

**CITY OF WILLIAMSTON
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
SEPTEMBER 16, 2008
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

1. Call To Order:

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers by Chairman Timothy Grossman and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. Roll Call:

Chairman Timothy Grossman, Authority Members Dawn Marie Joseph, Tom Mitchell, Alyson Wendt, Steve Eyke, Karen Joy McGarry, and Mayor Michelle Hyne. Absent: Barb Vandenberg (arrived at 7:07 p.m.), and Jeremy Emmi.

Also Present:

City Manager/Clerk Lisa Hitchcock, Deputy Clerk Holly Thompson, Community Development Director Michelle Aniol, Enterprise Reporter Brad Ritter, Ingham County Housing Commission Representatives Bruce Johnston and Glen Rocky, and citizens Dr. Keller, Denise Diedrich, Dave Okowit, Marla Swartz, Lea Estes, Kathy Kropp, Diane Gorsline, Bev O'Malia, and Wendy Shaft.

Motion by **Wendt**, second by **Joseph**, to excuse Emmi. **Motion passed by voice vote.**

4. Approval of Agenda:

Add 12d. Historical Preservation.

Motion by **Mitchell**, second by **Joseph**, to approve the agenda as amended. **Motion passed by voice vote.**

5. Public Response:

Wendy Shaft, 121 High Street, commented that she would like a collaboration with the DDA and the Chamber for First Fridays. She asked permission to work with Director Aniol to work on this collaboration. She gave them a sample postcard to advertise shopping in Williamston.

Member Joseph commented that she has worked with Ms. Shaft on this idea and they feel that many of their customers come from outside the community. They would like to do a mailing in September, October, and November. They would want to send them out once every three months.

Chairman Grossman mentioned that the Chamber has a bulk permit and mailing lists.

Member Joseph commented that another community assigns the buildings a number and a correlating map to help identify the businesses.

*Vandenberg arrived at 7:07 p.m.

6. DDA Regular Minutes of August 19, 2008:

Motion by **Mitchell**, second by **Joseph**, to approve the DDA regular minutes of August 19, 2008 as presented. **Motion passed by voice vote.**

7. Accounts Payable:

The DDA felt that the sign needs another finish coat and will have Member Vandenberg ask Francine Colgan to put another coat on.

Motion by **Joseph**, second by **Vandenberg**, to approve payment to Francine Colgan in the amount of \$200.00 for painting the sign and ask her to put another finish coat on to fix the milky look. Yes: Grossman, McGarry, Eyke, Hyne, Mitchell, Vandenberg, Joseph, Wendt. No: None. **Motion passed.**

Motion by **Joseph**, second by **Vandenberg**, to approve the water bill payment in the amount of \$76.02 as presented. Yes: Grossman, McGarry, Eyke, Hyne, Mitchell, Vandenberg, Joseph, Wendt. No: None. **Motion carried.**

8. Community Development Director:

Director Aniol reported that she has heard from Vanessa Warren regarding the streetscape grant and she has relayed that she has not heard anything from MDOT yet, but expects to soon. Director Aniol added that she found a card with parking mapped out on the table at a restaurant in Northville. She felt something similar may be helpful during the streetscape construction.

Motion by **Vandenberg**, second by **Wendt** to add 12e. DDA Plan Update to the agenda. **Motion passed by voice vote.**

9. Treasurer- Budget Printout:

Motion by **Hyne**, second by **Joseph**, to table the budget printout until the next meeting. **Motion passed by voice vote.**

10. Presentation- Ingham County Housing Commission Re: Rental Rehabilitation:

Bruce Johnston introduced himself and described the MSHDA's Rental Rehabilitation Program. It provides funds for property owners up to \$35,000 per apartment with a five year deferral. After five years of completing MSHDA's rental requirements it is forgiven. There is a 25% requirement for property owners to match. There are abatements for asbestos. There have been twenty-two rehabilitations completed in downtown Mason. The Mason City Manager speaks very highly of the program and it has enabled people to live in the downtown. The program can revitalize and boost a community. In his experience he has found that if this program is in place buildings will sell because people want to be able to rehabilitate their apartments. The program is becoming popular around the state. The Housing Commission would apply for the grant through Ingham County. The City would have to give a letter of support. They would work with the City staff and building inspectors to design the program. The apartments must be rented to an open market and a certain percentage of apartments would also have to be

rented to 50% below area or median income people for at least five years. To begin the process the applicant will need to put \$2500 in escrow for inspections, a letter from the bank to ensure you can contribute the portion needed for the project and, the applicant will hire an engineer or architect to design the area. Exterior renovation is not included in the grant.

11. Action Items

11a. Maintenance of Light Poles:

Chairman Grossman commented that the light pole bases are in need of paint.

Member Eyke suggested asking if the manufacturer has a warranty and if not what they would recommend to do.

Director Aniol commented that she will find out if there is a warranty and an estimate for how much it will cost to get them painted.

Chairman Grossman commented that the sidewalks also need to be sealed.

Member Eyke asked if the DDA could look at fixing the chips in the sidewalks. He commented that the chipping should be fixed before it is sealed.

Director Aniol commented that she walked the downtown sidewalks with DPW Director Gary Haney and he told her why he thought the sidewalks were chipping.

Chairman Grossman commented that he would also like to see the street signs replaced with some kind of historic looking signs that fit in with the streetscape.

Member Eyke questioned who is responsible for the holiday decorations in the downtown.

Chairman Grossman commented that the DDA is responsible for the holiday decoration and explained how things are being done.

Member Hyne asked who is ultimately in charge of the holiday decorations.

Chairman Grossman responded that Director Aniol would ultimately be in charge of the decorations.

Member Hyne commented that there was an issue on the southern block of the downtown that it was not lit up. She would like to see it addressed for this year.

Chairman Grossman suggested the DDA set up a plan to work with the business owners to get power to those poles that are not lit.

Director Aniol commented that the City of Rochester lights up their downtown buildings with light strands during the holidays.

Chairman Grossman suggested that the DDA purchase the lights and sell them back to the buildings so it is a uniform look.

Member Eyke suggested that just the outlines of the buildings be done.

Chairman Grossman commented that the DDA needs to focus on getting the poles lit on south Putnam and for this year just encourage the stores to decorate their store fronts.

Members Hyne and Joseph commented that they would like to see the City trees restrung in front of City Hall because they have received many complaints.

Director Aniol suggested that the focus be on the concentration and draping of the lights.

Chairman Grossman commented that the Christmas Lighting Plan be on the next agenda.

Member Eyke commented that he will take some pictures of the buildings and draw up some suggested plans as well as a plan for the City trees.

12. Discussion Items

12a. City Council News:

Member Hyne reported that the City Council had the first reading of the Planning Commission Ordinance from the Zoning and Enabling Act. Some of the Planning Commissioners have submitted a letter against the ordinance. She commented that it will give control to local municipalities and allow the Mayor to appoint two non-electors. She commented that Representatives Byrum and Meadows voted to pass the Act and many organizations such as the MML support it. Member Hyne also reported that the City is in the process of fixing the lot off of Middle Street and signage has been discussed showing where public parking is available. The City will work with MDOT for suggested signage.

12b. Wayfinding Signs:

Chairman Grossman asked Director Aniol to try to find the wayfinding sign information that a previous committee worked on.

12c. Reseal Sidewalks:

No discussion.

12d. Historic Preservation:

Director Aniol distributed a copy of Nantucket's historic standards.

Member Eyke commented that the standards help educate people on historical architecture. He recommended that the façade improvements offer more incentives for building improvements.

Chairman Grossman appointed Eyke, Wendt, Joseph, and Hyne to serve on the façade review committee to review the program.

The board discussed how to suggest facades improvements to applicants before they start planning their renovations.

Grossman: Remember there was an issue with TSC when that whole process was going through and things like can you make your entrance off of Linn Road instead of Putnam, I mean little things and they all caved. Now granted it's not in the DDA.

12e. DDA Plan Update:

Director Aniol distributed a DDA Plan update. She went through the incentives in the DDA Act.

1. Professional Technical and Administrative Assistance
2. Marketing Program
3. Public Improvement Projects
4. Redevelopment Assistance
5. On-Going Maintenance of Public Improvements
6. Loan Program
7. Retail Incubators
8. Wireless Technology Program
9. "One Stop Shop" Initiative
10. Façade Improvement Program
11. Sign Improvement Program

Tools that are not dependent on the Tax Increment Financing Revenue:

1. Liquor Licenses through Michigan Liquor Control Commission
2. Façade Improvement Grant through Michigan Economic Development Corporation
3. Signature Building Program Grant through Michigan Economic Development Corporation
4. Equity for rent from property owners

15. Public Response:

Dave Okowit commented that his business has moved a couple doors down to a new location. They have an issue with the tree in front of his building. The tree is located directly in front of their door and is beginning to touch the overhang on their building. He is also concerned because if he puts a sign up, people could not see it around the tree. He added that he has put a substantial amount of money into his business and it would be pointless to put a sign up if people cannot see it.

Director Aniol commented that an arborist will be coming into town to evaluate the trees in the downtown. To see which ones need to be pruned.

Dave Okowit stated that a group of businesses have collaborated with the City Pulse to put a 'What's up in Williamston' page but the cost for the advertisement is increasing and they want to see if the DDA can help contribute to the advertisement. He feels strongly it is a worthwhile investment.

Chairman Grossman commented that the DDA will investigate advertising with the City Pulse and get back with him.

Director Aniol commented that the trees in the downtown are densely foliated and should not have been used in this instance. She encouraged the DDA to look into putting in a different tree in the downtown.

16. Adjournment:

Meeting Adjourned at 10:20 p.m.

***THE PRECEDING MINUTES ARE A SYNOPSIS OF A DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY MEETING AND DO NOT REPRESENT A VERBATIM RECORD.**

Respectfully Submitted by: _____
Holly M. Thompson, Deputy Clerk

Date Approved: _____