

**DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
REGULAR MEETING
OCTOBER 24, 2017
121 N. 4TH ST., WEST BRANCH, MI 48661**

- I. Member Jayson Stroebel called the meeting to order at 12:01 pm.
- II. Present - Jayson Stroebel, Samantha Fabbri, Joe Clark, Autumn Hunter, Sandy Rabidue, Joanne Bennett, Rusty Showalter, Mayor Lawrence.
Absent - Tracy Williams, Dora Zapczynski.
Others Present - GPSCR Coordinator, Kelli Collins.

Motion by Stroebel to excuse Williams's absence due to prior obligations. Second by Clark.
Yes - Jayson Stroebel, Samantha Fabbri, Joe Clark, Autumn Hunter, Sandy Rabidue, Rusty Showalter, Mayor Lawrence.
No - None.
Absent - Tracy Williams, Dora Zapczynski.
Motion voted and carried.

Motion by Clark to excuse all past absences for all DDA board members. Second by Fabbri.
Yes - Jayson Stroebel, Samantha Fabbri, Joe Clark, Autumn Hunter, Sandy Rabidue, Rusty Showalter.
No - Mayor Lawrence.
Absent - Tracy Williams, Dora Zapczynski.
Motion voted and carried.

- III. **Additions to Agenda -**
None.

- IV. **Minutes -**
Minutes of the September 26, 2017, meeting were reviewed.
Motion by Showalter to approve the minutes as presented. Second by Rabidue.
Yes - Jayson Stroebel, Samantha Fabbri, Joe Clark, Autumn Hunter, Sandy Rabidue, Rusty Showalter, Mayor Lawrence.
No - None.
Absent - Tracy Williams, Dora Zapczynski.
Motion voted and carried.

- V. **Bills -**
Bill submitted for request for mileage reimbursement from Fabbri for attending the MML Convention September 13-15, 2017 in the amount of \$220.96.
Motion by Bennett to pay the request for mileage in the amount of \$220.96 as presented. Second by Clark.
Yes - Jayson Stroebel, Samantha Fabbri, Joe Clark, Autumn Hunter, Sandy Rabidue, Rusty Showalter, Mayor Lawrence.
No - None.
Absent - Tracy Williams, Dora Zapczynski.
Motion voted and carried.

VI. Bids -

Estimate from West Branch Greenhouse and Flower Shop was submitted in the amount of \$680. Discussion was held on past decorations of the 8 Corner Planters. All agreed they have been pleased with the past decorations and wished to continue with the same this year. It was agreed these decorations should be put out before Thanksgiving and left into the winter months. Rabidue will contact the Greenhouse.

Motion by Fabbri to purchase Evergreen decorations for 8 Corner Planters from West Branch Greenhouse in the amount of \$680. Second by Stroebel.

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

No - None.

Absent - Tracy Williams, Dora Zapczynski.

Motion voted and carried.

VII. Reports and/or Comments -

Chairman Reports -

Discussion was held on the West Branch Initiative Meetings and finding a Focus for the City of West Branch. Stroebel stated the majority of residents in West Branch feel West Branch is "known" for the Smiley Tower. Members debated the difference between "events" and a "focus". Fabbri advised the next Initiative meeting will be discussing a Focus for the City. Some suggested a consultation from Mr. Brooks. Bennett suggested contacting Alpena as they used Mr. Roger Brooks for their community. Stroebel volunteered to reach out to Alpena DDA.

Stroebel inquired whose responsibility it was to reach out to vacant building owners in the Downtown District. Showalter stated City Council recently voted on a policy that the City of West Branch would reach out to solicit business to vacant buildings. Collins advised she and the City Manager are meeting with Symmetry Management (a company who develops and manages commercial real estate) tomorrow on the vacated Kmart property. Symmetry Management contacted the City to discuss zoning and what the city wants and needs. Showalter stated he feels vacant buildings are the responsibility to many people - the building owner, the DDA, the EDC, as well as the Chamber of Commerce. Bennett re-visited the conversation of putting signage in the windows of vacant buildings. Displays from other businesses in the windows or art work were suggested. Showalter stated with the holiday season approaching it is the perfect time to move forward with this idea. It was suggested to contact the owners of the vacant buildings, work with them on displays and get the windows filled along with signage. It was suggested to have Office Central design and create the signs very reasonably priced with language such as "This space is NOT vacant....it is FULL of opportunity!" The sign could include contact information for the owner for anyone interested to rent or purchase the building. It was suggested to possibly get a key for the vacant buildings to enable DDA to change the display and signs as needed. Collins suggested they research the Ogemaw County Web Site to access addresses/owners for the vacant buildings to avoid any administrative costs incurred if requesting the City acquire this information. Bennett agreed to make a list for the DDA district and get the owners names of the vacant buildings.

Member Reports -

Rabidue suggested the DDA go forth with the suggestion from the last meeting on compiling a list of businesses downtown and offering an order sheet for flowers and pots to purchase for their business store front. Each business would own these pots of flowers and be responsible for the watering and weeding as needed. She explained this concept was implemented in Gaylord with Mums and was welcomed and appreciated very well. Suggestion was made to possibly have DDA supplement a portion of the cost to give incentive and encourage the businesses to purchase them. Rabidue volunteered to get prices for this project and see which businesses would be capable of making the pots complete with flowers.

Fabbri stated she researched the benches for downtown businesses. She found a very reasonable price for benches almost identical to the one she has through Walmart.com on sale at a discounted price. Pictures and details of the benches were distributed for the boards review. Discussion was held on how to purchase these benches and how many would be needed. It was decided the best strategy would be to purchase the benches while at a discounted price and delivered to a destination where businesses could pick them up and purchase them at the sale price. Clark agreed to purchase them through his business and he would be reimbursed by the businesses as they purchase them.

Motion by Hunter to purchase 10 benches at \$36.76 and 10 benches at \$35.97 from Walmart.com. Second by Rabidue.

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

No - None.

Absent - Tracy Williams, Dora Zapczynski.

Motion voted and carried.

VII. New Business -
None.

IX. Old Business -

Christmas lights and decorations for this holiday season were discussed. All agreed to use the current decorations from last year and possibly discuss other options going forward. Collins will contact DPW Superintendent to schedule getting them up before Thanksgiving.

Motion by Showalter to do the same as last year for Christmas lights and decorations in the DDA district. Second by Clark.

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

No - None.

Absent - Tracy Williams, Dora Zapczynski.

Motion voted and carried.

Stroebel stated Zapczynski has not attended DDA meetings nor submitted anything in writing stating she would like to resign. Collins advised she receives the same packet as other members each month in preparation for the meeting. Lawrence stated at the last Council Meeting a motion was made to not remove anyone for 6 months. Members questioned if she could resign. Lawrence stated she has talked to her and she does not wish to resign.

Showalter stated he felt a letter should be sent to Zapczynski. Bennett stated the DDA has not practiced this in the past but feels now that we are aware of the attendance policy of the City Charter and everyone has been informed we need to know if Zapczynski is interested in remaining on the board or not. Showalter stated if she does not resign and still does not attend at that time the DDA can make a recommendation to City Council to have her removed. Fabbri questioned if new board members receive information on these policies and how they are made aware. A Welcome Packet for new members was suggested stating dates of meetings and other important information. Questions were raised on what constitutes an excused absence vs. a non-excused absence. It was agreed that if a board member is unable to attend a meeting they would contact the DDA Administrator via telephone or email to be excused.

Motion by Showalter that a letter be generated to Zapczynski explaining attendance regulations and results of unexcused absences will vacate her seat on the board and further if she wishes to not continue on the board she submit a letter of resignation. Second by Clark. Motion not voted or carried.

Rabidue questioned what the DDA can do to and what is expected of them in the next 6 months as Council allowed for changes. Lawrence stated the DDA is to work with Planning and DDA Boards. Stroebel advised he felt we are expected to accomplish goals and projects. Planning Commission has been informed of DDA meeting dates and invited to attend. Fabbri suggested making a schedule for the DDA members to take turns attending future Planning meetings. Stroebel also suggested scheduling a Joint Planning/DDA meeting quarterly. Collins informed members they can also go to the City website to view all meeting minutes, including Council, Planning and DDA minutes. This would give opportunity to find out what each board is doing from month to month if they are unable to attend. Collins agreed to add Planning minutes to the monthly packets as requested. Clark suggested adding Planning Commission to the Agenda under reports/comments. This would give opportunity to report monthly at DDA meetings. Showalter also agreed we should do quarterly Joint meetings. This is very important with the upcoming reconstruction of downtown. Planning and DDA need to each be aware of what the other would like to see in the downtown district.

Bennett suggested moving DDA meetings to evening hours. Discussion was held on the pros and cons of different meeting times. Attendance issues were discussed and agreed they were not due to the meeting time of day. Board members agreed they wish to continue as is with the meeting time to be 12:00 noon.

Discussion of the next Planning meeting on November 14, 2017 was brought up. Due to Stroebel also a Planning member he will always be attending. Several other board members stated they may also be able to attend and would let Jayson know if and who will be attending. Showalter stated the DDA is making an attempt to work out issues brought forth from Council. DDA can attend Planning meetings, keep communications open, and set up Joint meetings. It is up to Planning as a board to do the same.

Stroebel pointed out that the December meeting falls on a scheduled Holiday for the City.

Motion by Stroebel to change the December DDA meeting from December 26, 2017 to December 19, 2017 due to the Holiday. Second by Bennett.

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

No - None.

**Absent - Tracy Williams, Dora Zapczynski.
Motion voted and carried.**

Stroebel broached the subject of the wooden steps in the City Parking Lots between N. 3rd and N. 4th Streets. The steps are in bad shape and get slippery when wet. He suggested a handicap concrete ramp and remove the steps. Showalter mentioned ADA regulations are very strict on ramps and slope. Hunter agreed these steps can be dangerous. Showalter suggested the DDA get an RFP for the construction of an ADA compliant ramp. He stated RFP's are typically done by City Administration. Clark also mentioned the steps behind the Ogemaw Herald are also in poor condition. He suggested a ramp beginning from the North where the sidewalk is located. Several other areas of concern in the parking lots were discussed. It was suggested to get separate RFP's for each of these projects. Stroebel will reach out the City Manager Grace to see if she will assist with the RFP's.

Motion by Clark to get Request for Proposals of the steps and handicap issues in the City Parking Lots as discussed. Second by Stroebel.

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

No - None.

**Absent - Tracy Williams, Dora Zapczynski.
Motion voted and carried.**

Stroebel questioned if the board needs to approve the Financials provided by the City. Showalter stated this is for the boards review to note where they are with the budget to date. Clark questioned the "Downtown Events" line for \$7500. Showalter advised this is money DDA gives to the Retail Merchants. Clark stated this was listed as "Downtown Promotions" in the past. This money is earmarked for billboards, etc. Lawrence stated no money was taken from DDA funds for City events. Showalter stated this question could be addressed to City Administration. Showalter stated this is just a title and the actual fund or line item is the "number" code. Collins advised all local units of Government must use the Uniform Chart of Accounts. Stroebel will address this question with the City Manager when he meets with her on the RFP's.

X. Public Comment - None.

XI. Adjournment -

Stroebel adjourned the meeting at 1:29 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kelli Collins
GPSCR Coordinator