more interest than usual.

**Downtown Economic Enhancement** – Director Goodman reported that there is a new tenant for the former B Jeweled location which is a business from Colorado that seems to have a nice fit for downtown; that Talulu Beauty Lounge has vacated their Redding owned storefront to move into a lower rent location; that City Council talked about their Economic Development plan at their meeting last night; and that WineGuys and High Five Spirits had received their permits for the Social District. The Downtown Director went on to say that a limited amount of Facebook criticism was received about the Social District over the Winter Weekend but that it was handled nicely by the commenters and staff did not have to get involved; also that she had been interviewed by NPR which gave her a great opportunity to address this and to point out all of the good things about the district.

**Report from City Staff**

The City Manager reported that the Little Traverse Wheelway detour is still being worked through by several local units of government with MDOT at the table to help with temporary safety mitigations; the master plan has gone out for public comment and the next step will be adoption by City Council; RRC priority sites are being discussed by Council and there is potential of adding Michigan Maple Block and the Bay and Howard Boutique Hotel project; Council will be revisiting the Action Plan in early March; and the City is submitting an ice rink pavilion roof grant, grant for new fueling system at the marina, and DNR Trust Fund grant to purchase property neighboring the Skyline Trail for recreational use.

**Other Miscellaneous Comments**

Marshall-Rashid commented that City staff who are negotiating with the County need to be negotiating strongly with the good of the DMB and its parking needs when it talks about the priorities of the City and to be careful not to give mixed messages about what projects are the most important to the City. The City Manager agreed and assured that this was being done.

Chair Slocum advised that the message of not using the Skyline Trail purchase for housing needs to be tempered when the City has stated that it is in a housing crisis.

Marshall-Rashid commented that the development of the Skyline Trail for recreation would be a great benefit to Downtown economically.

**Public Comments**

As there were none, the meeting adjourned at 8:15 P.M.