

**DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
REGULAR MEETING  
JULY 25, 2017  
121 N. 4TH ST., WEST BRANCH, MI 48661**

- I. Member Jayson Stroebel called the meeting to order at 12:01 pm.
- II. Present- Rusty Showalter, Autumn Hunter, Joe Clark, Samantha Fabbri, Joanne Bennett, Sandy Rabidue, Mayor Lawrence.  
Absent- Dora Zapczynski.  
Others Present- GPSCR Coordinator, Kelli Collins.
- III. **Additions to Agenda -**  
Stroebel advised business owners have been asking him about when they will get their refund of the deposit for the Facade Grant if they have withdrawn. Questions were broached on who has the authority to approve the refunds. Some have heard City Council has to approve and others were under the impression that the DDA approves them. Showalter advised if City Council needs to grant approval it should be on the next Agenda for the August meeting. Last meeting the DDA made a motion to refund Loggers Depot their \$2000 deposit. Several businesses have since submitted letters: Office Central, Schmitt Tire and Gas, 205 Crafts Emporium, and Fritz Crecine Agency. Only two businesses remain, The Highway Brewery and Jane Schwartz. Collins updated that Dan Leonard contacted her to update the application on the online site to reflect the withdrawals from the program. He stated he hoped to have it wrapped up by the end of July.  
**Motion by Fabbri to accept letters from Office Central, Schmitt Tire and Gas, 205 Crafts Emporium, and Fritz Crecine Agency to withdraw from the Facade Grant Program and receive their \$2000 deposit as a refund. Second by Showalter.**  
**Yes- Stroebel, Hunter, Clark, Fabbri, Showalter, Bennett, Rabidue, Lawrence.**  
**No - None.**  
**Absent - Zapczynski.**  
**Motion voted and carried.**
- IV. **Minutes -**  
Minutes of the June 27, 2017 meeting were reviewed.  
**Motion by Rabidue to approve the minutes as presented. Second by Fabbri.**  
**Yes- Stroebel, Hunter, Clark, Fabbri, Showalter, Bennett, Rabidue, Lawrence.**  
**No - None.**  
**Absent - Zapczynski.**  
**Motion voted and carried.**
- V. **Bills-**  
Showalter presented bills in the amount of \$38.11 from Loggers Depot.  
**Motion by Showalter to pay all bills as presented. Second by Rabidue.**  
**Yes- Stroebel, Hunter, Clark, Fabbri, Showalter, Bennett, Rabidue, Lawrence.**  
**No - None.**  
**Absent - Zapczynski.**  
**Motion voted and carried.**

VI. **Bids** - None.

VII. **Reports and/or comments-  
Chairman** - None

Member Reports -

Showalter advised he has contacted the City in reference to the DPW filling the water basins of the flower pots in town. Discussion was held on the sides collapsing due to not enough water and high temperatures. Everyone agreed the flowers look much better this year than last. Showalter also discussed the Annual Appreciation Luncheon for the volunteers of the flower plantings at the Bell Tower/Fireman's Monument. Last year we did it in October and we need to be planning something for possibly the end of August. This will be Nancy Griffin's last year as the organizer of the Bell Tower Flowers. She has forwarded a diagram of the plantings at the Bell Tower. DDA pays for the flowers and the watering/planting throughout the year is done by volunteers which Nancy schedules. The Church donates the water. DDA is required to participate in watering the flowers currently scheduled the first Wednesday of the month. Showalter advised everyone of the upcoming MML Convention in Holland MI September 13, 14, and 15, 2017. Showalter encouraged any DDA member to attend. Registration is open for Early Bird Specials. DDA would cover registration, mileage and meals. Holland has a very vibrant downtown and will offer tours as part of the MML Convention.

Fabbri discussed the Year End Financial Report Due for Retail Merchants. She has been in touch with City Manager Grace and stated she is working on this report. Fabbri questioned if there was a deadline for submitting this report - Showalter advised the audit is due by September so it should be submitted before then. Fabbri assured she will have the report done before that time.

Rabidue stated she is still working on getting prices for Banner Flags for downtown. She will continue to gather information as she gets it and relay that information at the next meeting. Bennett suggested we not go ahead with the purchase of these until everyone has had a chance to watch the webinar by Roger Brooks.

City Manager - None.

VIII. **New Business-**

Fabbri informed the board that Bennett, Clark, and Collins attended the *Roger Brooks International - Resurgence of Downtowns* webinar. This webinar was packed with a magnitude of information which would benefit not only the DDA, but Downtown Merchants, Planning Commission and City Council. The merchants would like to play this webinar before the next scheduled meeting. Discussion was held of inviting as many stakeholders in the City as possible. The webinar will be at the City Police building. There is a fee of \$29.99 for this webinar. Discussion was held on the pros and cons of purchasing a one- time user fee for \$29.99 or yearly for \$540 which would allow access to almost 50 webinars. Most of these webinars have topics which would benefit and be of interest to our City. All agreed to purchase the one-time use to present at the Merchants meeting and discuss at next meeting the purchase of the yearly webinars.

**Motion by Bennett to purchase a one-time user fee of \$29.99 for the *Roger Brooks International- Resurgence of Downtowns* webinar, to be viewed at the next Merchants meeting. Second by Stroebel.**

**Yes- Stroebel, Hunter, Clark, Fabbri, Showalter, Bennett, Rabidue, Lawrence.**

**No - None.**

**Absent - Zapczynski.**

**Motion voted and carried.**

Stroebel advised there are plans to connect the River Walk with the Tolfree Wellness Walk. Showalter also updated on the Iron Belle Trail System. Discussion was held on the mapping of the Trail System and routes not coming into West Branch. Collins advised she attended all of the meetings to date. The first meetings discussion was held on a route to West Branch and connecting to our River Walk Trail System. The last meeting a map showing routes was presented and it did not connect to the River Walk System....it ended at Fairview/State Road intersections as a "leg" off the trail which continued on Rose City Road. At this time the routes are being re-considered and adjacent townships to the City are pushing for the trail system to come to West Branch and connect to the River Walk.

Showalter discussed the DDA obligations to fund roads, street lights, etc. Funding has been re-routed over the years to help with these expenses. Rabidue expressed concern that DDA not be responsible for many of these expenses. Discussion was held on plowing of roads and parking lots and who should be responsible. Maintenance of projects funded by DDA was also talked about. Showalter expressed the importance of the DDA and City Council working together as a team. Rabidue articulated her thoughts that simple things as the Flower Pots funded by DDA each year is not really appreciated by the City. Who would do these things if the DDA did not? Mayor Lawrence informed she is repeatedly approached by citizens on what we are doing to revitalize downtown? She stated they have been organizing downtown events. Showalter stated we need to present to Council what we need to do and how it could benefit our community and ask the City to help with funding. Showalter stated since the last election with new council members, it is the first time he has seen support from council towards working together as a team. Showalter stated we will probably see stricter guidelines in the future from the State on what DDA funds can be used towards. Signage and billboards were discussed and who pays for these.

**IX. Old Business-**

Facade Grant Update was previously discussed under Additions to Agenda.

**X. Public Comment - None.**

**XI. Adjournment -**

Stroebel adjourned the meeting at 1:23 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kelli Collins  
GPSCR Coordinator