

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

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING HELD DECEMBER 17, 2015

The Oshtemo Charter Township Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Board of Directors held a special meeting on Thursday, December 17, 2015 to discuss the Streetscape Concept Plans. The meeting was called to order at approximately 12:00 p.m. at the Oshtemo Community Center, 6407 Parkview Avenue.

Members present: Terry Schley, Fred Gould, Jay Brown, Grant Taylor, Rich MacDonald, Bruce Betzler, Libby Heiny-Cogswell and Jack Siegel.

Members absent: Stephen Dallas, Chip Everett, Mike Lutke, Maria Dacoba and Glenn Steeg.

Also present: Julie Johnston, Oshtemo Township Planning Director; Ken Peregon, OCBA; Kylee Maycroft, Mike Sokolov and Dennis Berkebile, Consumers Energy.

Approve Agenda

Chair Schley asked the Board if any items needed to be added to the agenda and seeing none, requested a motion.

Mr. Taylor motioned approval of the agenda as presented. Mr. Gould supported the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Streetscape and Beautification Efforts

Chair Schley began this agenda item introducing Mr. Dennis Berkebile with Consumers Energy, wishing to deal with the more technical item related to the streetscape project, allowing the Board to then move to the bigger picture concept plans. Chair Schley also introduced Mr. Ken Peregon with OCBA and asked for an overview of the choices the Board will need to make with regards to the Consumers Energy pole placement.

Mr. Berkebile indicated that Consumers Energy was present at the meeting to review their needs at the corner of 9th Street and Stadium Avenue. Prior to this discussion, Mr. Berkebile commented that he thought the Board was on the right track with their streetscape plans but asked the Board to consider the “right tree in the right place.” He requested the Board consider planting slow growing trees near Consumer poles to avoid Consumers cutting them down later.

Chair Schley reinforced that the need to move the Consumers Energy pole was due to the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County’s project to realign Stadium Drive. Mr. Berkebile indicated that was correct and that they wanted to place the pole where it would be least obtrusive to all involved. He then introduced Ms. Mylie Maycroft and Mr. Mike Sokolov, asking Ms. Maycroft to describe the pole placement options.

Ms. Maycroft indicated Consumers Energy has two viable options that will work with the timeline of the Stadium Drive project. Plan A is to place a pole 30 feet north of its existing location at the northwest corner of 9th and Stadium, which would place aerial lines over the corner property. She indicated that an easement agreement was sent to the Township for the DDA. If the DDA does not want the easement, Consumers has Plan B, which is to place two poles at the 9th Street and Stadium intersection, one on each street. Making a determination on which Plan to use needs to be done so the easement agreement can be signed by the February 15th deadline.

Mr. Taylor asked about a Plan C, which was discussed at the November meeting. Mr. Sokolov indicated that options A or B are at no cost to the Township or DDA. Any other option will have costs that must be paid by the DDA. Ms. Maycroft stated that the two options requested by the DDA to be reviewed were discussed with line engineers at Consumers. One option was to cut behind the property to the west, which was not the best configuration. It requires a number of guy poles, which would be laminate poles, which are bigger and taller. It also increases the cost significantly to around \$400,000. This is not the best option.

The second option was to move the facilities to the other side of 9th Street and Stadium Drive, which is a more doable option. This would require a number of easements because the right-of-way is too narrow and a number of guy wires are needed. This option would cost about \$250,000 to the DDA, which is the least expensive of the alternatives.

The final alternative is to bury the lines. This option would cost around \$400,000 just for the Consumers Energy lines. Mr. Peregon indicated that additional costs would be associated with burying the lines for the other utilities that are on the poles. He has reached out to these utilities to discuss costs and has gotten no response. Mr. Sokolov indicated that going underground would also require meters to be changed for existing customers, which would increase costs.

Mr. Taylor asked if it would be cheaper to go underground now because the Road Commission will already be tearing up the road. Mr. Sokolov indicated that because of the timeline of the Stadium project, Consumers doesn't have time to engineer the underground option. However, he also stated that costs will be relatively the same whether the project is done now or next year.

Ms. May indicated that because of time constraints, Plan A or Plan B are the options available to the DDA right now. If the DDA is interested in pursuing one of the other alternatives, Consumers Energy is willing to work with them, but after the realignment of Stadium Drive. She indicated they just don't have the time to engineer one of the other options before this project begins.

Mr. Berkebile indicated Consumers preference would be one pole with the aerial easement. They will place the pole outside of the intersection as practicably possible. Ms. Johnston indicated that she could place the discussion of the aerial easement on the January agenda so if the DDA wanted to approve the easement, it could be signed before the February 15th deadline. Chair Schley stated that the easement would need to be signed by the property

owner, which is the DDA not the Township. Mr. Berkebile indicated that they need to move the pole before the road work begins, which means they need an indication from the DDA on which option they would like to see constructed.

Chair Schley asked if there were any further questions from the Board. Mr. Peregon asked if the DDA is interested in the underground option, should we at least work with the Road Commission to get the conduit placed while the road is under construction. Mr. Sokolov indicated that conduit could be placed later by boring under the road.

Mr. MacDonald asked if we went with option A or B, but with the highest possible pole, would it be no cost to the DDA. Mr. Berkebile indicated that there would be costs because Consumers would have to go back a pole or two to step down the height. Ms. Maycroft indicated that they will already be using a slightly taller pole because of the height of the new signalization. The new poles will be 55 feet, five feet taller than the existing poles. Mr. Peregon indicated that the low hanging wires, which are more in our field of view, are actually the other utilities and not the electrical lines.

Chair Schley thanked the staff from Consumers Energy for coming and discussing the different options with the DDA.

Chair Schley outlined the rest of the discussion items to help move outcomes forward. Three things need to be completed, as follows:

1. An update to the Township Board on the plans.
2. Commitment from the DDA on the next steps.
3. Assignment to pursue funding before moving on to additional design work.

Chair Schley then asked Mr. Peregon to provide the details of the concept plan and go over the plan sheets and any other details of the concept designs.

Mr. Peregon requested that the DDA ask any questions they might have as he discusses the plans. He began with the overall plan, which is from N Avenue to Meridian and from 8th Street to the Consumer right-of-way to the east, and includes Parkview, Atlantic and Chime. OCBA focused a lot of attention on the Village Core, but also where there might be areas where landscaped boulevards could be developed. The plan includes sidewalks and different kinds of landscape planters, which have are intended to serve as a barrier to the roadway in the Village core.

The most recent concepts on the planters were sent to the Road Commission but OCBA has not yet heard back from them. The initial ideas were not acceptable to the Road Commission so OCBA generated some additional options and Mr. Peregon is waiting on their response. As the design moves further out from the Village core, raised planters would be changed out to landscape strips next to the sidewalks.

Decorative pavement is planned within the Village Core. The final decision on what type of pavement, i.e. concrete, brick pavers, stone etc. hasn't been decided yet because it will depend on available budgets.

At the Village core, the design is intended to move towards the "greening of Oshtemo" so more developed landscaping is planned. On the DDA property, the Rotary has offered to provide a clock. Chair Schley indicated that they would provide the clock, which would have some branding for them and the tower would be the responsibility of the DDA.

Mr. Peregon indicated that Mr. Berkebile's comments about the right kind of tree along the street is important to note. The concept plans only indicated the desire for trees, but not the kind that will be planted. That would happen during the engineering phase of the project. Mr. Peregon indicated that during the community meeting at least one business owner stated he did not want the trees to block the signage for the business. This will also need to be considered at a later date.

The Village core plan offers an idea for how the old car wash property, owned by the Methodist Church, could be used for parking and greenscape. The plan is for the curb cut on Stadium to be removed. The idea is that the property would be used collaboratively between the Methodist Church and DDA.

The sidewalks and street tree treatments also happen along Parkview, Atlantic and Chime. The plan also looks at the realignment of Atlantic at Parkview and 9th Street. Conversations were had with the Road Commission to see if the realignment on 9th could occur when they complete improvements to 9th Street. Unfortunately, the timing is off to be able to do this now.

Mr. Peregon indicated that one of the big budget items for the project is lighting. Lighting is planned in the Village core at a pedestrian scale - 14-foot high and more closely spaced - and as you move to the Village fringe, lighting would still be decorative but would be taller and placed farther apart. Chair Schley indicated that the intent is for the lighting to be a certain style to be used as a branding item to announce that you are now in the Village area.

Chair Schley stated that there are a whole lot of logistic issues to be determined depending on what the Board wishes to pursue. There will likely be construction issues, decisions about street amenities and additional lights, maintenance issues, much like the discussions the Board had on the commercial access drive. Chair Schley indicated that the discussion today was to focus on the concepts and that those details will all come later when the DDA has a better understand of funding and are ready to move forward.

Chair Schley asked if there were any questions on the concepts. Mr. Brown was concerned that adding more lighting would cost the tax payers more money. Chair Schley indicated that hasn't been determined and that at some point the initial costs of the project will have to be paid by someone, whether it's a grant, DDA, additional partners, etc. He stated that the DDA has an understanding of what those first costs will be based on because of the budget provided OCBA. But, that there are many questions about how maintenance and other costs are

handled. He continued that the DDA just doesn't know what those answers are today, but that it is important to focus on a vision that the DDA wants to pursue and then work on how mechanically that vision gets realized.

Chair Schley stated that the process today requires hope and that it is a challenge because they don't yet have all the answers, the leg work will need to be done after the vision is has been approved. Chair Schley continued that having the Board involved in process is important so that consensus can be reached and that we are chasing something the Board is interested in.

Mr. MacDonald asked about the last public session. Mr. Peregon indicated that the session went very well. The plans were made available at the meeting and around 20 to 25 people attended. Chair Schley stated that members of the Methodist Church attended, who are a key players in the development of the plan. They were amenable to the vision and the closing of the curb cut.

Mr. MacDonald then asked how the streetscape idea got started, and was it for economic development. Chair Schley said it started as a definitive goal when the DDA and TIF were established. Part of the founding documents of the DDA. Chair Schley indicated that when the DDA formed, many items were prioritized and the streetscape was part of those established priorities. Mr. MacDonald asked if the establishment of the DDA was for economic development. Chair Schley stated that the DDA is for economic development, removal of blight, and to enhance the economic and aesthetic vitality of the area.

Mr. MacDonald asked what the desired outcome is for the streetscape, is it to improve aesthetics, generate new construction because of improved aesthetics, putting people on the street, etc. Chair Schley stated that it's all of those things combined. The project is intended to be a collaborative solution with the Township to provide pedestrian access that is needed and the use of TIF dollars to improve economic development and enhance and beautify the area where TIF dollars are required to be spent. It is also about branding the area.

Mr. MacDonald indicated that he is comfortable approving the concept plans as a "master plan" for the streetscape, knowing that more detail will come later. He stated that we would like to see the Board review priorities to determine the best possible approach for spending the funding that is available to the Board.

Chair Schley stated that maybe right now approving the concept plans is all that can be done. He was hoping that the Board could narrow the focus to some specific goals, but maybe that is premature.

Chair Schley asked if the Board was on board with the concept plan or "master plan" for the streetscape. Mr. Taylor stated that he sees the concept plan as the "cadillac plan" and that the Board needs to determine phases of development because of costs associated with the development of the whole plan. He stated that he believes the Village core should be the top priority and then work out as revenue sources become available. Mr. Taylor also indicated that the streetscape should be looked at as a capital improvement that will occur over a number of years.

Mr. Brown stated that the plan is an “idea” or concept and not something set in stone. He continued that if it is exactly what is going to be developed, he couldn’t support it. But, he felt it was okay as overview that can be tweaked as we move forward. Mr. Brown felt that it was okay as a “big picture” plan, but some of the ideas need further study. He voiced some concerns about traffic movement on 9th Street.

Chair Schley asked if there was anyone opposed to the plans presented by OCBA. Mr. MacDonald indicated that as long as there is flexibility both from the DDA and the public, he’s on board with the plan. Mr. Peregon indicated that he believes the plans are flexible and that there are a thousand things still to be worked out as the DDA moves towards actual construction. Chair Schley stated he felt the plans were a concept vision.

Chair Schley then asked the Board to discuss phasing of the project. He indicated that the Board will need to decide whether they want to try and pull the whole project off or to take it in phases. Ms. Heiny-Cogswell stated that if the Board is in agreement on the concept plan, she believes the implementation needs to look to partners, like the Road Commission, the Township and the Capital Improvement Plan dollars set aside for sidewalks on Stadium, the DDA funds and any private development that might occur. Finally, Ms. Heiny-Cogswell indicated that there are Transportation Alternative funds to help with these kinds of projects, both State and local dollars. When looking at what phases the DDA should establish, funding is a key component and the DDA might want to phase based on grant dollars.

Mr. Taylor felt the DDA needs to look at the Township Capital Improvement Plan when making decisions about phasing so the DDA can coordinate with that available funding. He also believes the DDA needs to add the cost to bury lines into the project, whether it happens this year or many years down the road.

Chair Schley stated he felt the Board needed to set the bar high. He felt that Chime and Atlantic could be dropped, but that the DDA needs to consider completing the project north to south and east to west.

Mr. Brown indicated that he thought one of the goals of the group was to get the corner of 9th and Stadium done and that is where he feels the DDA should focus funding.

Ms. Heiny-Cogswell suggested that we sit down with MDOT to discuss the streetscape project to see if it is eligible for Transportation Alternative dollars or other grant dollars.

Mr. Taylor indicated he thought the project should also be presented to the Township Board so that when the Board is deciding on budgets and capital improvement discussions, this project is included.

Chair Schley indicated that the corner project work will cost around \$1.3 million. To continue the work down Stadium Drive and north on 9th Street, the project increases to around \$4 million. If the DDA does everything but Atlantic and Chime, the budget is up to \$6.1. These budget dollars do not include burying the electrical lines. Chair Schley stated that he would rather see the funds that might go to burying the lines be spent on the more comprehensive

solution of the entire streetscape. The improvements planned on the corner may not warrant the cost to bury the lines.

Mr. MacDonald stated he felt the Board needed some guidance and feedback on what we can afford. Determining phases and amount of work to be completed can't be determined until budgets can be determined, including possible grant funding.

Ms. Heiny-Cogswell stated that she agrees and that the Board should postpone discussion on phasing until funding from other sources can be determined. She also stated the DDA's role should be lighting the fire for this concept and going to our partners to encourage them to support the project.

Mr. MacDonald stated that the DDA needs to be careful not to spend all of our resources on one project. He indicated that there currently is a gap in the market between rents and costs to construct and that the DDA might want to cover this gap to help spur investment in the area.

Chair Schley asked the Board to support the concept plan. He stated that he appreciates the practical issues of constructing the project, but where there has been a lack or want to pursue the highest fulfillment, often the best outcomes aren't reached. He believes the Board should set the bar high and work from there.

Mr. Taylor motioned to accept the concept plans as presented by OCBA. Mr. Siegel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Taylor asked if the motion meant that we could now start showing the plans to possible partners. Chair Schley stated that could be determined with the new leadership in 2016. However, he indicated that taking the plans to the public needs to be done in such a way that a practical view of the time to complete the project is considered.

Ms. Heiny-Cogswell liked the idea of a presentation on the concept plans to the joint board meeting in February.

Other Business

Chair Schley stated that he completed the inspection of the Citgo site as part of the Due Care Plan. The caps that were put in place after the demolition are all intact and do not need repairs. However, the perimeter areas where there is existing concrete have some gaps. It is possible these gaps may have been there when the previous property sold the property, but as the current owner it is the Board's responsibility to ensure that paved surfaces are maintained and sealed. Chair Schley will provide a report that will likely indicate repairs are needed. The DDA has the responsibility to complete a yearly inspection that must be recorded and put into a report.

Announcements and Adjournment

Chair Schley announced that he had two Board members indicate their interest in a leadership position. He requested that if anyone else is interested, to contact him soon so that a Board slate can be ready for the first meeting in 2016.

There being no further business, the Chair asked for a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Taylor moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Siegel supported the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 1:52 p.m.

Oshtemo Charter Township
Downtown Development Authority

Minutes Prepared: March 2, 2016
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