



DOWNTOWN MANAGEMENT BOARD

August 17, 2021

A regular meeting of the City of Petoskey Downtown Management Board was held in the City Hall Council Chambers on Tuesday, August 17, 2021. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 P.M., and the following were

Present: Vice Chair Robin Bennett
Gary Albert
Joe Keedy
Jennifer Shorter
Mayor John Murphy

Absent: Chair Ben Slocum, Noah Marshall-Rashid, Dan Harris
and 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 July 20, 2021 regular meeting minutes; acknowledgement of bills since July 20, 2021 that totaled \$28,969.08; and July expense and income reports as prepared by the Downtown Director. Upon motion made by Albert and seconded by Keedy the consent agenda was approved. All in favor.

Discuss the Proposed 2022 Programs and Services Budget

Goodman reviewed that the proposed budget was based on plans to provide programs and services in a year free of COVID restrictions and that highlights included the customary 2% increase; the elimination of a weekly summer evening concert event; Winter Carnival to continue to be held as a placemaking event to include ice sculptures; no drink tent revenue or expenses; a pared down amount for Presenting Sponsors; and a potential inclusion of a Summer Celebration event. She also stated that she had discussed receiving additional funding for community focused events with Parks and Rec and had been told those funds were likely not available but that in kind services would continue.

Board members had supportive comments regarding the elimination of the weekly summer concert series and posed questions regarding the upcoming Summer Celebration. No major changes were presented.

Discuss the Proposed 2022 Parking Budget

Goodman then began discussion of the proposed 2022 Parking Fund budget stating that she included identical numbers for proposed revenue in 2022 to those proposed in 2020 and 2021 due to the fact that COVID has skewed revenue amounts and no more accurate estimates are available. The exception to this was that proposed fine revenue had been due to the fact that the Parking Committee had decided to end the practice of issuing courtesy tickets which could potentially increase fine revenue by 50 to 60%. Other highlights of the proposed budget included an expenditure for bike racks of \$10,000; a refurbishing of the wayfinding sign system for \$25,000; a placeholder amount in the CIP for a possible engineering study, co-funded with the County, for a deck platform at the corner of Division and Lake of \$150,000; a feasibility study for a parking platform to be constructed on the Darling Lot of \$15,000; an increase in allotted expenses for snow removal of \$30,000; an entryway redesign for the corner of Mitchell and the highway recommended by the Design Committee and to be included in the soon to be finalized streetscape study of \$25,000; and a placeholder for partnership with the MEDC if a Winter Cities grant is received of \$30,000.

Staff also included that the final draft proposal may include costs for the purchase of the Chamber building if an arrangement could be worked out between the two organizations and costs for the sharing of an ordinance officer if requested by the City.

Board member questions were posed regarding what services the additional snow removal would include and what kind of MEDC grant might be available. Staff responded that the Board had indicated over the past year that a higher level of snow removal service was desired and that she had spoken with the contractor about being available more often and putting in more hours to provide cleaner sidewalks and that the extra funds would also help with the removal of snow from the curbs and the parking lots; and that the MEDC grants had just been announced with the application having been mailed the previous day and that the projects would be designed from a technical service visit from MEDC that would be based on projects outlined in their Winter Cities study that had been shared with the Board last winter.

Further questions arose from the plan to increase fine revenue with the elimination of courtesy tickets. Acting Chair Bennett asked for input on the courtesy ticket decision. Dissenting comments included the fact that courtesy tickets were a long standing tradition of hospitality, that there were marketing dollars well spent, and that we needed to remember that we are in the business of managing parking and not in the business of selling parking which takes away from the theory that we are “giving away our inventory” as had been stated by the Parking Committee. Bennett spoke as a Parking Committee member, enforcing the fact that the public had been told three years ago that we were raising the parking rates in order to create revenue in order to build a structure and that additional revenue is needed to make that structure a reality. She compared the courtesy sunset to the also proposed tactic of enforcing in the evening hours and stated that the committee believed that eliminating the courtesy ticket would be less offensive to the public than extending enforcement hours. She also said that the committee had briefly discussed changing its name to the Accessibility Committee in order to focus more on all pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular issues. Goodman supplied the data that in July of this year 610 money tickets were issued out of a total of 1874 tickets and offered the opinion that ending courtesy notices could be compared to ending not charging for handicapped parking in that both were policies overseen by the Parking Committee that could be managed as times evolve, even to the point of being reinstated if need be. Other questions were posed regarding whether or not the perceived marketing expense was worth the revenue being lost and if there was truly consensus on whether parking funds should be used or even increased for the purpose of building a deck.

There was a brief discussion on extending enforcement into evening hours, with the City Manager encouraging the dissolution of the courtesy ticket the extension of enforcement hours for the purpose of expanding parking and building a deck, stating the DMB also needs the money for other projects. The Mayor supported his comments and also spoke in favor of a deck at the Darling Lot that would utilize the grade of the property.

There being no further comments on the proposed 2022 budgets, staff determined to tweak and finalize some numbers before bringing it back for final review and approval at the September meeting.

Reports by Downtown Committees

Marketing and Events Committees – Symonds reviewed plans for the upcoming Summer Celebration event, saying that there was a lot of difficulty getting activities arranged that would fill up the streets; that there would be two concerts in the park; Howard and Lake would be closed with some street games set up; the trolley would run on Mitchell street; stores have been encouraged to come out into the streets with their own activities; a movie in the park would be held; and scavenger hunts were being created.

She further reported that the Back to the Bricks car show had asked us to apply as a host location for 2022 and that she is working on an application for Sunday night, June 5 with our SOH scheduled on that Friday, June 3, and the entire weekend being soccer weekend. Comments were made that this is not a cash register ringing event, that it created a mess of our sidewalks and streets, and that in many ways it was a problem for businesses. Staff reminded the Board that it had been very popular with the public when it was held in 2018 and that the Board at that time had enthusiastically agreed to pursue having the event return and also that applying to be a host did not obligate the community to anything.

Marketing Committee will hold an in person meeting in September.

Parking Committee – Goodman reported that the notes were in the packet and that parking revenue is up again and noted that discussion about the sunseting of the courtesy notice policy had taken place earlier in the meeting.

Design Committee – Goodman reported that, per the enclosed notes, the committee had held a special meeting to consider allowing the furniture on the dining deck of High Five Spirits to be used for the summer despite the fact that it did not conform with established guidelines and that the committee had agreed to recommend that it be allowed to remain and be used for the rest of the current season.

Downtown Economic Enhancement – Goodman announced that City Council had approved an OPRA district for 316-318 East Lake Street which would enable the use of MEDC grant dollars for the renovation of the property. She also noted that the façade grant that had been previously approved for the property may be coming forward for an extension request to as part of enabling the project to proceed.

She further commented that consultant Robert Gibbs had visited with her recently and they had talked about the use of new market analysis technology that can track extreme details of customer movement patterns; and that he had once again pointed out that targeting diverse segments of the population with destination marketing is important and that, in his opinion, he does not see that we excel in this area; and that he is predicting that experience shopping will continue to be boon at least for the next three years.

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 – Streetscape study is nearly finished and will be going back to the Design Committee for final review before it comes back to the Board.

Report from City Staff

The City Manager reported that City Council had passed a zoning district for the college; that the Council had adopted a letter of support to be sent to Emmet County Commissioners supporting a regional, comprehensive transportation system; that they had approved a redevelopment liquor license for 406 East Lake at the recommendation of the DMB; that they had approved the OPRA district for 316-318 East Lake Street which will amount to an annual abatement of \$14,000 for 8 years; and that a ribbon cutting ceremony was held for the Iron Bell Bridge.

Other Miscellaneous Comments

Joe Keedy expressed the need for more data regarding where people come from and what their needs are before we commit to construction of a deck. He also inquired what was the status of hiring a housing coordinator and the City Manager responded that interviews are underway for the position with a one to two year contract available and that the City would be contributing a total of \$10,000 to that person's compensation, adding that the Housing Summit will be held on August 26.

Mayor Murphy commented NCMC has ribbon cutting ceremony coming up and that LTHS has a corn roast scheduled for August 20.

Keedy asked about timeline for bike path funding and the City Manager responded that schematic drawings are being undertaken and expected to be completed by the end of September with grant opportunities to be explored at that point.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 P.M.