

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

Held on Thursday, April 18, 2019
In Council Chambers at City Hall

Members Present: Grimminck, Gorman, Barnes, VanSlambrouck, Pung, Briggs, Antaya, Madarang

Members Absent: None

Staff: DDA/Main Street Director ConnerWellman; City Clerk Miller

Guests: None

Chair Grimminck called the meeting to order at 3:32 P.M.

There was no public comment.

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

Motion by VanSlambrouck, supported by Antaya, to approve the minutes of the March 21, 2019 DDA meeting as presented.
All in favor. Adopted.

Motion by VanSlambrouck, supported by Antaya, to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented.
All in favor. Adopted.

Under Team Reports, Mayor Barnes reported the Organization & Finance Team continues to work on planning for the Sesquicentennial celebration and Beerfest on the Bridge.

Chair Grimminck reported the Business Enhancement Team continues to hold business workshops. Director ConnerWellman stated consideration as to continuing them should be given as there has not been great attendance.

Member VanSlambrouck stated the Promotions & Marketing Team has nothing new to report.

Under the Design Team Report, Member Briggs stated Dennis Cunningham has been in contact with them to discuss his thoughts on moving The Red Tomato to 160 Kent St. Calendars for summer streetscape maintenance are being developed.

Under New Business, Director ConnerWellman presented proposed updates to the Façade Improvement Application, Agreement and structure of available funds. In order to fund agreements with taxpayer dollars an easement must be put in place. The proposed funding structure would include payment of \$10,000 for a primary façade, \$5,000 for a second façade and \$3,000 for a third façade. This funding structure would also increase the available incentive.

There was discussion regarding the length of time a property owner would have to wait to apply for another \$10,000 incentive after they had already received an incentive of the same.

Member Antaya suggested there should also be language included to address how long before a property owner could apply for funding after receiving it.

Director ConnerWellman presented a Façade Application from Tim Fuller for the boardwalk side (primary side) of the Opera House at 128 Kent St. (Building A)

Member Madarang arrived at 3:56 P.M.

Director ConnerWellman asked the Board if consideration could be given to granting the \$10,000 Primary Façade Reimbursement to Mr. Fuller's application.

Member Pung asked that Mr. Fuller be encouraged to make quality improvements to his property that meet the historic standards.

Director ConnerWellman suggested rescheduling the DDA's meetings outside of regular "business hours" in order to attract individuals to serve on the Board. More involvement from the community is needed. She suggested meeting at either 7:30 A.M. or 7:00 P.M. rather than the current time of 3:30 P.M.

Member Antaya noted that the 3:30 P.M. time was set because most of the DDA members either lived or worked in the DDA district.

There was discussion.

Under the Director Report, Director ConnerWellman presented her report on downtown activities including business and property news.

Under Board Member Comments, Member Briggs noted that the National Day of Prayer service will be held Thursday, May 2, 2019 at 7:00 P.M. at the Red Mill Pavilion.

The Ionia County Commission on Aging will host meals at the Congregational Church on Wednesdays and Thursdays at Noon.

Member Pung inquired if the Main Street Update on August 28, 2019 will formalize the Main Street Agreement and funding.

Director ConnerWellman stated that is her understanding. Michigan Main Street has stated they will fund the Portland Main Street Program through the end of the year but not for the length of the 2-year agreement.

City Manager Gorman stated the City has been researching the Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) program for the past year. He was recently made aware of a conference call with Michigan Main Street where it was stated that Main Street communities will no longer receive funding unless they are engaged with RRC. City Manager Gorman further stated that the philosophy behind Main Street has always been that it is separate from "the City"; they are now

tying the program to the City. His research has not found any tangible results from the program to date. The recently approved 2-year agreement with Michigan Main Street makes no reference to the City being engaged with RRC.

Member Madarang left the meeting at 4:32 P.M.

Member Pung stated the DDA has not been engaged in this process. She asked if City has had a formal report out on the evaluation that was conducted? Has there been a public process on the report out? Was this just a report provided to the City?

City Manager Gorman stated the RRC is a Citywide program and is not specific to the DDA. The City received a baseline report from RRC and has been evaluating it. The City has to have the resources to make it work.

Member Pung stated she recalls being at the Michigan Municipal League conference where this message came out three years ago. She asked what the findings are? She further stated that this could impact significant resources and funding to the community.

City Manager Gorman stated this is a mandate from the State; if the City doesn't do certain things it won't get funding.

Member Pung asked if the report was given to Council for a public discussion.

City Manager Gorman stated that Council was provided the baseline report, it was discussed at the goal setting session. Participation in this program is a Council decision. At this point, tangible results have not been seen.

Member Pung stated that many communities have the RRC professionals come in and discuss their findings.

City Manager Gorman stated this has not happened yet because the City has not decided to move forward, although we have remained engaged.

Member Pung suggested having the RRC leadership in for a meeting.

City Manager Gorman stated that he has not yet found another community that has recommended the City of Portland should also get involved. A clear benefit has not been seen for the amount of work needed.

Member Pung stated that this is a new program so dramatic impact will not be seen yet.

There was continued discussion.

Member Briggs asked if the Main Street update and potential amendment to the agreement provide an opportunity for the DDA to decide if it wants to continue with the program? She asked what Portland is getting out of being a Main Street community? What financial benefit is it now?

City Manger Gorman stated that RRC requires City to do certain things if it wants certain funding. If the City has to find a way to get RRC done then it will do it. He further stated he has done a ton of research over the past year and has been met with resistance to questions he was asking.

Director ConnerWellman clarified that this is a City Council decision, at this time they have not said no to the program but have said not right now.

Member VanSlambrouck inquired why a vote was not taken on the splash pad project at the March 21, 2019 DDA meeting? The project is very different than the one previously proposed and the DDA is the only funding source.

Director ConnerWellman stated the project had just been approved by City Council at its meeting on March 18, 2019. The viewpoint was that the DDA was reapplying for a project that had already been approved. The application is only for a conceptual plan at this point.

Member VanSlambrouck asked why funding is not split with Parks and Recreation Department as was previously decided.

City Manager Gorman stated the City does not have the funding to provide.

Member VanSlambrouck stated her feeling that there should have been full disclosure about the project and its funding sources; there should have been a vote taken.

City Manager Gorman stated his understanding that the form in which information on the project was presented could have been better. He stated that this project is in the DDA's TIF plan with a cost of \$350,000; the benefit of the grant application is approximately another \$300,000 in funding to put towards the project.

Member Pung noted that the lack of process in how this grant application for the splash pad project was handled is an example of how the RRC program could help Portland.

Motion by Antaya, supported by Briggs, to adjourn the meeting at 4:50 P.M.

All in favor. Adopted

Respectfully submitted,

Margery Briggs, Secretary