

Downtown Business Improvement District
Board of Directors
Regular Meeting
February 23, 2006

The February 23, 2006 Board of Directors meeting was held in the Jesse Lowe Conference Room of the Civic Center, at 1819 Farnam, and began at 8:30 A.M.

Minutes

A. ROLL CALL/INTRODUCTION

Members Present:

Curtis Christensen, Chair
Brenda Dooley
Jeff Jorgensen
John Yochum
Paula Steenson
Brian McGee
Joe Bateman

Mayor's Staff:

Ayesha Graves
Jasmyn LeFlore

City of Omaha Planning Department:

Bridget Hadley
Kenneth Johnson
Lynn Meyer

Public:

Paul Bitos

B. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion to approve the minutes of the January 26th meeting made by B. McGee, second by B. Dooley, passed

C. Old Business

PUMA-Approved payment of \$4600, approximately \$9600 left

Downtown stakeholders- no new communication

DotCom set up new training time for website

J. Bateman spoke with a tax expert and found that UP is centrally assessed and is under an agreement for their taxes. He also thought that Qwest and OPPD might be under a similar agreement. Joe will contact Qwest to see if they are on the same accord. Curtis will see if Brad has an agreement for them to follow.

Jim Doyle from ConAgra resigned from board, so the Mayor approved Deborah Goertz as the replacement, but the city council has to approve.

D. New Business

Lynn Meyer from City Planning reported on the Wayfinding Program. He discussed the \$75,000 contract for downtown and showed graphics from Philadelphia that will be similar to Omaha. There are two groups involved in the project. The Client Group is staff and employees of the city. The Stakeholder Group is Downtown Business Representatives who give input on destinations, directions. L. Meyer also showed a map that will point out vehicle and pedestrian way finding for exits to Qwest, River, Holland, Orpheum, Rose, Joslyn, Heartland Park. The map will also have signage for parking. The BID wants to provide maintenance and input issues that may arise and discuss the importance of transit, condition of corridor (visibility, accessibility, image). C. Christensen and J. Jorgensen will keep the group up to date.

Summary of individual thoughts concerning the Business Plan

J. Bateman discussed changing all references to “a manager” to management in order to leave options open. He pointed out the need to be careful in wording of coordination with Old Market Business Association and the importance of collaborating with other groups. If there is no interest in the Old Market being a sub zone then it should be taken it out of document.

P. Steenson felt that separating the Old Market will make things more complicated and everything should be included in downtown.

J. Jorgensen was concerned about mentioning any one stakeholder and making sure that the program focused on BID’s ideas rather than Brad’s. The Old Market Business Association voted 34-4 in favor of the plan and it included tenants. The concept of an Old Market sub zone is good, as long as it is done as a whole group first. There is a 60% support by the property owners but there is a concern about who is not getting assessed.

Not only property owners get to be involved; whoever is going to pay deserves a voice.

B. McGee liked the plan overall. He noted that the price was lower than in the original plan. The manager must be a good quality person. BID should see if Brad has examples of manager's salaries. The person must be employed by the BID board so they can hire/ fire the person. Benefit of BID developing relationships is better communication with what downtown leadership will be doing and how BID will become the face of downtown. The Old Market Business Association and DOI can be an advisory group as long as acceptable clear boundaries are set and they spell out everyone's responsibility. Trash collection needs to be enhanced throughout all of downtown. The assessment formula is acceptable as long as there is a mix of small property and business owners. The BID board can remain a mayoral appointed board if put in writing, otherwise the board can figure out how to appoint by asking stakeholders. BID needs a unifying voice to talk about market effort that is able to sell a usable benefit for the investment. Maintenance and park come under market and education. There have been calls about no information and transportation to get around downtown.

B. Dooley questioned the structure of the manager position. BID needs to make sure there is no overlapping and duplication with existing downtown groups, and BID must avoid the fact and perception of trying to take over existing groups.

OMBA –DOI cannot undertake the programs that BID can.

C. Christensen pointed out in the areas of economic development there is a need to insert words to support working with Chamber and show the BID is not seeking a leadership role regarding economic development. The Plan needs to be carefully written so readers will know that we re not trying to compete with other economic development organizations.

K. Johnson expressed concerns about the assessment process. Who would be assessed and by how much? BID must be aware of the political ramifications when looking at hiring people, so it does not seem like another layer of management using tax dollars. It is important to get City Council to buy in as well as UP, ConAgra, Wells Fargo, First National and other companies. It might be easier to do this by getting the Mayor, City Council and at least one major corporation to get other companies to buy in and accept assessment. BID should stay away from economic development but emphasize collaboration. To garner support, BID needs a synopsis of activities that various organizations have attempted, where

they are today, where they need to go and how the BID can be the vehicle for accomplishing goals.

B. Hadley discussed management and how many people will be needed. She pointed out the importance of having a point person who could unify downtown community business and residents and create a mixed use of downtown community: entertainment, tourism, business and homes. BID needs to define what downtown is and change its image to an urban community where people can live, work, play and be entertained. The document must show that BID is going to be facilitate all of these activates.

K. Johnson stated that the budget should be a table instead of line itemed. It needs to show percentages instead of dollars and it also needs to show how funds will be allocated.

C. Christensen was not sure if boundaries would change. He was concerned with that the assessment be equitable because the tax roll does not include centrally assessed governments and C3's. He would ask Brad what the assessment base is between, \$600,000-\$800,000. What will ultimate assessments be? BID has 5 years to prove downtown is a valuable district in Omaha. BID must work with people familiar with properties not on tax roll to ensure the assessments of downtown properties are equitable. He will contact GAO to see their model.

K. Johnson suggested talking to MECA and work through them to formulate a system. The BID should look at changing borders to include new development at a later date. There are problems with taxing the Civic Center, the courthouse, parks, libraries and police departments, so they should consult Roger Dixon.

Rent controlled areas must be taken into account.

C. Christensen will get comments to Brad by next week. The goal is to have a recommendation to planning by May. Comments should be sent to C. Christensen via email.

The group felt there was no need for subcommittees at this time.

E. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 10:10 A.M. The next meeting will be held at 8:30 A.M., on March 23, 2006, in the Conference Room on the first floor at Union Pacific.

