

**Minutes of the Downtown Development Authority
City of Portland**

Held on Thursday, September 27, 2007
In Council Chambers at City Hall

Members Present: Antaya, Barnes, Briggs, Dempsey, Kavanagh, Trappen,

Members Absent: Clement, Dumas, Pontz,

Guests: Frewen, Parsons

Vice-Chair Antaya called the meeting to order at 3:41 P.M.

Motion by Barnes, supported by Kavanagh, to approve the agenda as presented
All in favor. Adopted

Motion by Barnes, supported by Kavanagh, to approve the minutes of the August 22, 2007 meeting after corrections.
All in favor. Adopted

Motion by Barnes, supported by Kavanagh, to approve the Treasurer's Report.
All in favor. Adopted

City Manager Dempsey stated that the downtown business owners agreed to pay the amount of the engineer's estimate for the first bid of the Riverside Façade Improvement Project. However, after the project was re-bid several of the estimates came in lower and several business owners will be getting a refund.

Motion by Dempsey, supported by Kavanagh to include in the Treasurer's Report the addition of Riverside Façade Refund Checks to Mark Lewanski for \$1,000, Ed Bishopp for \$7,919, Wanda Urie for \$89, and Cheeky Monkey for \$375.00.
All in favor. Adopted

City Manager Dempsey stated that Mel Christensen our Main Street Manager/DDA Director would not be present at this meeting and would normally talk about the Riverside Façade Update. However, because of a misunderstanding that occurred regarding an informal off camera meeting vs. our normal meeting being televised, she left. He stated we met with the business owners and talked about the re-bid of the contract and how the buildings had different variables. All of the building owners agreed to stay with their original commitment of the grant agreement that they signed with MSHDA. The bid was low enough that we were able to accept the lower bid and get all of the work done on the Riverside Façade. There was a pre-construction meeting with the contractor this week and all the business and property owners included in the project were invited attend. Property owners were able to select the color of paint for the buildings, windows, and the color of window frames.

The window supplier is in Wisconsin and will be able to get the windows in about 3 weeks instead of the 10 to 12 weeks that we were led to believe. City Manager Dempsey stated it is possible to have the project completed this fall. He also indicated that we have been in contact with Mary Kay Steffes-Rossett regarding her building, which was not eligible to receive the grant. She is willing to go along with the improvements to the back of her building. The property owners have agreed to advance their money on the condition that she would sign an agreement for when she sold her building the money for the improvements would get paid back to the D.D.A. City Manager Dempsey is currently working on that agreement. He stated if the weather cooperates, the project should be complete this fall.

Treasurer Kavanagh asked the City Manager how long the project would take.

City Manager Dempsey replied 10 to 12 weeks and they should be starting soon on tuck-pointing and foundations. They will be able to start painting the buildings as long as the weather stays above 55 degrees. He stated we want to make sure we have a good job with good quality, and will wait until spring if the weather requires it.

Kathy Parsons stated that the Design Committee has completed their Sign Survey and have made some draft recommendations that the Promotion and Marketing Committee and the D.D.A. members will review. They would like to move quickly on the recommendations in order to have them finished to coincide with the Riverside Façade Project.

Mayor Barnes asked Ms. Parsons to summarize the findings of their survey.

She indicated that business owners agree there needs to be some regulation; however, they also need to determine how signage will affect their businesses and how they want to be projected. She stated it is more than just for the Riverside Façade Project; it is also for Maple and Kent Streets. She stated the biggest change from the current Sign Ordinance is to limit the space for signs to 10% of the first floor instead of 10% of the entire building. She stated that will bring it down to a pedestrian scale and limits the area covered on the building. All survey comments are available for Boardmember review.

City Manager Dempsey noted that the current Sign Ordinance allows for 15% of the wall space for signs. He stated we are trying to preserve the architecture of the downtown buildings and do not want to obstruct the second story loft apartments with signs. He asked D.D.A. members to provide comments back to the Design Committee so they can formulate a recommendation based upon the survey results to City Council.

Vice-Chair Antaya asked Ms. Parsons if there was a reason that the Design Committee did not come up with a defined size for the signs that each business could have.

Ms. Parsons replied there are no two building alike downtown. What would be appropriate for Jerry's three facades would not be appropriate for any other building downtown. That is why they decided to come up with a percentage of the building rather than a defined size.

City Manager Dempsey referring to the sign for Sanborn Real Estate on the back of their building, stated under the current City Sign Ordinance a non-conforming sign must be brought into compliance within 15 years or upon certain events involving the building such as modifications or if the building is sold. He stated that we need to get something in front of Council in October because they passed a 90-day moratorium on signs which will expire in October.

Mayor Barnes asked if there was any guidance or historic preservation guidelines they should be following on signs.

Ms. Parsons replied there was nothing from the materials they researched on recommendations for signs. She reiterated this would include the signs for Maple or Kent Street signs.

Boardmember Trappen referring to the Year-End Evaluation stated she feels strongly that we need Mel for the rest of the agenda. She said, "The discussion that happen when we were first here should have happen before we all arrived today". She stated she felt very uncomfortable with a bad situation. She stated that Mayor Barnes should have brought it to Mel's attention before the members arrived today. It was an uncomfortable situation for everyone in the room, and most uncomfortable for Mel because she did not come back. She said, "I don't believe we can do the year end evaluation without her".

Mayor Barnes explained that in the information that was sent out Mel suggested we hold the meeting off camera to facilitate a roundtable discussion of the year-end evaluation. He stated he expressed his concern with that to City Manager Dempsey. He stated typically you would discuss the decision with Chairman Dumas to get something definite on how things would go. He stated his concern is that this decision was not made public so that anyone that was desirous of watching the meeting would tune in and there would be no meeting. He said, "It gives the perception there is something going on that maybe they should know about". He said, "I certainly didn't intend to create a situation where Ms. Christensen felt compelled to leave and not be here for the meeting". He is concerned about the perception of what type of business we are doing and how we are doing it. He stated upon walking in and seeing that the room was changed there should have been a decision on whether it was appropriate or not and if we decided as a group to put the chairs back and continue as we normally do. He said, "I apologize for creating that situation but at the same time I think it is important that we conduct our meeting in such a way that everyone is informed on what is going on and why".

Boardmember Trappen stated she was well aware that the format for the meeting was going to be changed because it was in the packet she received over a week ago. She stated the year end evaluation is Mel's baby and she should be here.

City Manager Dempsey stated the thought process in having a meeting in a roundtable format was to try and generate more discussion. Mel was trying to emulate a discussion we had when we had our evaluation with the people from the State of Michigan when they were here. There is a little more interaction when you are in a roundtable format instead of being seated at the dais.

Mayor Barnes asked the City Manager if he had raised that issue with Mel about being in a roundtable discussion.

City Manager Dempsey replied he advised Mel that the Mayor had indicated that the discussion should be on-camera. He also asked Mel if she had heard back from anyone else from the D.D.A. about the off-camera discussion. He stated we also failed to announce to the public that the meeting would not be televised. He said as far as the notice that Mel included in the packet, it clearly apprised everyone of her intent to hold the meeting off-camera to get more of a round table discussion going.

Mayor Barnes stated his interpretation of what was going to happen is that we would come here, discuss it and if we decided go ahead with the round table discussion. He was under the impression that the City Manager informed Ms. Christensen that they would have their business meeting first, and then go off-camera for the round table discussion. Mayor Barnes agreed that Ms. Christensen should be here for the Main Street review, but at the same time part of what was brought up was how to restructure the D.D.A. in such a way to become a more efficient overseer of the Main Street Program. He stated without Chairman Dumas here it is difficult to get his input on decisions that could significantly alter how we do business with the Main Street Committees. He noted that there are members on the D.D.A. that do not have a vested interest in the downtown portion of the D.D.A. They are valued members of the D.D.A.; however, we can not expect that they should be on a Main Street Committee because their businesses are elsewhere and they need to devote their time to their businesses.

Mayor Barnes stated that we should table the year-end review and the year-end round table discussion until a future meeting to take any action in making the D.D.A. a better overseer of the Main Street Program.

Boardmember Urie asked if that meant that we would not work on creating the Main Street Board today.

Mayor Barnes replied we are tabling the discussion it doesn't mean that we can't work on it. He stated he was under the impression that we would work on the Main Street Board today with the recommendations that were given to us by Ms. Christensen and make a recommendation for the next meeting. He stated we need to add people to the Main Street Over Site Board that are not currently on the D.D.A. along with members of the D.D.A. When Mr. Borgstrom from the Michigan Main Street Program was asked who should be included on the Over Site Board, he recommended the D.D. A. members who reside or own a business in the downtown and the four chairs of the Main Street Committees.

Boardmember Urie stated she specifically asked Mr. Borgstrom who should be on the Standing Committee of the Main Street Board and he replied the Committee Chairs, any members of the D.D.A. that wanted to be on the Committee, and any members from the public that are interested in seeing downtown improved. Mr. Borgstrom suggested that the membership be from 7 to 11 people.

Boardmember Trappen added the people of the general public would need to be approved by the D.D.A.

Boardmember Urie stated she is ok with tabling the year end review; however, we should not drag it out because the work plans have not been approved and the Main Street Program is in limbo at this point. She stated we need to move on a plan of action to get the governing board created.

Mayor Barnes stated it would be appropriate to start with the D.D.A. members, the four chairs of the Main Street Committees, and the D.D.A. could approve members from the public.

City Manager Dempsey added there should be some qualifications for sitting on a Main Street Board. To be a member of the D.D.A., or Main Street Chairs, or someone from the public that is working on a board in the downtown. It is important for people to understand what the program is about.

Motion by Barnes, supported by Trappen, to have members of the Main Street Over Site Committee consist of the four Main Street Chairs, members of the D.D.A. that have a business or reside in the downtown, then those members would then select members from the public subject to approval of the D.D.A.

All in favor. Adopted

City Manager Dempsey noted that the D.D.A. is a 12 member board and there are currently two vacancies. He stated to be talking about that large of a Main Street Board how much duplication will there be and how hard is it going to be to recruit people to serve in that capacity when we are not filling our boards and commissions now.

Mayor Barnes, referring to a conversation from Vice-Chair Antaya last month stated the D.D.A. Board used to be smaller, but when there were more qualified applicants than openings the number of members was expanded to twelve.

Vice-Chair Antaya stated that the Mayor has the authority to increase or decrease the membership of the board.

Mayor Barnes stated that has been the rationale for not appointing additional people to serve on the D.D.A.

Boardmember Trappen stated that Rush is not at the meeting today; however, he may be very interested in serving on a Main Street Board.

Mayor Barnes stated that we should let the Main Street Board orchestrate their membership. The Main Street Board would consist of D.D.A. members Trappen, Briggs, Urie, and the four chairs of the Main Street Board and have a discussion on who else would serve on the board. They would also come up with their proposed by-laws and present them to the D.D.A. for approval.

City Manager Dempsey clarified that if you are changing the composition of the D.D.A. that has to be approved by City Council; however, if you are creating a sub-committee of the D.D.A. or setting up the by-laws, it would be approved by the D.D.A.

There was discussion on the by-laws of the City of Ferndale that D.D.A. Director Christensen included in the board packets.

Mayor Barnes stated there could be very simple changes made to the by-laws that simply address the fact that there would be a Main Street Over Site Committee that would report to the D.D.A. which would in turn need to be approved by City Council.

Vice-Chair Antaya reiterated that we need to come up with language of proposed draft changes so that the D.D.A. would not have to come up with all new language for the by-laws.

City Manager Dempsey stated there was confusion among Boardmembers regarding the Articles of Corporation and by-laws. He informed the D.D.A. of the differences.

Mayor Barnes stated in a recommendation from Main Street Michigan, Mr. Borgstrom indicated he wanted a significant demonstration of the commitment between the D.D.A. and the Over Site Board and it should be stated in the by-laws. Discussion continued on who should be part of the Main Street Board, as well as the recommendations in the Year-End Evaluation for the Main Street Program. The Main Street Oversight Committee will make by-law changes and bring them back to the D.D.A. for review at their next meeting.

Motion by Dempsey, supported by Barnes, to appoint Boardmember Urie as Acting-Chair of the Main Street Oversight Committee until they meet and appoint a Chair.

All in favor. Adopted

City Manager Dempsey stated he had two observations in looking at the drafts of the by-laws. The D.D.A. is a public body governed under the Open Meetings Act. The Main Street Board is also a public body and they need to conduct themselves in accordance with the requirements of the Open Meetings Act. He also stated that Ferndale appoints their members on an annual basis, but suggested appointing our members on staggered years so that we have some continuity so not all terms are expiring at the same time. He stated if someone resigns from the D.D.A. they should also resign from the Main Street Board. Ferndale also appoints and removes people for the Main Street Committees where the City of Portland has volunteers.

Mayor Barnes informed Boardmembers there is currently in the works an Economic Development Corporation being founded.

City Manager Dempsey stated that City Council has approved Articles of Incorporation for an Economic Development Corporation for the City of Portland. They are empowered to take on projects in the City limits that encourage commercial or industrial development. He stated currently there is no budget and there are seven members of a nine-member board. He stated there is not a defined project at this time; however, the City property at the corner of Cutler Road and Grand River Avenue might be a project they will take on. The members that have been appointed so far are Danby Township Supervisor, Richard Pohl; Portland Township Supervisor, Jim Lakin; George Vollman; Keith Cook; Julie Clement; Joel VanSlambrouck and City Manager Dempsey. There are two positions that still need to be filled. City Manager Dempsey stated the EDC is one more tool that stimulates better shopping opportunities in Portland. The Mayor appoints members to the EDC. If anyone is interested in serving, please submit a letter of interest to City Hall.

Boardmember Briggs stated that Terry Frewen has been involved in economic restructuring in the County and he may be a person of interest regarding possible interest in development or being on the EDC.

Mayor Barnes stated the Regional Economic Development Team (Red Team) in Lansing had a concern that there may be too many front doors for businesses that want to do business in the Lansing area.

They have gotten together to form a new group and Portland, being a member of the Red Team would be a member of the Leap Organization. He stated being a member and knowing what land may be needed for a development, we would be able to let them know that Portland has 58 acres that could possibly be a site for new development.

Mayor Barnes stated there will be some workshops in Howell put on by the Howell Main Street Program. There will be meetings in October and November that we may want to attend. The Michigan Main Street Program encourages us to participate in the training sessions. More information will be available from D.D.A. Director Christensen.

City Manager Dempsey stated that Mel walked out of here today and we need her to be successful in implementing this process to go forward. We need to encourage her to getting back in this project.

Vice-Chair Antaya apologized to Mel stating that he assumed the seating arrangements were approved, because he knew about the change and didn't say anything about it.

Motion by Urie, supported by Dempsey, to adjourn the meeting at 4:52 P.M.
All in favor. Adopted

Respectfully submitted,

Yvonne M. Miller, City Clerk