

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

MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING HELD SEPTEMBER 17, 2020

The Oshtemo Charter Township Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Board of Directors held a virtual meeting via tele-conference on Thursday, September 17, 2020. The meeting was called to order at approximately 12:04 p.m.

Roll Call Vote:

Chairperson Taylor asked Ms. Lubbert to call the roll by voice.

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

Members absent: Mike Lutke, and Jack Siegel.

Also present: Iris Lubbert, Planning Director, Marc Elliot, Public Works Director, Ryan Russell, Prein & Newhof and Martha Coash, Meeting Transcriptionist.

Approval of Agenda

Chairperson Taylor asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

Mr. Corakis moved to approve the agenda as presented. Mr. Cekola 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 Virtual Meeting of July 16, 2020. Hearing none, he asked for a motion.

Mr. Wieber moved to approve the Minutes of the Meeting of July 16, 2020 as presented. Mr. Betzler seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Mr. Corakis asked whether the discussion at the July 16th meeting regarding whether design work on the sidewalk project had been billed incorrectly to the DDA rather than the Township had been addressed.

Chairperson Taylor said he had not had time to do that yet but will explore it.

Treasurer's Report: July – August, 2020 (unaudited)

Ms. Lubbert presented the Treasurer's Report for July – August, 2020.

She noted the report for this cycle showed an increase in Property Tax Revenue of \$4,161.69 and a \$3,952.21 increase in interest earned.

Expenditures from this cycle include payments totaling \$65,791.31 towards the corner site improvement project and various maintenance costs totaling \$1,676.00.

Mr. Corakis noted the logo on the corner site sign had not yet been changed.

Ms. Heiny-Cogswell said the logo had actually been moved to completely encircle the "O" in Oshtemo, and though that was not what had been discussed she and Mr. Skalski felt it looked acceptable.

Mr. Corakis also suggested when a final walk through is done with the contractor there needs to be some adjustment to the electrical junction boxes.

Mr. Skalski will do the final walk through and is aware of a number of issues that need to be addressed.

Ms. Lubbert said there is still about \$50,000 of work to be done. The July-August report does not reflect final payment.

Mr. Corakis asked that the SignArt invoices be looked at to be sure there has not been double payment.

Ms. Lubbert will check on that.

Chairperson Grant noted the signs should soon be swapped out for the autumn.

Hearing no further comments, Chairperson Taylor asked for a motion to approve the Financial Reports.

Mr. Wieber moved to approve the Treasurer's Report for July - August 2020 as presented. Mr. Cekola seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

CIP Discussion

Ms. Lubbert said the Township is required to prepare a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) outlining the public structures and improvements planned to be completed in the following six-year period. The document is intended to help municipalities develop intermediate action steps for achieving key objectives in the community and is an

ongoing planning instrument that influences Township decisions. Part of the Township's CIP includes a section for the DDA.

At the DDA's last meeting, the budget for 2021 was discussed and submitted to the Township Board for consideration. The next step is taking the proposed 2021 budget and projecting project decisions forward. She provided a CIP draft for discussion.

Projects discussion included lighting on 9th Street from the ballpark to the south of the DDA boundary and the project that would provide sidewalks to the school. Also discussed were other new and replacement sidewalk priorities. Property acquisition was also discussed but not expected to occur until sidewalk work is completed.

Chairperson Taylor noted estimated income will depend on a number of factors, including, since he will be leaving the Treasurer's position, how a new Treasurer will approach investing.

After discussion, several changes were made to the draft, including two updates to the proposed 2021 DDA Budget. The CIP will be considered again next year.

Chairperson Taylor asked for a motion.

Mr. Corakis moved to approve the Capital Improvement Plan as presented with the discussed changes. In addition if the expected project expenditure amount was changed for the Covid-19 Emergency Assistance Program later in this meeting, they would be adjusted in the CIP. Mr. Skalski seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

A copy of the amended CIP is attached to the end of these Minutes.

The Chair also asked for a motion to amend the 2021 Budget to match the CIP.

Mr. Skalski moved to approve the 2021 Budget to match the CIP. Mr. Skalski seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Project Updates

a. Gateway Project at Stadium and 9th Update – Mr. Skalski

Mr. Skalski reported that in addition to addressing the electrical boxes, the ADA detectable warning device needs to be removed, and then the project will be pretty much done. He will confer with Mr. Corakis who mentioned conduits along Stadium Drive that need to be adjusted as well as some edging that was not properly installed and needs to be replaced.

Mr. Corakis noted trees need to be moved and/or expanded to meet electrical code inspection.

Mr. Skalski said he will find out where that stands, but moving trees would need to be delayed until cold weather to avoid damage to the trees.

It was discussed and agreed that fall pansies should be planted at the corner site in front of the wall. The Chair asked for a motion.

Mr. Corakis moved to contract for placement of pansies in front of the wall at the corner site, not to exceed \$1,000. Mr. Cekola seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Ms. Lubbert will coordinate with S&T Lawn Service, Inc.

Chairperson Taylor said after the punch list is complete a notification for a ribbon cutting ceremony for the corner site will be sent out.

Stadium Drive Sidewalks

Mr. Ryan Russell, Prein & Newhof, gave a progress report on the Stadium Drive sidewalks project. He wondered if the current contract with the Township should be modified for further work within the DDA boundary or whether a new contract should be prepared with the DDA.

Ms. Heiny-Cogswell indicated a new contract should be prepared for the DDA and sent to Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Ryan Russell explained there were different options to dealing with the property just east of Andover Drive, which has a steep drop. A retaining wall could be built and a slope developed for the sidewalk to follow, which could be below the road so a walker could not be seen from Stadium Drive or a modified version of that plan was possible. Either would be quite expensive. Another option would require a large easement, but is the least expensive and preferred. It would require a large amount of fill at a cost of about \$20,000 vs. about \$80,000 for the options that would include a retaining wall.

A fifty foot wide 460 foot long easement would be needed. Brush would be removed and the fill would improve the property which is currently entirely in a large hole. One or two trees would need to be removed at a cost of about \$1,000 each.

The group consensus was that the fill option at an estimated \$20,000 should be pursued.

The property is currently for sale with a taxable value of \$125,000. It was felt the owner would likely be agreeable to an easement with the improvement to the property which would increase its value. Mr. Russell, Mr. Skalski, and Ms. High will talk with the owner about the possibility of easement, improvements, and whether the owner might gift the property to the DDA or offer a good deal for a purchase. The DDA is a 501C3 entity so there could be tax advantages to the owner.

Mr. Russell also reported progress on the church steps issue. The church is receptive and willing to work with the DDA on relocating the steps to accommodate the planned sidewalk. The west side ramp will likely be similar to the east side with a widened sidewalk. A railing would be added to the outside, with a one foot buffer on each side and will be connected to the existing sidewalk.

Mr. Russell inquired about the scope of the sidewalk project. He noted there were some areas that already had sidewalks within the DDA boundary. Mr. Russell noted that some of the existing sidewalks are five feet wide in some places; six feet, the expressed preferred width, is not a requirement. The group agreed to his suggestion to keep a lot of the newer sidewalk areas except where they are damaged and should be replaced.

Mr. Russell said they will continue with design work. He noted that the apron areas are a large cost. Once they have concrete cost figures on paper he will share them with the DDA Board and the group can consider if the sidewalk width needs to be adjusted.

Mr. Corakis told the group he has seen the sidewalk on the corner being used quite a bit, often by shoppers with carts coming from Hardings. Once they get to the church, they head out into the street. He will take some pictures for future use, being careful to not include people's faces.

Mr. MacDonald wondered whether the sidewalks are considered pedestrian friendly. He was concerned about pinch points where the perception of comfort and safety might be sacrificed.

Mr. Russell indicated money is the pinch point. The city standard is 10 feet wide, but they build 12-14 feet. Wider sidewalks are more comfortable.

Ms. Heiny-Cogswell noted the Road Commission's basin is west of Erbelli's and wondered about a slight, long gradual curve five feet from the road.

Mr. Corakis said the land drops quite a bit for the retention pond.

Mr. Russell said a "V" shape could be done to sneak away from the road as much as possible.

Mr. MacDonald suggested doing as much as could be done where needed to make the sidewalks feel more comfortable for a reasonable cost. He mentioned other things such as making the delineation clear on either side of driveways.

Mr. Russell will send a link to training tools for community walkability that include how to make those delineations according to code.

Several options were discussed. Mr. Russell noted a new code is coming soon and will provide better guidance.

Mr. Corakis felt whatever is done should be consistent.

Chairperson Taylor thanked Mr. Russell for his report and moved to the next agenda item.

b. Music in the Park

Ms. Karen High, Parks Director, provided a written update on this year's 'Music in the Park' sponsored every year, usually at Flesher Field, but which was held virtually on Sunday, September 13 from 6 – 7 p.m. The concert was very well received and recorded to be posted online.

Mr. Corakis suggested having the same artist back next year when the performance could be in person.

Open House – November 19th and December 2nd

Ms. Lubbert said PA 57 of 2018 requires DDAs to hold at least two informational meetings each year. These meetings can be designed as open houses to inform the public of the goals of the Board and the projects the DDA is financing. Due to Covid-19, the plans to hold these open houses in the spring and summer were cancelled. However, to meet State requirements and with increased knowledge about Covid-19, she proposed holding open houses on November 19 and December 2. The December 2 date is also when SODA will hold its required meeting, so the two meetings can be held at the same time. She indicated that from what she has heard people rarely attend, but crowd size controls would be in effect.

Chairperson Taylor explained the TIF district will help subsidize the Drake Road path. Dollars will be captured to pay off the Drake Road project from Stadium to West Main Street. They have the same legal requirements and this is an opportunity to combine the two open houses.

The group agreed to the proposed dates and the plan to combine the required open houses.

DDA Covid-19 Emergency Assistance Program

Chairperson Taylor reported the DDA's Emergency Assistance Grant Program ran from April to June during which 19 grants were awarded to businesses located within the DDA boundary. The program had immediate impacts and businesses have expressed their sincerest gratitude for the DDA's support during this hard time. \$42,500 of the allocated program funds remain. Unfortunately, the attempt to start a gift card program was not as successful. To date, only one business officially reached out to staff with interest in participating.

After previous Board discussions, it was agreed these programs would be revisited in the fall. He said a couple of businesses reached out to him after the request forms for grants were due. There was a lot of positive feedback from the businesses who received grants

Mr. MacDonald said there was no good program to utilize to set up a gift card program. The original program was focused on businesses that experienced significant impact in March and April. He said he leaned toward holding off for now and seeing whether there is a need to provide more assistance in the future.

Mr. Skalski agreed with holding until a later date. If things get worse the program could be brought back.

The group agreed with that approach.

Mr. Corakis wondered if there is a list of businesses operating within the DDA.

Ms. Lubbert said they have the list of businesses who applied for a grant but it would be good to have a comprehensive list. Ms. Potok is working on a list as contacts are made with businesses.

Mr. Corakis suggested the Fire Department likely has a list.

Chairperson Taylor will check with Deputy Chief Wiley.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Other Business

a. Holiday Decorations

The group consensus was to provide holiday lights at the corner property. Ms. Lubbert will contact the current vendor, S & T and Naylor's to see what could be provided at a couple of different levels and at what cost.

Due to time constraints it was agreed a budget amendment should be approved not to exceed \$5,000 for holiday lights and that Chairperson Taylor be authorized to contract for rental and installation. Mr. Corakis will work with the Chair on this project.

Mr. Corakis moved to amend the budget to increase it by \$5,000 and to authorize Chairperson Grant to contract for rental and installation of holiday lighting at the corner property in an amount not to exceed \$5,000. Mr. Skalski seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Announcements and Adjournment

There being no further business, Chairperson Taylor adjourned the meeting at approximately 1:50 p.m.

Oshtemo Charter Township
Downtown Development Authority

Minutes Prepared: September 19, 2020

Minutes Approved: November 19, 2020