

**ADA TOWNSHIP DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (DDA)
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 8, 2021, MEETING, 8:00 A.M.**

A regular meeting of the Ada Township Downtown Development Authority (DDA) was held on Monday, February 8, 2021, at 8:00 a.m. via video/audio-conferencing, in conformance with Public Act 228 of 2020 concerning temporary authorization of remote participation in public meetings.

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 8:04 a.m. by Chairperson, Bowersox.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Bowersox, Coe, Harrison, Idema, Leisman, Norman, VanderWulp, Wright

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Knapp

STAFF AND OFFICIALS PRESENT: Buckley, Ferro, Fitzpatrick, Moran, Suchy

PUBLIC PRESENT: 3

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Moved by Leisman, supported by Harrison, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 11, 2021 MEETING

Moved by Harrison, supported by Leisman, to approve the minutes with proposed change in wording to section V, 3rd paragraph, last sentence, to read "would first come back to the DDA Board for approval." Motion passed by roll call vote 8-0, with 1 absent.

IV. REQUEST FOR DDA FUNDING PARTICIPATION IN LEONARD FIELD PARK IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT

Fitzpatrick presented his request for a DDA funding contribution to the cost of the proposed Leonard Field improvements. Fitzpatrick went over details on the improvements along the riverfront and the grant application process as included in his staff memo. He said RJM-Design estimates the total riverfront project cost is \$676,100.00 and the Land and Water Conservation Fund grant requires a 50% match.

Fitzpatrick gave an approximate time line for the funding and said the grant application is due the end of March, then DNR would review, and approval of funding would possibly be in late 2021.

Fitzpatrick stated he is requesting support from the DDA in two ways:

1. A "Letter of Support" from the DDA to be included with the grant application to show their approval of the project and grant application.
2. A commitment of \$50,000 from the DDA to be a part of the 50% match the Township is responsible for towards the grant-based project.

Fitzpatrick said as a pledge now, the DDA expenditure of funds would not be needed until FY 2022-23 or could be spread out over two years.

There was some Board discussion on fund raising options, overall costs for the riverfront project, overall cost of the entire master plan, and they all liked the proposed improvements and the opportunity to enhance facilities to accommodate improved areas for softball and multiple activities including township events.

Moved by Norman, supported by Wright, to approve a letter of support for the grant application for improvements to the riverfront park and to commit \$50,000 towards the project costs from the DDA, contingent upon the grant funds being awarded.

Motion passed by roll call vote 8-0, with 1 absent.

V. REVIEW AND APPROVE PROPOSED BUDGET FOR FY 2021-22

Ferro stated based on the input from the January meeting, it was agreed to increase the budgeted amount for DDA Marketing/Promotion Consultant to \$35,000. Ferro said purchase of additional deer was not included in the budgeted amount for holiday decorations.

Suchy stated they are pleased the holiday program went well and looking to expand it would be important to evaluate what we liked and did not like this year and get quotes and contracts in place for lights and trees for next year. Suchy went over the new holiday decoration items and what items were already purchased/own; the 6 deer, tree stands, and the grapevine ball toppers, but lights for trees were not purchased and we would need to purchase new trees and lights for next year. Suchy suggested increasing the amount to \$10,000. The Board agreed to bump up amount from \$5,500 to \$10,000 for holiday decorations.

Leisman made note of an item to consider, not to adjust budget now but at a later time, for the DDA support staff office location and the possible office renovation costs in the future.

Ferro stated one other item to point out as mentioned in his staff report was the personnel budget number assumes a 9 month period for a new DDA staff support person and if an earlier date of hire is assumed, it would increase by \$18,425.

Suchy stated he had concern with holding off to hire a DDA director until June and if they could get someone by April, they would have more opportunity to get to know the businesses and work through some of the strategic planning items the DDA wants to work on.

Following Board discussion, it was moved by Idema, supported by Bowersox, to approve the proposed budget for FY 2021-22. Motion passed by roll call vote 8-0, with 1 absent.

VI. DDA FINANCIAL REPORT, 1/31/21

Ferro said there was not much to mention in the revenue/expense report other than what was included in his memo. The fund balance as of the end of January was \$629,881.

VII. DISCUSSION REGARDING COMMUNICATIONS/COORDINATION WITH ABA AND BUSINESS COMMUNITY; POTENTIAL FOR BUSINESS COMMUNITY CREATION OF A CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Coe expressed her concern and said she has mentioned it before about the communication, or lack thereof, between the ABA, DDA, the township and just the community as a whole and thought maybe a Chamber would act as the hub and bring it all together.

Suchy stated having a coordinated effort is important and Ada has struggled the last year since Brian left, not having that point of communication. Suchy explained the Chamber and DDA have two different goals/missions. He said a DDA is more geared toward infrastructure, marketing and attracting people. A Chamber is a little more business front-facing and geared toward working with businesses on trainings and event planning and there is a lot of overlap. Suchy said that could be done here depending on what the structure and framework looks like.

Kindell Rerucha, ABA President, said we have great entities within the village itself that are working to promote businesses and it appears there has been a lot of confusion due to not having one person or physical location to go to to understand everything about Ada. Ms. Rerucha stated we are proposing to put together a task force to either convert to a Chamber or combine the DDA position so that we have a central clearing house for all of Ada entities; i.e., currently we have 5 different factions that want the same goals but are working independently.

Idema stated we have been talking about doing some strategic planning maybe that is an opportunity to find out where the overlaps are and resolve the road blocks.

Wright stated the problem in Ada is communication and first and foremost we need to get the existing entities talking with each other.

Leisman suggested to set up a meeting with 2 or 3 members from ABA, Julius, Jim, Ross and 1 other member from DDA to talk about it. Bowersox agreed with the idea to get together with a small group and discuss what the issues are and he volunteered to serve on a task force. Leisman suggested they set up a meeting to talk about an idea of a task force or another alternative. The Board agreed to table discussion until the next meeting.

VIII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENT

Wright asked if there was follow up on providing the DDA some guidance in terms of awarding liquor licenses. Suchy had an update and said the Township has an intern, Steven Hively, that is working on the liquor license issue and is communicating with the Liquor Control Commission. Suchy hopes to have an update at the next meeting.

Coe asked for an update on signage in the village and any possibility of electronic signage. Suchy updated and said the Township has put a pause on the signage as it stands now and the designs needed some refining. Suchy stated they have taken a step back to rethink the entire design aesthetics. The plan is to engage more designers through the process. Suchy said as far as electronic signs he thinks there is great value with the informational component, it just depends how you can do it in a tasteful way and that is not something that has been decided yet.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT

Suchy stated in the future he would like to add a Township Manager Report to the agenda to share updates in the Township and help keep the lines of communication going. Suchy shared additional updates:

*The Amy VanAndel Library is open. There was a soft opening on Saturday and will officially open publicly with a dedication on March 18th. The community rooms are not open to public.

*The Township is working on our budget and will have a public hearing on March 8th, approving all budgets on March 22nd.

*Virtual Meetings: The MTA sent out information that all meetings must be held virtually through February 21st for sure. The State has not decided yet for February 22 through the end of March and Julius will continue to update all Boards.

*Trails Bond: The Township Board had a Trails Worksession to plan for our increased trail millage initially as we are going to be looking into repair projects in 2021, some low-hanging fruit and looking at a Bond to take advantage of low interest rates to complete some of the larger projects based on the ConnectAda plan.

X. ADJOURN MEETING

Moved by Idema, supported by Norman, to adjourn meeting at 9:22 a.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted:

Devin Norman, Secretary

rs:eb