

APPROVED
By: _____ DATE: 10/22/19

**CITY OF WIXOM
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
49045 PONTIAC TRAIL
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2019**

This meeting of the Wixom Downtown Development Authority came to order at 7:30 a.m. with the following individuals in attendance:

DDA MEMBERS: Chairperson Anthony Moscone, David Gavron, Amanda Habbouche, Melanie Klebba-Cheney, John Smith, Kristin Rzeznik, Wes Umlor, Vanessa Willett

ABSENT: Excused: Members: Sheng, Grossi Unexcused: None

STAFF: Steve Brown, City Manager, Debra Barker, Economic & Community Development Director, Sheryl Lucas, Administrative Assistant to City Manager, Laura Cloutier, Assistant to Director of Economic and Community Development, and Mona Freiburger, Recording Secretary

Determination of Quorum:

Quorum is met.

Reading of Vision and Mission Statement:

Mission Statement: The Mission of the Wixom DDA is to coordinate the efforts of businesses and residents to promote the growth of the downtown area for the community's benefit.

Vision Statement: The Wixom Downtown Development Authority is to provide a friendly, welcoming downtown which will enhance and honor our history while promoting cultural, business and recreational opportunity that attract businesses and residents.

Approval of Agenda:

MOTION by Board Member Willett and second by Board Member Habbouche to approve the Meeting Agenda.

VOTE: MOTION CARRIED

Public Comments:

Chairperson Moscone stated this would be his last meeting. He is reducing his role at Total Sports, taking on other roles, and prioritization to his family and friends. Chairperson Moscone indicated he had been a board member for nearly ten years including his time as chairperson. He said his time on the board was great.

Board Member Rzeznik thanked Chairperson Moscone for all of his service, and his great leadership.

Approval of Minutes:

MOTION by Board Member Habbouche and second by Board Member Willett to approve the August 6, 2019, DDA Regular Meeting Minutes.

VOTE:

MOTION CARRIED

Correspondence:

Director Barker stated she had submitted her resignation letter on September 10, 2019 to City Council via email. A hard copy was submitted to the City Manager, Steve Brown and the letter is available in the City Manager's office.

Director Barker indicated her last day was October 31, 2019, however, this was her last DDA meeting since she would be on a long planned two week vacation beginning October 14 through October 25, 2019.

Board Members Smith and Klebba-Cheney thanked Director Barker for her service.

Old Business:

- 2019 Wixom Block Party Recap

Director Barker stated the DDA was given money for sponsorship and still had approximately \$1,000 which was not used. The Block Party was very busy for much of the day. There were no negative comments from vendors. It was a fairly good event.

City Manager Brown stated with the addition of the longer hours and thinking about moving forward in the future, to give some thought regarding the impact of what had been added and whether that is something that we wanted to continue to maintain.

- Promotion Committee -- Education on Rack Cards

Board Member Smith stated he distributed rack cards at the last meeting. He indicated 15,000 cards were printed and 8,000 were distributed thus far.

Board Member Smith brought additional cards for the board members to distribute throughout the community. The card is a way to help tell our story, direct people to the Facebook page. Board Member Smith thanked Director Barker and Ms. Cloutier for the printout of all of the places that the cards had been distributed, approximately 200 locations.

Board Member Smith explained, CTM Media, is the card distributor company. He explained that each hotel has racks of cards. The racks are not owned by the hotel but are owned by the companies like CTM Media. There may be some places, locally, where the cards would not be distributed because CTM Media does not own those racks. Board Member Smith indicated that the DDA board members could take the cards to those businesses locally to be dropped off; the other option is to consider working with other hotel card distributors to have even more distribution. In the 200 locations, it is meant to be spread out throughout SE Michigan. Some of the places are high profile, and an opportunity for a lot of visitors to come into Metro Detroit, that they see our city, and downtown Wixom. He explained that we want to drive people from all over and we should do our part in distributing the cards as best as possible.

Chairperson Moscone asked if more cards were to be printed, if edits could be made at that point. Board Member Smith indicated yes, that was the full intent, to add those things along the way and make changes, if needed. When the website is ready, there could be a link or QR code that could be redirected to the website instead of the Facebook page.

Board Member Smith added that we could add any trail information to the Facebook page and provide as much trail information or link to the Facebook page, as well.

Chairperson Moscone indicated for the 8,000 cards that need to be printed, for the board members to send a note with suggestions within the next couple of weeks such as the bike trail link, so they could go directly to it. Chairperson Moscone stated the bike trail is a big driving force for weekends, visiting, etc., for something to do.

Board Member Smith indicated the design was, intentionally, kept light and simple; we don't want the card to tell our story, we want the website or the Facebook page to tell the story because that's where we can have a lot more content information. The card is meant to be a gateway to where we can provide a lot more information.

Board Member Willett asked if we are going to go to businesses to promote handing out the cards, how this should be handled so that multiple people are not going in. Board Member Smith stated we needed to be very clear when people were asking for places to go, things to do, etc., the cards are either on the counter or something that they hand out. If the cards are in the racks, they will get tossed. Board Member Smith indicated he would create a document to start listing the places they had been with their name, so there aren't multiple emails but could be checked before the cards were dropped off some place.

Board Member Smith also brought stickers to go on the front windows or doors of businesses within the city limits, with a focus on downtown, as a branding and also a way to show support.

- DDA Director Position Update

Chairperson Moscone spoke about the Recodified Tax Increment Financing Act (Excerpt) which was in the packet with a sentence underlined by City Manager Brown. In part, it said, "The director shall serve at the pleasure of the board".

City Manager Brown indicated it was Act 57 of 2018; there was a change, but he did not know the exact changes; it was an update. City Manager Brown indicated he provided this to Chairperson Moscone and Vice Chairperson Sheng. At the May 28, 2019 Council Meeting, there was some discussion about the DDA director position where we adopted the budget. A council member had made a comment at that meeting that he was hoping the person needed to be under the City Manager/City Council and not segregate the position. When City Manager Brown drafted the job description, it reflected reporting to the DDA Board and to the City Manager. It came back from Vice Chairman Sheng and Chairperson Moscone, this was not reflected in the job description. There was a discussion after the last DDA board meeting in August at which time Vice Chairperson Sheng stated it was his understanding, legally, the DDA director could not report to anybody but the DDA board. City Manager Brown indicated this was not consistent with what he had experienced in the past. City Manager Brown stated he had done a variety of checkins with some people regarding the legality and he had not received a definitive answer from anyone. The closest came recently when somebody provided this document and they first thought it would be okay, in their opinion, for the director to report both to the city manager as well as the DDA board. City Manager Brown stated he read it, and he didn't see where that prohibits anything, it says the director shall serve the pleasure of the board. City Manager Brown indicated he put in an inquiry to the city attorney. Their initial reaction was that it was not cut and dry. Also, he had conversations with other people where they weren't necessarily sure if that should be a position of council. City Manager Brown indicated this may be something to have a discussion.

City Manager Brown stated he was looking for job descriptions. He found a Grand Haven job posting with reporting to the DDA and city manager. He thought in that particular job description would be a model but he was getting conflicting information and not a cut and dry answer at this point.

Board Member Willett inquired why we couldn't go to the Oakland County Main Street to get the verbiage for the job description and the law. City Manager Brown stated this was one of the inquiries that he had made.

Board Member Willett asked why it was so important to have the DDA director report to the city manager. It was her understanding that it is a separate entity and it would be a conflict of interest. Approval would have to be made for anything over \$3,000. The only concern would have to be funding and misappropriation of funding but that is documented. Board Member Willett stated we are losing the interim DDA director, we need to hire a director now because the board members are all volunteers.

Board Member Smith stated a lot of projects we have had along the way are on hold as a result of not hiring a DDA director. A number of the committees are meeting, working very hard and hiring a director is taking too long, particularly when we have a lot of big things going on. It is best for the downtown, and it is the best for the city as well.

Board Member Smith stated their recommendation had not been reached out to, and it was a concern because he had been the expert for the DDA and Main Street program.

Board Member Willett indicated she talked to numerous people at the Block Party and they were very impressed. She stated we could get a lot more volunteers but we need to have a leader in place to help us bring in more businesses, and push the developers to show that we are serious.

Chairperson Moscone added that, hopefully, the DDA director could help us get funding from the County and the State. He asked if city council understood some of the checks and balances that are built into the position and another talk with them might be a good idea.

Mayor Ziegler stated that the DDA had made progress in the last 20 years and the last two years had been significant. He wants to see a DDA director hired. There has been approval but at one of the meetings, it was brought up if it was possible to do this, and approaching city council. At the budget meetings, you get questions like this from the council members, what happens, who is that person going to report to, who is going to be giving them instructions, where is their office going to be, etc. We need to think about those things in advance. Mayor Ziegler indicated he did not know if these questions were thought about in advance because we went through the process and got the position set up and some of those questions did come up. Mayor Ziegler indicated he thought that it is a minor thing because who is the person reporting to? If there is an agreement in the beginning, you have a place to start, why not have them report to the city manager? The DDA does not have anybody that is here every day that is going to be able to direct that person. Mayor Ziegler indicated he was disappointed because somebody is looking at the language to say we don't want this to report to the city manager, we want them to report to the board. There is no simple language. The language might mean something to you but it means entirely something different to somebody else. Mayor Ziegler suggested taking the language that had been proposed by the administration, allow the person to report to the administration and get going. As time goes on, the job description could be changed.

Mayor Ziegler stated he would like to make a proposal to have the director report to the city manager and have a review in a year with the job description to be redone.

Director Barker spoke about some of the issues such as the banners, and being told by the City Manager where they would be ordered. This is taking away the expertise of the design committee, and promotion committee, who are experts in their fields. City Manager Brown stated he did not know the language which was being referred to but the distinction was the city

banners as opposed to DDA banners. City Manager Brown indicated there are two reasons why it would be appropriate to order from the same banner company. One, there was difficulty in finding companies that made exactly what we needed, the exact way that we needed it. Secondly, the cost, it is markedly below anybody else. People have had negative experiences when an individual group created their own banners which didn't work.

Board Member Smith stated he had done some research with banners and it is in his background and field as well. Some of his concerns in the downtown area, there is no indication that we have a downtown, all of our signage says Village Center. There is nothing setting us a part as a downtown. Part of our initiative, branding and our efforts is to create a downtown atmosphere. Right now, the current banner says City of Wixom which it is within the city, but we need to have a distinguished downtown and that's part of the research that was done to work.

Board Member Smith stated that once we agree to have the oversight by the city manager and down the road, how do we get back the level of autonomy? There are approvals by the city council, the city manager, the Mayor, but we need some level of autonomy as well when we are offering up the confines and constraints of our guidelines to be able to move the downtown forward.

Mayor Ziegler indicated based on conversations that he had at budget meetings, etc., it is his opinion, the city manager would maintain the authority for the time being because it is a brand new entity and you need to have some oversight and guidance.

Chairperson Moscone suggested setting up a 90 day or 100 day timeframe or term where it falls under the city manager's direction in order to get some traction to move along and then reevaluate, if that is possible to do so.

City Manager Brown stated there was some discussion why the director should report to him: Fundamentally, the city is going to perform the HR advertising function, take in the resumes, organize resumes, bring them all to the board, etc., it is going to be functioned through the city. Financially, over \$3,000, it is going to have to come through the city. Physical space, unless there is a different idea, the person is going to reside at city hall, close proximity to the city manager. There would be a lot of involvement from the city on this front. It makes sense for day to day supervision to have somebody that's there day to day to some extent. The person is going to be operating under the direction of the board, in general, in terms of the overall movements and programs, etc. In the beginning, there would be a lot of city involvement and that is the reason why the director should report to the city manager. City Manager Brown suggested that the language read, "anticipated to report to the city manager".

Board Member Willett stated that the DDA and the city should be working together, we are all looking for the same thing. We have to have the support of the Mayor, city manager and the city council. It helps all of us who are paying taxes and who want to see more businesses come

- October 8: Signarama (79677 Grand River Ave.)
- November 12: Nonverbal Science with Monica Levin at Denise's Wixom Grille (29710 S. Wixom Rd.)

- **Downtown Business News/Events**

- Every Monday: Drafting Table 5K Run/Walk Club - 7 p.m.
- Every Wednesday: Bike Night 6:30 p.m.
- October 2: Ladies Night Out -- *Sip N Stroll*
- October 5: Drafting Table -- Oktoberfest Party

Public Comments:

No public comments.

Executive Director's Comments:

No comments.

Board Members' Comments:

Board Member Willett indicated her and Director Barker attended the Heritage Conference and thought it was unique and very informative. The conference gave them a lot of ideas on what to do on the historic side, the DDA telling the story of Wixom and how it came to be. The Conference was well done, the speaker was from the secret service who served five presidents, who had some good stories.

Board Member Rzeznik thanked Chairperson Moscone and Director Barker for all of their services. She indicated we need to make sure that we know how the city works, it is smart to take guidance from those who have been here and know how things work. Board Member Rzeznik also stated that we need a director as soon as possible.

Chairperson Moscone stated it was great serving on the board, he was apprehensive at first to serve in the community back in time. Total Sports has grown since then. Even though he won't be here, everyone should know that Total Sports supports the different departments, supports the city; the financial sponsorships will continue as long as they are here, hopefully, forever.

Mayor Ziegler stated he wanted to have an update or discussion on the municipal parking lot, it is almost finished. It is very nice and impressive. Mayor Ziegler suggested that the DDA have a dedication and bring attention to it because it is such a nice job.

Mayor Ziegler thanked Chairperson Moscone with all of his hard work and dedication. He also congratulated Vice Chairperson Sheng and Board Member Rzeznik for their new positions.

Adjournment:

MOTION by Board Member Willett to adjourn the meeting. Member Klebba-Cheney second the motion. This meeting of the Wixom Downtown Development Authority was motioned and adjourned at 8:55 a.m.

Mona Freiburger
Recording Secretary

September 10, 2019

COPY

Dear Mayor and City Council Members,

It is with sadness that I submit my resignation, to be effective on November 1, 2019. This is almost one year to the date from November 15, 2018 when the City Manager stated, tongue and cheek, "I'm trying to flush you out, too".

Much of my 20 years with the city, I have loved my job! It has brought me joy to see the lightbulb go on when someone finally understood their property assessment, to assist an entrepreneur in achieving their goal and opening a small business, or to find the right building to suit the needs of a larger business. I have proudly served Wixom.

There have also been some darker sides to working for the city, which some say, comes with the territory. I always took the stand, "keep me out of the politics and let me do my job". Along the way, several have scapegoated me in an attempt to cast blame away from themselves. I have taken it better than most for this simple reason: I am not guilty.

If I am guilty of anything, it's being aggressive, passionate and forgetting that others don't share the same ethics. I have never worked for recognition, but for the good of the city. I speak honestly and have always represented Wixom with the highest level of integrity and respect. I've attempted many times to partner with other departments for the betterment of the community and only with the intent of performing with excellence.

Lastly, my final remarks will speak about items of economic development that I would consider outstanding, but not for lack of effort on my part.

1. DDA Director: A DDA Director should have been hired by now. The City Manager states Council wants the DDA Director to report to him. However, the laws are clear (Section 125.4205 of PA 57 of 2018): the Director reports to the DDA board. It appears Council is concerned that the DDA will run rogue and misuse funds, but the DDA cannot operate without approval of the City Council. Council has final say over who the Director is. Council approves the DDA budget. The DDA cannot spend over \$3,000 without Council approval.
2. City marketing
3. Redevelopment Ready Community application

It had been my hope to work at least two additional years with the city to see some projects through. It is now my intent to work in an environment that supports a healthy culture, values hard work and professionalism, and does so without harassment, condescending tones, and discrimination.

In the future, I wish Wixom and all of its residents, both residential and commercial/industrial, the very best and will continue to support efforts which will make Wixom even greater.

Respectfully,



Debra S Barker

Cc: Steven Brown, City Manager