

**OSHTEMO CHARTER TOWNSHIP
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING HELD MAY 21, 2020

The Oshtemo Charter Township Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Board of Directors held a virtual meeting via tele-conference on Thursday May 21, 2020. The meeting was called to order at approximately 12:09 p.m.

The meeting was short by one member to reach quorum, so Chairperson Taylor began with the information updates on the agenda until quorum was reached.

Project Updates

a. Village Theme Development Plan

Ms. Lubbert reported that the 2019 Village Theme Development Plan Update was reviewed and approved by the Township Board on April 28, 2020 and is now available on the Township's website.

She noted that the next step will be working with the Planning Commission to modify the Village Form-Based Code Overlay Zone of the Ordinance to reflect the approved Plan. However this may not happen for some time due to workload. A consultant may be brought in to update the language.

Mr. Corakis had joined the meeting by this point. The Chair asked Ms. Lubbert to call the roll by voice:

Members present: Grant Taylor, Themis Corakis, Libby Heiny-Cogswell, Rich MacDonald, Dick Skalski, and Ryan Wieber.

Members absent: Bruce Betzler, Bill Cekola, Julie Hite, Mike Lutke, and Jack Siegel.

Also present: Iris Lubbert, Planning Director, Josh Owens, Assistant to the Supervisor, Karen High, Parks Director, Martha Coash, Meeting Transcriptionist, and guests Ryan Russell, with Prein & Newhof and Paul Warnick, with OCBA Landscape Architects.

Approval of Agenda

Chairperson Taylor asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

Mr. Wieber moved to approve the agenda as presented. Mr. Corakis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Approval of Minutes

The Chair asked if there were additions or corrections to the Minutes of the Emergency Virtual Meeting of March 31, 2020. Hearing none, he asked for a motion.

Mr. Skalski moved to approve the Minutes of the Emergency Meeting of March 31, 2020 as presented. Mr. Corakis seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Treasurer's Report: March – April 2020 (Unaudited)

Ms. Lubbert presented the Treasurer's Report for March – April 2020.

She indicated the report showed an increase in carryover funds, from \$380,000 to \$480,000, and a new expenditure line item. The changes are due to the recently approved budget amendment to fund the DDA's two new Emergency Assistance Programs created in response to COVID-19. The report also provided a summary of the awards granted and issued from round one of the DDA's Small Business Emergency Assistance Grant Program which occurred in mid-April.

She said additional expenditures from this cycle include \$298.40 in postage fees to publicize the grant program, standard accounting fees totaling \$600, and payments totaling \$29,341.20 for corner site improvement invoices.

Chairperson Taylor asked for a motion.

Mr. Skalski moved to approve the Treasurer's Report for March – April 2020 as presented. Mr. Wieber seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Project Updates

The Chair returned to where the group left off on the project updates portion of the agenda.

b. Stadium Drive Sidewalks

Ms. Lubbert said Staff has begun the process of attaining easements for the DDA's section of Stadium Drive sidewalks.

She said there have recently been some changes to the grant programs to which the DDA was planning to apply for assistance in funding their portion of the Stadium

Drive sidewalk project. Mr. Ryan Russell, with Prein & Newhof, was present to explain the changes and their implications to the DDA Board.

Mr. Russell said a TAP MDOT grant had been applied for, but funds were obligated out to 2021 and they were told six foot sidewalks were not often funded. The best bet was to go through the KATS program TIPS in 2021. Since the project this summer was funded by KATS, it likely would also be funded. It will be a nine month process until we would find out if funding was approved.

The survey is complete. The project will end at 9th Street which is most cost effective. 10 temporary and 12 permanent easements have been obtained. Prein & Newhof will continue to work with property owners and will provide more updates as progress is made.

Ms. Heiny-Cogswell asked if we might receive matching funding each year if the project construction is split over two years.

Mr. Russell said that could be the case. The amount of funding needed for each of the two projects is the same amount. The earliest construction can be expected for the next round of KATS is 2024-2025; the projects are in three-year chunks.

Ms. Heiny-Cogswell noted that unless we pay 100% out of pocket, the earliest we could expect to begin construction is five years away and asked what the Township's portion of the projects would be.

Mr. Russell said all three phases would be about the same, approximately \$515,000. Phase three would run sidewalks from 9th to 8th Street. He said there is a right-of-way problem he will pursue with the United Methodist Church as you can only build so close to the edge of a church and the proposed sidewalk would violate that.

Chairperson Taylor pointed out that if the project is self-financed, we still would not construct until 2022. He noted a traffic lane will need to be removed at the Speedway and filled in with green space. Also standards require a seven foot path at the staircase behind the church, which likely cannot be met. We may need to figure out a new route. He doesn't think the church uses the stairs at the front of the building and wondered if they might be removed if the Township were able to work with the church to acquire the property.

Mr. Russell noted the stairs are in the Township right-of-way. Because of the age of the building we may not be allowed to demolish them.

c. Gateway Project at Stadium and 9th Streets

Ms. Lubbert said Mr. Skalski was asked and agreed to help staff coordinate construction efforts related to the Gateway Project at Stadium and 9th St. and would provide an update. She said the discussion would center on the entry sign. In response to additional complaints received about its verbiage and design, Mr. Skalski would be presenting the Board some options to address public concerns and provided members with images of possible modifications to the entry sign.

Mr. Skalski provided three options for consideration:

1. Change the color of the letters from black to white, at a cost of \$335.
2. Increase from 4 to 5 inches the letters for “Area” at a cost of \$371.
3. Change the sunburst to completely encircle the “O” in Oshtemo, at a cost of \$190.

After discussion, it was the consensus of the group that the sunburst should encircle the “O” or be removed entirely, that the black letters are readable and should be left black, and the “Area” letters should be left at 4 inches. Further discussion led to agreement that the sunburst should be removed.

Ms. Heiny-Cogswell moved to: 1. Leave the letters black; 2. Leave the “Area” letters at 4 inches; and 3. Remove the sunburst entirely. Mr. McDonald seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

d. DDA COVID-19 Emergency Assistance Programs – Subcommittee Update

Ms. Lubbert said the DDA Sub-Committee, comprised of Grant Taylor, Libby Heiny-Cogswell, Rich McDonald, and Themis Corakis, wrote and sent letters to all individuals located within the DDA boundary advertising the small business emergency assistance grant program and gauging interest in a potential gift card program.

The group reviewed a number of applications and awarded 17 grants. Awards from Round Two of the grant award cycle will appear in the May – June Treasurer’s report. Of the \$90,000 budget, \$40,000 has been spent to date.

The program has had immediate impacts and businesses within the DDA have expressed their sincerest gratitude for the DDA’s support during this hard time. Unfortunately, she said the attempt to start a gift card program was not successful. As of May 13, only one business officially reached out to staff with interest in participating.

Mr. Taylor felt the program has been a great thing for the DDA to provide.

Mr. McDonald thanked Ms. Lubbert for handling the grant process, noting it had been a lot of extra work.

Initial 2021 Budget Discussion

DDA CIP Discussion

Potential DDA Executive Director Position Subcommittee Update

Ms. Lubbert provided a copy of the current DDA five-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), which shows the Stadium Drive shared use path project commencing in 2021. However, this project was planned with grant funds in mind. With this grant opportunity no longer being an option for next year, staff felt it was prudent for the DDA Board to revisit the CIP and discuss how to move forward. The discussion will set the groundwork for the 2021 budget discussion at the DDA's regular July meeting.

First needed is approval for an amendment for a change order request.

Mr. Warwick with OCBA Landscape Architect explained there were issues with the sidewalks, especially Stadium Drive near and at the church drive. The sidewalk has to be reduced to miss a power pole and to make the sidewalks flush. There is a drainage issue on Stadium with a Road Commission drain by the right of way. Traffic water is being trapped there as the catch basin on church property is denied access. Mr. Skalski is talking with the Road Commission regarding a revision to that walk.

Mr. Skalski indicated that since there is less water runoff because of increased pervious area, the engineer had no problem with it.

Mr. Corakis felt the DDA should not be responsible for increased costs as the architect designed the plan for drainage.

Mr. Skalski moved to approve a budget amendment for a change order for the sidewalk work in the amount of \$2,019.19 Mr. McDonald seconded the motion. The motion carried 5 – 1 by roll call vote, with Mr. Corakis dissenting.

The group discussed how to approach the CIP without the expected \$603,000 grant for sidewalk work and whether to self fund, finance, or apply for grants.

Mr. McDonald said in the past during bad economic times the government looked for shovel-ready projects. If the design is finished for the sidewalks the project might qualify for a job stimulus plan if one is offered.

Ms. Heiny-Cogswell thought it made sense to continue so the sidewalk project is ready to go in case something like that comes along. We should work hard to get the drawings ready for bid and acquire the necessary easements.

Mr. Skalski agreed, saying we are heading in that direction anyway.

Ms. Heiny-Cogswell said the “safe walks to school” initiative could be included.

Mr. McDonald supported an expedited approach to be sure we are ready, saying either way we would not lose funds.

The Chair said there will still be an ending fund balance as the end of 2021. We could get east of 9th St. done in 2021 and the rest of 9th completed in 2022. We should keep pushing forward and could finance it if needed.

Ms. Heiny-Cogswell asked what other capital projects people were considering.

Chairperson Taylor listed car charging stations at Flesher Field and Harding’s parking lot, community WIFI at the parks and community center, an affordable housing project at Millard’s Way, property acquisition adjacent to Flesher Field for development of a commercial corridor, and blight assistance to Chime and Erie Streets. If we put all our eggs in the Stadium Drive basket we won’t have a lot of funding to do those things.

He said the Board needs to think about and decide upon what direction to go over the next five years. Property tax captures will be higher than what is listed because of the memory care facility, which is up this year about \$30,000 and will increase in the coming years. State reimbursement for personal property is less and drying up.

Ms. Lubbert noted that when the group was originally formed in 2004 they adopted a multi-year development plan – one of the State’s requirements for a DDA. Part of this plan outlined what projects the DDA Board wanted to get completed and it has been a guide for projects to this point. She will send a copy of the 2004 Plan to members to help guide discussion. If the Board decides to go in a different direction, that report will need to be updated.

She reported the school house now belongs to the same contractor who recently approached the DDA for assistance. He failed to provide the details requested by the Board after his presentation. They are trying to save the building but the Township’s Code Enforcement Officer and Building Official have deemed it unsafe and it may be demolished. We are waiting to see what happens.

Ms. Heiny-Cogswell asked what the process is regarding development of Millard’s Way.

Ms. Lubbert indicated the idea was to approach property owners to attempt to purchase substantial parcels and combine them with the property already owned to yield a larger parcel. A realtor is testing the waters, but there is no word yet.

Mr. McDonald said once we figure out what we have and develop high level goals, MEDC assistance can be sought for the RFP process and evaluation of proposal responses.

Ms. Heiny-Cogswell hoped the evaluation can be done before approval of the budget in July.

Mr. McDonald felt it would be good to get organized on the sidewalks to get them shovel ready and to give more thought to what other possible projects could also be made shovel ready.

Chairperson Grant agreed and wondered if the board needs an Executive Director to push things like that or whether they should go the route of consultants.

Ms. Heiny-Cogswell asked if there were some additional project work Mr. Skalski could take on.

Mr. Skalski said he had no problem working in that area.

Mr. Corakis felt the need for a sidewalk on the west side of Stadium Drive between 8th and 9th Streets is a more immediate need than the east side, which already has at least a bike trail. He also mentioned the church steps discussed earlier may not have historical value as a ramp was added in the 1980s, so we may be able to do something there.

Ms. Lubbert reported the Sub-Committee, comprised of Grant Taylor, Libby Heiny-Cogswell, Rich MacDonald, and Themis Corakis, felt after research and discussion that the discussion for a potential Executive Director was occurring prematurely. They agreed it should be revisited once the DDA has a better understanding for where they see themselves in the future regarding projects, growth, etc. They recommended revisiting this topic after the DDA's meeting with additional direction from the Board.

Ms. Heiny-Cogswell said an Executive Director could manage meetings and take on requirements for State reporting, which needs to be done by the end of July.

Ms. Lubbert said she could still prepare financial reports and agendas. Her need for assistance is not drastic or immediate, but she will definitely need help with the more detailed State reporting requirements in July.

Chairperson Taylor said he may have to reorganize capital projects reporting requirements. A consultant could be approached to see what it would cost to prepare RFPs, do reporting work, prepare meeting packets and run DDA meetings, prepare financials and work on CIP plan revisions to match the 2004 projects.

Several people were suggested as consultants who might be approached for the various types of work needed to relieve Ms. Lubbert of the increasing time needed for DDA work.

Chairperson Grant will reach out to several people who might act in a consultant role for the DDA for the various needs. Mr. Skalski will continue to work on the brick and mortar issues, including keeping an eye on the corner site along with Mr. Corakis. His payment for work for the DDA will be kept separate from work done for the Township.

Ms. Lubbert noted Ms. High will also keep her work for the DDA on the sidewalk project separate from her work for the Township.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Other Business

Ms. Lubbert asked for direction regarding the Small Business Gift Card program.

Chairperson Grant felt this opportunity could be considered again in the fall after limited capacity openings are allowed; the board can discuss it at their July meeting.

Announcements and Adjournment

There being no further business, Chairperson Taylor adjourned the meeting at approximately 1:48 p.m.

Oshtemo Charter Township
Downtown Development Authority

Minutes Prepared: May 23, 2020

Minutes Approved: July 16, 2020