



## DOWNTOWN MANAGEMENT BOARD

July 20, 2021

A regular meeting of the City of Petoskey Downtown Management Board was held in the City Hall Council Chambers on Tuesday, July 20, 2021. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 P.M., and the following were

Present: Chair Ben Slocum  
Gary Albert  
Marnie Duse  
Noah Marshall-Rashid  
Robin Bennett  
Dan Harris  
Joe Keedy  
Mayor John Murphy

Absent: Jennifer Shorter

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 June 15, 2021 regular meeting minutes; acknowledgement of bills since June 15, 2021 that totaled \$31,766.03; and June expense and income reports as prepared by the Downtown Director. Upon motion made by Albert and seconded by Bennett the consent agenda was approved. All in favor.

### **Approve End of Summer Event as Recommended by Downtown Staff and Downtown Events Committee**

Goodman reviewed that the Board had discussed at previous meetings an end of summer event to replace the events that had been cancelled in the last 18 months due to COVID. She further stated that the merchants had been surveyed and there was support for holding the event and that the Events Committee and staff were now recommending that it be held on August 27 and 28. Symonds further reported on comments from the Events Committee, stating that although some merchants expressed interest in a "huge, festival type event" staff is recommending a simple event that could be organized in the short time available and that would celebrate summer and somewhat compensate for the events that have been cancelled over the past two seasons due to COVID restrictions. Staff recommended that the event could be supported with funds in the Downtown Live line item as that event was cancelled after the budget was approved, not to exceed \$5,000, and that it be held August 27 and 28.

A question was asked about whether Gallery Walk would be a part of the event and staff responded that the galleries had been consulted but that there was no interest from them in holding the event this year.

Board discussion centered on a desire to close the streets in order to create a feeling of safety for pedestrians or whether they should be left open as there were no plans to fill them with activities.

Marshall-Rashid moved to hold the event with the streets closed pending review by Public Safety. Bennett seconded. Further discussion focused on which streets to close or if all should be closed. The proposed two-day length of the event was also discussed. Motion was amended to make the event a one-day event on Saturday, August 28. Motion passed. All in favor.

**Approve and Recommend a Redevelopment Liquor License for Clurichaun Enterprises LLC dba The Underground Bar, 406 East Lake Street**

Goodman reviewed her memo stating the City had recently received a redevelopment liquor license application from Marjorie and Scott Neal, prospective owners of a new business planning to open at 406 East Lake Street. The Neals were present at the meeting and described their concept as a “Bartique”, a combination of a bar and a boutique.

A motion was made by Duse and seconded by Marshall-Rashid to recommend that the license be approved. Board members Slocum and Harris abstained due to a conflict of interest. All voting were in favor 6-0.

**Hear Presentation and Discussion Regarding Alternative Uses for Parking Fund Revenue**

Goodman reviewed her memo that included background information on how the Parking Fund had been managed in the past and the current status of the fund, stating that the Parking Committee had requested a presentation outlining potential alternative uses for the fund due to the fact that the fund has not grown relative to the costs of building a structure.

Mayor Murphy commented at the beginning of the presentation that City Council had agreed to raise fees and fines in 2018 based on the fact that the money would be used for the sole purpose of creating additional parking. Goodman responded that the presentation was conceptual only and that any changes in direction would need to be fully vetted and would require the approval of Council. Slocum stated that it was the responsibility of the Board to consider alternative uses for the fund as building a structure continues to be an unrealistic goal.

Goodman proceeded with her presentation and outlined that all alternative spending concepts fall into the four point style of downtown management. Included in the presentation were the following alternative concepts:

Design

- Financially support the sidewalk snow melt system that we have been talking about when the feasibility study is complete or pay more for snow removal so that merchants do not have to provide any snow removal services.
- Become a financial partner with Parks and Recreation to develop a master plan for Pennsylvania Park.
- Pay for the lighting improvements that will be recommended from the Lighting Study.
- Develop the entrance to Downtown per the Gateway Study.
- Fund the streetscape improvement study.

Organization

- Reorganize job descriptions to include more staff and more specialized staff members, separating parking management from marketing.
- Become the official Downtown welcome center by relocating to the Chamber building and taking over the visitor center

Promotions and Marketing

- Build a Farmers Market pavilion that could also be used for other events.
- Create a signature event like the Cherry Festival or Venetian

Economic Enhancement and Parking

- With a partner, make an investment in affordable housing, perhaps dormitory style, that could be used to house summer employees and alleviate some to the employment crisis.
- Establish a co-working space – perhaps one that included affordable housing and childcare.

- Create an innovative CIP for parking that would include the most modern and cutting edge innovations – stacked cars, scooter parking, EVC considerations, driverless cars, cell phone apps to identify empty spaces, etc.
- Purchase a shuttle to run back and forth from an out lot that could be used for free by employees and visitors.
- Establish and manage a valet parking operation.
- Purchase under utilized properties and redevelop them or resell to developers.
- Implement the movie feasibility study by managing and operating a theater.
- Continue maintenance and repair of existing lots.

The Downtown Director concluded by reminding the Board that situations change with the times and that the concepts presented were meant to start discussion with the understanding that construction costs are rising more quickly than parking revenue. She also reminded the Board that \$150,000 had been contributed to the restroom construction, \$80,000 had been contributed to the purchase of the rail corridor, and \$50,000 was now pledged to the development of Park Avenue through Pennsylvania Park at the request of Council, indicating that it was possible to allocate parking funds for a variety of reasons.

Chairman Slocum suggested that Downtown may also be past the tipping point in regard to parking in the light of a changing economy and technology. He also said that parking management is about accessibility and if funds are diverted they should be diverted to accessibility issues. Marshall-Rashid stated that the presentation was valuable, especially for new board members and that it was the responsibility of the Board to consider these issues as they plan for future years.

There was a question regarding investing the funds to make them grow more quickly. Staff responded that she had been told by City staff that the City is in the business of protecting the funds, not risking them in any way.

Staff was directed to develop numbers for added revenue if enforcement continued into the evening hours and also to report on how many courtesy tickets are written annually.

### **Reports by Downtown Committees**

**Marketing and Events Committees** – Symonds reviewed that the social media campaign is continuing to grow and merchants are showing appreciation of the current spotlight campaign. Events Committee did not meet officially but consulted through email regarding the end of summer event. The committee will begin regular meetings again in August. Symonds also thanked the Board for their direction on the end of summer event and added that the Back to the Bricks organization had been in contact and requested Petoskey to apply for 2022. She concluded with a comment about Sidewalk Sales being held the following week and that this is the first major event being held in almost two years.

**Parking Committee** – Goodman reported that the notes were in the packet and that parking revenue is up again.

**Design Committee** – Goodman reported that the committee has met twice this month to work on review of the Beckett & Raeder streetscape plan.

**Downtown Economic Enhancement** – Goodman reported that there have been no new openings or closings of businesses. Business owners are reporting good sales and high foot traffic.

**Other News** – Goodman said that she had spoken to Kiwanis and that there had been enough questions and comments from the membership to keep her talking well past the allotted time.

### **Report from City Staff**

The City Manager reported that City Council is partnering with Housing North to hire a full-time housing coordinator and will be chipping in a total of \$10,000 over two years for the salary; that an RFP has been issued for the purpose of increasing housing inventory on obsolete City properties; that City Council has scheduled a public hearing on an OPRA district for 316 and 318 East Lake Street that will provide a tax abatement of about \$14,000 per year which will be used as a local match for an MEDC grant; that a new zoning district is under consideration for the College; that EVC units are being discussed and plans are underway to have them installed on City property; that staff is working with NCSA on a capital needs assessment for all city buildings, parks, trails, and waterfront properties; that the Bear River Bridge is complete and a ribbon cutting ceremony is planned on August 5; that the Greenwood Road reconstruct has started and a \$350,000 grant from the LTBB is being implemented.

Slocum asked a question regarding a quote in the paper about strategies for filling vacant retail spaces. The Mayor responded that he is looking at a case currently being decided in San Francisco courts that assesses fines to owners of vacant buildings.

Harris commented on the performance of our current charging stations and urged that we opt for faster charging models in the future.

There was a short conversation about the details of the proposed OPRA and comments regarding why it would be good for all of Downtown. The Mayor made a point that all of Downtown will be informed about the upcoming public hearing. Downtown staff will help with the notification.

### **Other Miscellaneous Comments**

Board member Marshall-Rashid asked for future information regarding the amount of revenue lost due to courtesy tickets and how much revenue could be gained if enforcement were extended into the evening hours.

Harris commented that the Darling Lot is always quite crowded but that there are usually spaces available there.

Dr. John Kazanowski questioned the decision made by the City to not allow the color of the furnishings at the High Five Dining Deck and was informed that the Design Committee would be meeting on this issue the next morning. He agreed that he would paint the furniture black. Kazanowski also expressed a desire to have lighting in the alleys and was informed that was being considered by the Design Committee as a part of the current lighting study. He also suggested that property owners with vacant buildings be fined for not contributing to parking revenue.

### **Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 P.M.