

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

Held on Thursday, May 16, 2019  
In Council Chambers at City Hall

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

Members Absent: VanSlambrouck

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 Madarang, supported by Antaya, to approve the agenda with an amendment to remove C, under Old Business.

All in favor. Adopted.

Motion by Barnes, supported by Pung, to approve the minutes of the April 18, 2019 with a minor amendment to the bottom of pg. 2.

All in favor. Adopted.

Motion by Briggs, supported by Madarang, 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.

There was discussion of the Main Street program, the Board will wait for the revised agreement from the Michigan Main Street Center tying Main Street to the Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) program. The Board will then have the option to graduate from the Main Street program if they no longer see a benefit to participating in the program.

City Manager Gorman noted that planning for an amendment to the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Plan will continue.

Chair Grimminck stated the Business Enhancement Team has discussed the future of the business workshops as the last one was cancelled because only 3 individuals were signed up to attend. At this time, they have decided to continue holding the business workshops and will market them in different ways.

Nothing new to report from the Promotions & Marketing Team.

Under the Design Team Report, Member Briggs stated the committee has been discussing changes to the Façade Improvement language. Updates to the streetscapes and plantings in the downtown will begin next week. Production of the historic sign is underway with delivery expected before the Sesquicentennial Celebration where it will be unveiled.

Under Old Business, Director ConnerWellman presented the updated Façade Improvement language as discussed at the last meeting.

There was discussion of the 5-year easement required for the Façade Improvement Grant.

Member Antaya noted his abstention due to language in the Façade Improvement Program regarding available discounts if purchases are made local due to his ownership of Tom's Do It Center.

City Manager Gorman stated that he would like to reserve the right to do a legal review of the agreements to make sure the DDA/City is protected.

Motion by Barnes, supported by Gorman, to approve the Façade Improvement language and funding updates.

Antaya abstained. Six in favor. Adopted.

Director ConnerWellman suggested changing the regular meetings to the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of each month at 7:00 P.M. rather than the third Thursday of each month at 3:30 P.M.

Mayor Barnes stated the rationale for the proposed change is that individuals are reluctant to volunteer to serve on the DDA due to conflicts with their business. A change to an evening meeting time may attract more volunteers.

Motion by Barnes, supported by Madarang, to change the regular DDA meetings to the 4<sup>th</sup> of Monday of each month at 7:00 P.M.

All in favor. Adopted.

Under New Business, Chair Grimminck brought up the review of the Michigan Main Street Center to discuss whether the DDA would like to remain a Michigan Main Street Community or graduate from the program. Both the Design and Business Enhancement Committees felt that it is time to graduate from the Portland and made motions to that effect.

City Manager Gorman stated that he is glad the conversations have been taking place. Continuing with Main Street was not an issue until they tied the Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) program to the Main Street agreement.

Member Pung stated her feeling that she has heard from the DDA Board that Main Street has had value, the only change seems to be the RRC driver. She further stated that it sounds as if the City has decided not to engage in RRC, which is taking Main Street off the table.

City Manager Gorman stated that is not the case. The City will continue to evaluate the RRC program, the City Council is in a holding pattern in terms of making a decision at this time. The DDA Board needs to make a decision about Main Street itself. The issue with RRC is pushing the conversation. City Manager Gorman stated his personal feeling that it is time to move on from the Main Street program.

There was continued discussion about what has been driving the recent discussion.

Member Briggs stated that at Design Team meeting the history of Main Street in Portland was discussed in terms of where it has been beneficial and how it was evolved over the years. They also discussed the requirements and the benefits of staying involved with Main Street. Four members unanimously decided that it is time to take what has been learned and graduate from the program.

Chair Grimminck stated that before the Refresh she was on the fence in terms of continuing with the Main Street program. The proposed amendment that is coming from Main Street to require engagement with the RRC program is a good pivot point. She doesn't feel like it's a bad idea to wait to make a decision until the amended agreement is received from Main Street.

Member Pung stated that it seems like the DDA Board is quick to make significant decisions with very little time and planning. She stated that she has heard the benefits of the program over the past 1 ½ years she has been on the Board. She further stated her feeling that Portland hasn't embraced all of the pillars of the Main Street program so hasn't seen all of the benefits of the program. She stated her disagreement to withdrawing from the Main Street program just because of the RRC issue.

City Manager Gorman doesn't feel like waiting for the amendment from the MEDC will change his analysis of the Main Street program. The decision to continue with the Main Street program should be based on its merits and not because of the RRC issue.

Chair Grimminck stated the DDA wouldn't be discussing whether or not to continue with Main Street if it wasn't for the RRC issue, not participating with RRC keeps Portland from getting the benefits of the Main Street program.

Director ConnerWellman stated that buy in is necessary for the Main Street program to succeed. When she worked in Ionia she was on the outside and envious of Portland's involvement with Main Street. She is grateful to have spent the past 2 years involved with the Main Street program. After evaluating the program over the past 2 years she sees that Portland has an emotional tie to the program as it feels good to be a Main Street Community. There appears to be less of a buy in to the program. There seems to be a reluctance on the part of both the DDA Board and the team members to participate once what "has to be done" is done. The DDA Board members need to decide if they want to do what it takes to be a Main Street Community and embrace all of the tenants of the program otherwise there is just a lot of busy work being done without any real reason.

Mayor Barnes stated that if the DDA Board waits for the amended agreement to be proposed by the MEDC that it will be the nexus to question continuance with the Main Street program. He further stated he finds it offensive that MEDC has tied RRC to the Main Street program. He feels it is appropriate to wait until the change is an officially presented edict before saying, "no, thank you."

City Manager Gorman stated that he does agree that continuing with Main Street is tied to RRC but the analysis for the Main Street program itself is separate. He is aware of the discussions regarding the Main Street program that have taken place over the past few years but have not

been discussed openly. He further stated that he agrees with the program and the 4-point approach but doesn't see the return on investment in Portland. No one, from the DDA board, team members, and property owners are invested in doing the work required by the Main Street program, this has been a reoccurring problem.

Motion by Barnes, supported by Gorman, to table review of the Michigan Main Street Program until the June DDA meeting.

All in favor. Adopted.

Director ConnerWellman noted that terms are expiring for Members VanSlambrouck, Grimminck, and Antaya.

Under the Director Report, Director ConnerWellman presented her report on downtown activities including business and property news. She will attend the Michigan Main Street quarterly training on June 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> in Owosso, MI.

Under Board Member Comments, Mayor Barnes noted that the tulips that were blooming around the downtown clock look amazing.

City Manager Gorman provided development updates.

Motion by Madarang, supported by Pung, to adjourn the meeting at 4:25 P.M.

All in favor. Adopted

Respectfully submitted,

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Margery Briggs, Secretary