



DOWNTOWN MANAGEMENT BOARD

June 15, 2021

A regular meeting of the City of Petoskey Downtown Management Board was held in the City Hall conducted through Zoom, on Tuesday, June 15, 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
Noah Marshall-Rashid, Petoskey, Emmet County, MI
Robin Bennett, Saugatuck, Allegan County, MI
Dan Harris, Petoskey, Emmet County, MI
Joe Keedy, Petoskey, Emmet County, MI
Mayor John Murphy, Petoskey, Emmet County, MI

Absent: Marnie Duse

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 April 20, 2021 regular meeting minutes; acknowledgement of bills since April 20, 2021 that totaled \$26,686.17; the April expense and income reports; acknowledgement of bills since May 18 that totaled \$38,769.59; the May expense and income reports as prepared by the Downtown Director. Upon motion made by Harris and seconded by Shorter the consent agenda was approved. All in favor.

Discuss and Determine 2021 Sidewalk Sales

Goodman reviewed that COVID restrictions had been lifted and that the City had approved the application to hold Sidewalk Sales. It was the recommendation of staff that the 55-year-old event be held again this year. Motion to hold Sidewalk Sales on the last weekend of July was made by Marshall-Rashid. Seconded by Albert. All in favor.

Discuss Potential Zoning Ordinance Amendments to Ground Floor uses in the Central Business District Requested by the Planning Commission

Goodman reviewed her memo stating that this agenda item was for discussion and recommendation only as requested by the Planning Commission.

Board member comments were questions regarding prior denial of residential on the first floor at the 200 East Lake Street development site; what potential restrictions the Planning Commission would place on the final ordinance amendment; what the details of the amendment to the ordinance might be; and that the Board would be open to this concept in spirit but would want to see the details before approval. There was a strong desire to maintain commercial on all street fronts. The Board concurred that the concept was solid, but that they would like have an opportunity for final review.

Consider Appointment to the Design Committee

Goodman reviewed that there were openings on the Design Committee and that one criteria was that a member of the committee should be a DMB member. Gary Albert had volunteered and showed a strong interest in committee work. His interest in committee work has been demonstrated. Motion by Harris and seconded by Shorter to appoint Albert to the committee. All in favor.

Discuss and Possibly Approve Downtown Lighting Project Requested by the Design Committee

Goodman reviewed that the Design Committee had met and chosen improved lighting of the Gazebo as their first project. Tim Knutsen, Beckett and Raeder, gave a short presentation of the gazebo lighting project, stating the project would consist of three elements, including foundation lighting, interior lighting and downward cast lighting. Board members questioned if there were final pictures of what the lighting would look like; how mowing and snow removal would be affected; what the costs would be; and if the allocated \$15,000 would be enough to complete the project. It was moved by Marshall-Rashid and seconded by Harris that the gazebo project be completed at a cost not to exceed \$20,000. All in favor.

Discuss and Possible Approval of The Big Art Show hosted by Big Brothers Big Sisters in Pennsylvania Park

Goodman reviewed that the Big Brothers Big Sisters had applied to the City for permission to hold their annual art and crafts fair in Pennsylvania Park on Saturday, August 21 of this summer, explaining that the normal course of action for application to use City parks for an event is for the application to be approved by the Parks and Rec Department, the DPW, Public Safety, and the Downtown Office. She explained that all City staff required to approve had signed off on holding The Big Art Show, however she, as Downtown staff, had not, due to the number of complaints she had heard from merchants about the show over the years. The City Manager, who has final approval of holding any event on public property, is asking for DMB input before he makes a final decision to approve or not approve holding this craft show. Goodman asked the Board to consider the following points in their discussion and decision making:

- This event was held for many years by the JayCees who coordinated it through the Chamber as a part of Festival on the Bay. During those years, the event was not juried and many of the vendors were selling low quality or “flea market” type merchandise. Several complaints were made over the years that the event did not reflect Downtown’s upscale image and reputation for high end shops that provided unique and rare merchandise. That stigma still exists and today. Much of the merchandise currently sold at the fair is not hand crafted, but is commercially produced. Last year it was observed that there were some items being sold at the event that were identical or similar to items being sold in our own stores which sets up a competitive situation.
- Over all of the years the event has been held in Pennsylvania Park there have been problems with the vendors obeying the parking rules set forward by the event organizers who state on the application that they have made arrangements for them and require them to park in the News Review parking lot. The problem is that they do not enforce their own regulations. Staff has monitored the News Review lot on the day of the event and found only two or three cars parked there, indicating that the vendors for the craft fair are not parking there. Last year, staff noted that vendors were loading and unloading their cars from spaces surrounding the park. If those cars were left there all day, which appeared to be the case, this took away valuable parking spaces from Downtown businesses. The vendors also park at three hour meters for the entire day. Since the majority of them come here only once a year, they receive a courtesy notice and do not even pay for the parking that they use.
- With the elimination of Festival on the Bay from the Chamber schedule, staff had requested that this event no longer be held in Downtown on a busy, summer Saturday

but that has not happened. Over the years, staff has received numerous complaints from merchants who believe that the vendors do not respect the parking ordinance and that the customers they attract do not visit Downtown shops and restaurants, but merely come to the event, take up parking spaces that could have been used by shoppers, and then leave. (staff noted that she has even received complaints about Art in the Park, a very prestigious art fair, being held on a summer Saturday when shopping needs are high.) A better day for the craft show to be held, if it were to benefit Downtown by bringing in additional shoppers, would be a Sunday when the parking system is traditionally not as taxed.

- In summary, staff supports the rights of merchants who have complained about the BBBS Big Art Show over the years to have their thoughts considered. Many report that the extra chaos created by this event is a detriment to their sales. There is no doubt that the BBBS organization does excellent work and deserves support, but perhaps a park by the waterfront would be a better location for the event to be held.

Comments from Board members included questions about what the organization paid to the City; that opening up to one group means opening up to everyone; concurrence that commercial activity in the park should not be allowed; and that the cause of the organization is admirable but the fit is not good for the Downtown community.

Motion to deny the Big Brothers Big Sisters application for the Big Art Show was made by Harris, seconded by Marshall-Rashid. All in favor.

Reports by Downtown Committees

Marketing and Events Committees – Symonds reviewed the committee notes that were included in the packet stating that there was interest from the Events Committee in holding an event at the end of the summer that would be a composite of the events that had been cancelled so far in the summer. This event could be funded with money in line items that were not spent. Staff asked if there were objections from the Board for staff to work on the event. There were no objections and staff agreed to come back with a final plan at the July meeting.

Parking Committee – Goodman reported that the notes were in the packet but that since the meeting, she had heard feedback from the merchants that the curbside bags were becoming obsolete and that the spaces would be more valuable as parking spaces than pick up spaces. She announced that she had determined to eliminate them July 1 if there were no objections from the Board. Goodman went on to further explain that the Parking Committee had decided to move away from plans for collaborating with the County at this time; and that two new employees had been hired in the parking office, that one of them was a relative of an employee, that raises and incentives have given. Parking revenue is up again.

Downtown Economic Enhancement – Goodman announced that there is a new mortgage company moving into the former Trillium location that will be doing a complete façade renovation; Thunder Bay Winery will be moving in on upper Mitchell shortly; there will be a vacancy at 410 Lake Street that could last several months due to a landlord dispute; Big Red Nutritional Sports Drinks has moved in the former La Dolce Vita space; Northern Michigan Axe Throwing Company will be moving in an Upper Mitchell location soon; and that two dining decks are in operation this summer. Business owners are reporting good sales and high foot traffic.

Other News – Goodman introduced Joe Keedy, Wineguys, as a newly appointed Board member replacing Brittany Brubaker. She then informed the committee that the Parking Services Office is now fully staffed between 8 and 6 daily and that she and Andi and in the office on a regular basis but are continuing to do some of their work remotely.

Report from City Staff

City Manager Straebel reported that City Council will be considering the partial funding of the hiring a housing coordinator; Council had approved their new Action Plan; Council passed a resolution in opposition to a house bill that would impact the City's ability to locally control short term rentals;

Little Traverse Wheelway detour plans are moving ahead; the Fourth of July festivities have been approved; a new bridge is being completed at the Bear River Sports complex; and a \$175,000 grant has been obtained from the Waterway Council to replace fuel tanks this fall.

Other Miscellaneous Comments

Board member Shorter asked if there was a way to promote which restaurants are open on which days so that the retail community could help guests find places to eat.

Chair Slocum reminded the Board that the July meeting would be held in person and encouraged board members to arrive on time.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 PM.