



DOWNTOWN MANAGEMENT BOARD

September 21, 2021

A regular meeting of the City of Petoskey Downtown Management Board was held in the City Hall Council Chambers on Tuesday, September 21, 2021. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 P.M., and the following were

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

Absent: Dan Harris

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 August 17, 2021 regular meeting minutes; acknowledgement of bills since August 17, 2021 that totaled \$30,143.83; and August expense and income reports as prepared by the Downtown Director. Upon motion made by Shorter and seconded by Bennett the consent agenda was approved. All in favor.

Approve the 2022 Downtown Programs and Services Budget and Parking Budget – Staff reviewed her memo that outlined changes to the draft budget since the August meeting that included:

- Loss of revenue in the Programs and Services budget due to the termination of Stafford's title sponsorship, thanking Stafford's for their continued support over the years.
- A reduction of the \$5,000 expense for Back to the Bricks to \$2,000 expense, announcing that Downtown staff had received an official invitation to be a host community on Sunday, June 3, 2022 and approval of this expenditure would serve as acceptance of the invitation.
- An explanation that the Downtown Live series that was never initiated but intended to replace Petoskey Rocks was still listed as an option along with the experimental Summer Celebration that took place this year on August 28 and included an expense of \$10,000 to support either one of them, elaborating that a decision on moving forward with either event would need to come after more discussion from the Events Committee and perhaps even after a new staff person is hired to coordinate either event.
- No revenue increase in the Parking Fund that could result from an extension of evening hour enforcement as the Parking Committee did intend to move ahead to recommend the hours be extended in the spring of 2022, but that no formal plan had yet been developed or approvals from the full Board and City Council received.
- That the Downtown Office line item was boosted to support potential salary increases due to staff replacement.
- That the proposed budget for the entry way project at Mitchell Street had been increased to \$35,000 due to a revised projection from Beckett and Raeder.

Board member comments included questions about the redesign of the Mitchell Street entryway; would the costs requested be for implementation or more study; and a request from the Mayor that promotional materials about Downtown be sent to the Back to the Bricks participants before their arrival.

It was moved by Marshall-Rashid and supported by Shorter that the budgets be approved. All in favor.

Recommend that the City Council Levy Special Assessments on behalf of the DMB to Finance Programs and Services for 2022 – Staff reviewed that because the Downtown Management Board had approved the proposed 2022 programs-and-services-expenditures budget, the next step in the special assessment process would be for the Board to request that the City Council levy the special assessment which would reflect a 2% increase, on the Downtown Management Board's behalf.

Questions were asked regarding changing this from an annual process to a once in a two or five-year process. Staff responded that she believed it was possible and that she would do further research. Mayor Murphy cautioned against changing the standard procedure and it was decided that the need was to continue in the regular way at this time and to consider changes in the future.

It was moved by Marshall-Rashid and seconded by Shorter to request that the City Manager recommend to Council that it levy special assessments, on behalf of the Downtown Management Board, to finance Management Board programs and services for 2022 through the Downtown Development and Management Fund. All in favor.

Discuss Formation of an Organization Task Force – Staff reviewed that Chair Slocum had suggested a by-laws review in the fall at the beginning of the year and added that with the resignation of Andi Symonds there was a need to review staff structure and succession plans moving forward and that there was a need for a task force to do this work. Slocum then reiterated that work on policies regarding attendance at board and committee meetings needed to be included in the committee work.

Board member comments were in support; there was a suggestion to have the Board review these subjects prior to reviewing them to a task force. Slocum urged that the task force begin work immediately due to the immediate need to review staff roles with the by-laws review not being as urgent.

A motion was made by Shorter and supported by Marshall-Rashid to form an Organization Task Force for the DMB. All were in favor.

A motion was then made by Albert and supported by Marshall-Rashid to appoint Chair Slocum, Vice Chair Bennett, and Board members Shorter and Keedy to the task force. All in favor.

Discuss Fall Events and Marketing Schedule – Staff reviewed her memo that stated COVID recommendations and regulations continued to be a consideration and that now there was the resignation of the Downtown Marketing and Events Coordinator to also consider, that there was a need to discuss the upcoming fall event schedule and marketing initiatives. She synopsized the following:

Social Media Campaign – Advances in this area were too valuable to let slide; the work requires an individual or team of individuals with specific and advanced social media skills.

Downtown Trick or Treat and Jack O'Lantern Walk – The Trick or Treat portion of this event is over twenty years old; the Downtown Director has managed this event on her own before and it is uncomplicated, though somewhat time consuming, to execute; that staff does not personally foresee difficulties receiving permission to hold this event due to COVID issues as long as the schools remain open; that the Jack O'Lantern Walk portion is gaining popularity and shows promise for future development but is more complicated and time consuming, involving the enlistment of organizations and individual participants to organize and there is also set up and take down on the day of the event to manage.

Ladies Opening Night – That this is a cash register ringing event that is becoming more and more popular with merchants although it was not held last year based on requests from merchants who do not want to host extra people in their stores during COVID; that this will be the first time the event would be held with our Social District being fully functional and promoted; that the event requires a large amount of staff time and organization, including enlistment of the stores, program design, printing, and distribution, collection of afterglow donations; promotion, etc.; that the afterglow portion of the event is somewhat controversial as it involves a large gathering of people packed in the Rose Room at the Perry, at standing room only levels, in order to be present at the prize drawing that the event also requires an intense amount of set up and take down on the day of the event and a strong and charming personality to host the prize awards; adding a suggestion that the afterglow prize drawing could be held virtually, although it would require technology skills and a “television” style personality.

Holiday Parade – The Downtown Director went on to say that this event had been hindered more than others this year from the recent relinquishment of the title sponsorship by Stafford's Hospitality; that without Stafford's assistance in float building, Santa services, promotion, emceeing, and feet on the ground the day of the event, planning and execution would be more difficult than usual; that the lack of a staff person to oversee the parade would make it even more complicated; and that she would not be able to organize this large of an event on her own now that Symonds is leaving.

Holiday Open House – According to the Downtown Director, this event requires minimal preparation; that as this will be the first year it will be held with our Social District in place, it could change it in some subtle ways; and that we may want to rethink Santa hearing children's wishes in the gazebo in times of COVID.

Downtown Petoskey Holiday Catalog – Staff reviewed that the catalog could be seen as more popular than ever as it adds an online or mail order or even curbside shopping component to many who do not have means to promote this heavily on their own; that it is time intensive as it requires enlisting people to participate, billing them, scheduling them with the photography, writing copy, and checking and double-checking copy, among other details.

Staff then outlined the following recommendations to move forward that took into considering the difficulties with delegating responsibilities to third parties on a short-term basis, it is the recommendation of staff to move forward in the following manor:

- That the Social Media campaign be contracted out to Keep it Real Social until the end of the year for a monthly charge of \$2,000 that would be charged to Downtown Office line item as the service would be replacing a salary.
- That Downtown Trick or Treat would be overseen by the Downtown Director.
- That the Jack O'Lantern Walk would either be overseen by the Downtown Director or that she would seek another organization to take it over or look to a contract person to manage it.
- That Ladies Opening Night would be managed by a contract person that the Downtown Director would supervise or that the event would be cancelled.
- That negotiations with the Sunrise Rotary to manage the Holiday Parade were running smoothly and that she believed they would take over management for this year for the \$3,000 amount that was in the budget.
- That the Downtown Director would oversee Holiday Open House.

- That the Downtown Director will oversee the publication of the Holiday Catalog with the assistance of the printer (Mitchell Graphics) as designer or that the catalog will not be issued this year.

Board member comments included reservations regarding the \$2,000 per month proposal from Keep it Real Social Media.

It was moved by Marshall-Rashid and seconded by Bennett to accept the Downtown Director's recommendations for moving ahead.

Reports by Downtown Committees

Marketing Committee – Did not meet

Events Committee – Symonds gave an overview of the Summer Celebration event highlighting some of the negative comments from the merchant survey, most of them objecting to having the streets closed.

Board member comments included a thank you to Andi for her work on the Summer Celebration and Shorter expounded on the success her business had with their birthday party celebration, stressing that merchants need to help events be successful and added that she hoped that the Board had learned from the recent attempt.

Symonds expounded on the problems with street closures as far as the public driving around the barricades and parking on the streets before and during the closure.

A discussion followed about the value of street closures and when that should happen with concurrence that the streets should be closed when the event becomes successful and the streets are either filled with activity or people.

Symonds spoke to the Board about the current situation of holding events in Downtown, stressing that there seems to be a high emphasis on growing events from the Board but there is not support from the merchant community and that, in reality, she is just one person and one person can only do so much; that the Board members could help by encouraging support with their business neighbors, attending meetings, and participating with each event. In response to a comment that merchants will always disagree, she responded that the events are the fun part of Downtown life and the elements that should draw people together. The Board thanked her for her parting comments and opinions and the information that she shared in her resignation letter and also for her five years of service.

Parking Committee – Goodman reported that she had posted on the Closed Downtown Facebook page that the courtesy ticket policy was no longer in effect and that there was a lot of pushback and that she was quite disappointed in the level of negativity displayed; that she had responded by putting out some cold facts and offering parking education but that she had stopped responding and was not going to participate in a Facebook war. Chair Slocum spoke about the fact that we are growing and dealing with the same problems Traverse City dealt with in the past and Traverse City is dealing with what Ann Arbor dealt with the past.

Downtown Economic Enhancement – Goodman reported that she is working with two very promising entrepreneurs who are actively looking for space in the Downtown. There was a question about the old Spencer Drug building on Mitchell Street and if it had been sold or not and staff responded that the deal had fallen through.

Report from City Staff

The City Manager reported that City Council has reviewed the first draft of the new Capital Improvement Plan and provided an overview of the projects included in it, one of them being electric car charging stations, two of which will replace the stations in Downtown, and an expenditure for final engineering drawings for the combined County/Lake Street Lot as well as an expenditure for a preliminary design drawing of a single story platform on the Darling Lot; that the search for finding a new Finance Director to replace Al Terry is continuing and difficult; that an Economic Development Incentive Policy is being developed for Council's approval; that he sees Council as taking a more active role in economic development and business friendliness; and that \$100,000 will be spent on the repair and maintenance of the Little Traverse Wheelway this fall.

Other Miscellaneous Comments – There were no miscellaneous comments to be added.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 P.M.