



DOWNTOWN MANAGEMENT BOARD

April 27, 2021

A regular meeting of the City of Petoskey Downtown Management Board was held in the City Hall conducted through Zoom, on Tuesday, April 27, 2021. The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM, and the following were

Present: Chair Ben Slocum, Petoskey, Emmet County, MI
Gary Albert, Petoskey, Emmet County, MI
Jennifer Shorter, Springvale Township, Emmet County, MI
Marnie Duse, Petoskey, Emmet County, MI
Robin Bennett, Saugatuck, Allegan County, MI
Mayor John Murphy, Petoskey, Emmet County, MI

Absent: Dan Harris
Noah Marshall-Rashid
Brittany McNeil

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

Approve Consent Agenda Items

Downtown Management Board members discussed the first item of routine business, the March 16, 2021 regular meeting minutes; acknowledgement of bills since March 16, 2021 that totaled \$49,462.53; the March expense and income reports as prepared by the Downtown Director. Upon motion made by Albert and seconded by Shorter the consent agenda was approved. All in favor.

Hear Beckett and Raeder Update on Streetscape Study including Downtown Lighting Schematic Design

Tim Knutsen, Beckett and Raeder, and Robert White, Illuminart, gave an overview of the work that had been done on the overall Streetscape Update Study. The first segment included lighting inventory findings, a confirmation of the areas of focus, proposed initial lighting concepts, and improvements for specific locations.

The second segment, which focused on the snowmelt system, included a representative from Fishbeck who described the differences between hydronic (gas) and electric snowmelt systems.

The third segment was a summary of the inventory process related to the streetscape study and included the results of the waste facility consolidation poll, some metrics/guidelines for improvement, and some discussion about next steps and a plan to complete the study by the May meeting.

In the interest of time, staff reminded the group that more discussion needed to happen with Parks and Recreation and with the Design Committee and that no decisions needed to be made at this meeting. The City Manager also commented that so much information had been given that the Board had been overwhelmed and there had been no time for comments. Mayor Murphy said that he appreciated the overview and that now was the time to start having individual groups work on the details. Knutsen stressed that he was trying to meet a deadline, but he was assured by all that there was no pressure to end the study in a short amount of time.

Discuss and Determine 2021 Summer Event Schedule

Staff reviewed her memo, stating that it was getting to be time to finalize the summer event schedule; that time had been spent gathering information through various means that will help determine direction regarding the holding of this summer's schedule of events. In regards to Girls Getaway Weekend, she also said that, staff had made the decision to postpone its debut until 2022. This decision was based on the fact that it was scheduled to be held before the Board would meet again, that it is a new event that needs a strong launch, that previous general comments from the Board had indicated that now was not the time to initiate new events, that merchant surveys had not demonstrated that there would be much participation in it, and that the Perry Hotel cited reservations about hosting it. Staff plans to include Girls Getaway Weekend on our calendar of events and listed for the weekend before Mother's Day in 2022.

Taking into consideration survey results, conversations with City staff, communications with individual merchants, and input from the Events and Marketing Committees, staff offered the recommendation to the Board to not hold Summer Open House or Movies in the Park or to run the Downtown Trolley in the coming summer months. Staff also stated that they believed the decision whether or not to hold Sidewalk Sales could wait for one more month or possibly until June.

Chair Slocum concurred and asked for Boardmember comments that included the importance of considering vaccination numbers and the need merchants had to focus on their individual businesses until things get back to normal; whether the City would approve of the events if the Board decided to move ahead and when that City decision would be made.

The City Manager reminded the Board of the MDHHS regulation that states no more than 300 persons can attend an outside event. He also suggested that the optics on holding some events and not others would confuse the public.

It was moved by Albert, seconded by Murphy, to cancel Summer Open House, Movies in the Park, and the trolley operations for 2021 and to hold off on the Sidewalk Sales decision until May. Further Board discussion included questions regarding the City policy for holding the events, not wanting to disappoint the public, and the realization that it is possible to operate without events as we learned last summer. After discussion the motion was put to a vote and passed. All were in favor.

Reports by Downtown Management Board Committees

Marketing and Events Committees – Symonds reported that the reports were in the packet and also stated that the Gallery Walk committee had made the decision to postpone their event until August; that the shopping map was being prepared on schedule; and that we had held a shopping map cover photo contest.

Parking Committee – Goodman reminded the Board that meeting notes were in the packet; that curbside pickup bags would remain likely throughout the summer and that staff will refresh them and review their locations; that she and the City Manager and City Clerk had met with County staff on the Lake and Division deck partnership, stating, once again, that the County had reiterated that they had no funds to commit to the project and that the Parking Committee would be discussing at their next meeting; and that the office is still struggling with staff as a result of the pool of potential employees and incentives that are being offered by other employers.

Downtown Economic Enhancement – Goodman reported that new businesses included Thunder Bay Winery, Serendipity Consignment, Fox and Hound Children's Clothing, and Merchant

and Tailor; that a new tenant had signed in the former Trillium space on upper Mitchell; that another boutique concept entrepreneur with experience and a promising business plan was still looking; that the Bay and Howard Street boutique hotel concept may have a new developer possibility. She further stated that City Council had added a new goal to its Economic Development Plan and its goal to develop a systematic approach to fill vacancies on Upper Mitchell; that the City Manager had asked her to provide background on what had been done on this problem in the past which she had done; and that she had suggested to use the Redevelopment Ready Community Program to market specific downtown properties, to explore live/work spaces on upper Mitchell that would allow entrepreneurs to live in the back of the building while operating a business from the front of the building, and to review blight ordinance that would address exterior as well as interior building issues.

Beautification – Goodman reported that flower planting is arranged with St. Francis for May 27; that meters and bike racks have been painted; that several trees had been removed from Pennsylvania Park and that some replacement trees had been planted.

Other News – Goodman reported that staff is beginning to market the Social District more intensely, but still tastefully, and will be working with all restaurants to be certain that restaurants are using proper cups, color coded, logos, etc.; that Wake Up DT will be done in a printed format; that the New Employee packet will be done in the same format; and that the office should be staffed much more regularly as she is working remotely less of the time, but that employee shortages are still a problem in being open and available 100% of the time.

Report from City Staff

The City Manager reported that City Council had approved RRC economic plan; that the City is considering some housing proposals for three City owned properties; comments are still being received on the 2021 Action Plan; the township has approved cost participation for the detour for the Little Traverse Wheelway but the County has not and that the County may reconsider, and that a request for urgent funds has been submitted to Senator Bergman's office; a Ferry service agreement was approved for the summer months similar to last year; and the Planning Commission is looking at revisions to ordinances that would create additional housing.

Other Miscellaneous Comments

A Boardmember inquired whether there are standards for landlords regarding livability and code inspection. The City Manager replied that the City uses the International Property Maintenance Code to regulate rental properties.

The Mayor spoke in favor of the City contributing funds to hire a housing director that would help coordinate housing opportunities.

There were comments that the Streetscape study needed to be handled further at the committee level than at the full Board level.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:28 P.M.