

DOWNTOWN GRAND JUNCTION BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT
BOARD MINUTES
THURSDAY, MARCH 13, 2014
248 SOUTH 4TH STREET
8:00 A.M.

PRESENT: Les Miller, Shane Allerheiligen, Martin Chazen, Kirk Granum, PJ McGovern, Stephan Schweissing

ABSENT: Kevin Reimer, Jason Farrington, Jodi Coleman-Niernberg

STAFF: Diane Keliher, Harry Weiss, Aaron Hoffman

GUESTS: John Shaver, Brian Watson

CALL TO ORDER: Les called the meeting to order at 8:10 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Marty made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 6th meeting; Kirk seconded; minutes were approved.

ART & MUSIC FESTIVAL: George Rossman of Event Masters resigned from producing the Downtown special events effective March 14, 2014. She expressed concern about some of the changes that have been proposed for Downtown events and the timeliness of decisions. The BID has hired Ron Wilson of Sandstone Productions to book the music and help with the refreshing of the music presentation for the upcoming Art & Music Festival. The greater challenge will be finding a replacement to coordinate and manage the Farmers' Market. It is one of the most popular markets in the Valley and needs a professional event coordinator. Harry has a couple of candidates in mind for the position.

CMU is planning to run their criterion through Downtown Grand Junction on April 19th. The Manufacturers of Outdoor Gear festival (MOG) is also taking place on Main Street that same weekend. There are a number of BID merchants who are objecting to these events and may approach City Council with their concerns, specifically the impact of the large street closures in Downtown on the Saturday before Easter. At the same time, there are many BID members who are supporters and sponsors of the events (US Bank, restaurants), and thus, the BID membership is highly divided. Harry reviewed the history of the DDA as a review and approval agency for special events downtown – City Council delegated this role to DDA in 1981 with a statutory purpose to “maximize the usage” of Downtown Grand Junction. In this context the DDA responds to the interests of the community at large rather than advocating for the narrower interests of the BID. Les added that there are businesses that benefit from special events and others that are harmed by them and it's not clear how to balance these competing perspectives.

Stephan restated his concern that the DDA and the BID boards are inherently conflicted, and that they should be constituted as two different boards. John said that was taken into consideration when the BID was formed, and it was decided that the inherent conflicts would be better managed as an internal matter under the auspices of a joint board appointment rather than having two separate boards going back and forth with Council mediating. PJ noted that in most instances the businesses downtown are not the ones paying the BID special assessment – it is the property owner who pays the assessment - and that both boards are obligated to serve the greater community.

PJ and Shane had to leave the meeting.

CMU is putting together a presentation for the merchants at the Downtowner meeting on April 8th. Kirk asked what Downtown businesses are sponsoring the events. Harry mentioned US Bank is the title sponsor of both events; Rockslide and Summit Mountaineering are both MOGFest sponsors (the event will be staged on the 40 block of Main Street which is bookended by those two businesses).

Marty again asked what the definition of “maximum usage” means. John stated that the ordinance applies to commercial activities in the Downtown area. Harry said we have an obligation to be aware of the various “layers of the onion”.

Stephan asked about the hiring of a new event coordinator given that we are already into the event season. Harry has a couple of possibilities in mind. Kirk asked about who would run the beer garden at the Art & Music Festival. We are planning to feature Rockslide, Kannah Creek and Palisade craft beers for the festival and will coordinate their participation. We will also have two satellite beer & wine sales venues.

2013 EOY: 2013 was the year that the DTA was absorbed by the BID which resulted in a patchwork of budget tracking for the year. The 2014 budget is built around a comprehensive consolidation of former DTA items with BID items, and includes adjustments in vendor fees and special event expenses.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Harry distributed a draft summary of economic development targets for the BID and DDA. There are four elements of emphasis; networking with commercial real estate brokers; conducting a retail mix and recruitment study; looking into Colorado Creative District certification; completion of the Downtown Housing Study and implementation of housing strategy.

The introductory comments describe the future goals of the DDA and characterize Downtown’s contribution to the quality of life in the Grand Valley. The DDA has made many physical improvements to the public realm and we now have the opportunity to concentrate on attracting private investment to leverage our capital improvements. We have maintained a rather strict delineation of DDA activities restricted to capital improvements, but more flexibility can be sought for programmatic activities for economic development. The Strategic Downtown Master Plan, which was never formally adopted, suggested establishing a Community Development fund which would be an entirely new entity. Harry will be reviewing the constraints that limit a broader engagement of economic development options.

The commercial realtors are ready to cooperate with regular meetings and information sharing. The original Plan of Development lists a retail study as one of the seven goals of the DDA. Business recruitment is also within the DDA’s scope. Harry would like to do an RFP for a retail consultant to do a retail mix study. Harry will always advocate for downtown housing to create urban vitality. Colorado Creative Industries works with professionals in the creative sector i.e. architects, graphic designers, artists, photographers, etc. to encourage business recruitment.

Harry will convene a networking meeting in April with commercial realtors and will also research what elements are needed for a retail mix study. The City already collects data that would be helpful to us. The next phase of the Housing Study will be a design and development charrette at the end of this month, and preliminary housing schematics should be ready in April.

Marty feels that all of the partners should get together to come up with a marketing and branding tool. Harry feels the Downtown Housing Study will bring developers to the table. We can also support the commercial realtors in their marketing opportunities. Colorado Creative Industries is a great marketing tool. Harry emphasized that every community has tensions; rural and urban lifestyles, tradition and innovation, recruiting young leadership. Marty said it's important to retain young people and families. Stephan feels this is a good time to provide leadership and go in a different direction.

ADJOURN: There being no quorum, the board adjourned at 9:10 a.m.