

**DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
REGULAR MEETING
SEPTEMBER 26, 2017
130 PAGE ST., WEST BRANCH, MI 48661**

- I. Member Jayson Stroebel called the meeting to order at 12:08 pm.
- II. Present- Autumn Hunter, Jayson Stroebel, Joe Clark, Joanne Bennett, Sandy Rabidue, Samantha Fabbri, Rusty Showalter, Mayor Lawrence.
Absent- Dora Zapczynski
Others Present- GPSCR Coordinator, Kelli Collins; City Manager, Heather Grace.
- III. **Additions to Agenda -**
None.
- IV. **Minutes -**
Minutes of the August 22, 2017 meeting were reviewed.
Motion by Bennett to approve the minutes as presented. Second by Stroebel.
Yes - Autumn Hunter, Jayson Stroebel, Joe Clark, Joanne Bennett, Sandy Rabidue, Samantha Fabbri, Rusty Showalter, Mayor Lawrence.
No - None.
Absent - Dora Zapczynski.
Motion voted and carried.
- V. **Bills -**
Collins presented an additional bill from West Branch Area Chamber of Commerce for a renewal membership dues for dates Oct 2017-Sept 2018 in the amount of \$194.50. Discussion was held on DDA paying a membership in the past. All members agreed they do not recall paying this previous years past.
Motion by Bennett to postpone payment of the Chamber invoice until further research.
Second by Rabidue.
Yes - Autumn Hunter, Jayson Stroebel, Joe Clark, Joanne Bennett, Sandy Rabidue, Samantha Fabbri, Rusty Showalter, Mayor Lawrence.
No - None.
Absent - Dora Zapczynski.
Motion voted and carried.
- Motion by Clark to pay all bills as presented except Chamber invoice. Second by Bennett.**
Yes - Autumn Hunter, Jayson Stroebel, Joe Clark, Joanne Bennett, Sandy Rabidue, Samantha Fabbri, Rusty Showalter, Mayor Lawrence.
No - None.
Absent - Dora Zapczynski.
Motion voted and carried.
- VI. **Bids - None.**
- VII. **Reports and/or comments -**
Chairman - None.

Member Reports -

Fabbri reported she attended the MML Convention in Holland Michigan. She stated it was an excellent convention with a lot of great information. She testified that Holland is a beautiful city to be admired! Other members who attended the Convention shared their experience and ideas acquired from the convention. All agreed several things Holland has implemented could be done in West Branch and many were impressed with the elevated parking structure. Showalter and Bennett shared pictures of many things in Holland to perhaps duplicate in West Branch in the future. Showalter stated MML will come to West Branch to do a Pop Up Event if we are interested.

Showalter advised that Nancy Griffin is inquiring on a date for the Appreciation Luncheon. Grace stated we are waiting for the new DPW Superintendent to give a date on when the water hook up will be done before scheduling it. Many expressed the need to schedule it before weather is too cold. Bennett suggested we schedule a date of October 22 at 12:00 noon. It will be held near the Children's Garden. Showalter stated last year we cooked hot dogs and prepared salads. The DDA also presented each of the volunteers with a Smiley Helper T-shirt. Discussion was held on what to present as a token of gratitude this year. Grace suggested the Smiley Mug sold downtown filled with gourmet chocolates and decorated as a small gift to the volunteers. Showalter stated he will contact Nancy and forward Bennett's telephone number to advise she will be in charge of getting the gifts. Some suggested an additional gift for Nancy as this will be her last year in charge of the Fireman's Monument. Lawrence suggested a gift basket from the Silver Lining. Stroebel stated Logger's would donate a gift certificate for the basket.

Bennett informed she attended a break out session at the MML Convention on retro-fitting the lights for the city. She stated there is grant money available. Consumers Energy offers a discounted rate once this is completed. Showalter stated this is a great idea and Clark advised we should discuss this before we start the downtown street re-design so we are prepared going forward.

City Manager -

Grace distributed a letter describing the Dual DDA/Planning Commission proposal. Also included was a copy of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act - Act 33 of 2008, and MEDC Downtown Development Authority. She reminded everyone of the Public Hearing to be held Monday, October 2, 2017 at 6:00 pm at City Hall. Grace advised the consolidation is considered a stream-lining for cities under 5000. This consolidation may increase attendance by forming one committee coming together. Once council approves, the city will undergo a complete change to the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance. This consolidation would ensure all views are expressed at the right time and venue by our proposed committee combining DDA/Planning to make certain our new updated Master Plan and Zoning are what we want for our Downtown and community. Fabbri advised she contacted 2 cities in Michigan who have combined these committees. Fabbri expressed her concerns and questioned why we are doing this. Both Fabbri and Grace spoke to the city of Armada and got opposite views on the success or failure of consolidation. Grace advised we are a city on the small side...most cities who have active DDA's are on the larger side and can afford to have paid full time administrators. Rabidue stated she has spoken to smaller cities that have very active DDA's. Many members commented they do not understand the benefit to either the DDA or Planning Commission if consolidated.

Grace expressed her thoughts that both boards separately have not accomplished much in the past...but by combining both boards and reinvigorating them we could get something accomplished. Rabidue suggested scheduling a few joint meetings in the future before going forth with a consolidation. Many members expressed they felt this was consolidation was going forward to quickly without exploring other options to make the DDA and Planning Commissions more effective. Clark conveyed his thoughts that if you put the two groups together you would probably have one stronger group and one weaker group and therefore be creating more followers than leaders. Clark felt that having two separate committees' things get discussed and every so often have joint meetings so see what each group is doing to get things done. Grace expressed she has hopes that this consolidation would create more leaders and a stronger group with more authority and control to effectuate change quickly. Grace stated if you wish to keep things as they are we can, but if you want to see change quickly, this is her best recommendation as an administrator. Showalter stated his biggest concern is to make sure there is equal representation from both committees. Grace advised City Council will be making the decision on consolidation - it could happen at the Public Hearing or they could table it to make a decision at a different time. After lengthy discussion on the issue of consolidation most members agreed they felt this was moving too fast and would like more time to explore other options before making the decision to consolidate DDA/Planning Commission.

VII. **New Business -**

Bennett discussed outside gas heaters for downtown. Members articulated the importance of creating an inviting atmosphere downtown during winter months. Bennett stated these are Roger Brooks suggestions and since the DDA invested the money for his webinar...we should implement his suggestions. Flower pots are another simple improvement for downtown. All agreed benches and flower pots make the businesses and downtown inviting. Concerns were raised on who would maintain/water the flower pots if the DDA purchased them. Suggestions were made on creating a form from DDA to present to each business owner to purchase at a small fee a flower pot for their business. This would give them an investment and incentive to care for the flowers and keep them looking vibrant. Grace suggested these ideas are great but someone needs to take board action to continue and implement these ideas. Rabidue volunteered to research flowers/pots for spring. Fabbri will research and look for benches. Bennett stated she would research heaters.

IX. **Old Business -**

Lawrence questioned if the DDA has appointed a Chairperson.

Motion by Lawrence to appoint Jayson Stroebel as DDA Chairperson. Second by Clark.

Yes - Autumn Hunter, Jayson Stroebel, Joe Clark, Joanne Bennett, Sandy Rabidue, Samantha Fabbri, Rusty Showalter, Mayor Lawrence.

No - None.

Absent - Dora Zapczynski.

Motion voted and carried.

Lawrence asked Showalter if he wished to continue on with his resignation from DDA or stay on the board. Showalter informed as separate entities he would stay on the DDA board but if combining to make a joint committee he would probably not reapply.

Stroebel stated he has not heard of a response on the letter sent to the Loop Group/West Branch Township on providing documents relating to the Signs Project expenses. Grace

informed she received a packet of information last week from Mr. Veeder but it did not include the information we need. Grace has submitted a FOIA request asking for everything we need. Stroebel stated he will be attending the Joint DDA Meeting the end of October and he will ask questions at that meeting concerning the signage.

X. **Public Comment** - None.

XI. **Adjournment** -
Stroebel adjourned the meeting at 1:26 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kelli Collins
GPSCR Coordinator