

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF HIGHLAND
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Record of the January 18, 2012 Meeting
APPROVED**

Members Present: Triscia Pilchowski, Dale Feigley, John Hirzel (arrived 6:30), Roscoe Smith, John Dowson, Beth Lewis, Gail Perrin, Doug Bourgeois

Members Absent: Matt Barnes, Mike Maher

Staff Present: Melissa Dashevich, Director
Karen Beardsley, Recording Secretary

Visitors Present: Rick Hamill, HDDA Design Committee
Mary Pat Chynoweth, Highland Township Board
Brian Rhodes

Mr. Roscoe Smith called the meeting to order at 6:15 PM.

Regular Board Meeting Minutes of December 21, 2011

On page 2, paragraph 3, Ms Pilchowski would like to add the words "with the project" to the end of the last sentence in that paragraph.

MR. FIEGLEY MOVED TO APPROVE the Regular Board Meeting Minutes of DECEMBER 21, 2011 as corrected. SUPPORTED BY MS. LEWIS and the MOTION CARRIED with a unanimous voice vote (8 yes votes).

Mr. Smith suggested a change of order from the agenda to await Mr. Hirzel's arrival.

OLD BUSINESS

Ice Skating Rink

Mr. Smith presented the idea of the Ice Skating Rink again, prompted by a link to a website sent to him by Ms. McDonell. This link was to the Pinckney DDA sponsored portable ice rink. It is 52 ft. X 32 ft. and their purchase cost was \$3,000. This idea was put on hold in previous meetings, since we had just solidified our streamlined budget. The rink at Duck Lake Pines doesn't hold water, despite Szott's extensive contributions. Also, it needs to be filled by a fire truck and this could present a problem should the fire truck be needed for a run. There were many discussions than ensued about various problems at an unsupervised park such as Duck Lake Pines.

Ms. Pilchowski stated that there are a couple of portable ice rinks in Prestwick, but they have experienced some vandalism. Also these rinks do require maintenance, storage, etc. She suggested that while it would be great to have a rink for the community to enjoy, the DDA is not in a position to sponsor it. She suggested; however, that Ms. McDonell find a group of hockey enthusiasts to sponsor, maintain, and operate it, similar to the baseball and soccer groups at the other parks. Chris Baker is connected to Joe Kocur; he may know of a group who is interested.

Mr. Feigley mentioned that it should be in our district for us to be involved at all. Ms. Pilchowski thought it might be worthwhile to speak to the school board about using the vacant middle school grounds right here in our district; maybe even have them involved as far as scheduling for the rink, etc.

Mr. Smith will file the request for now; perhaps asking Ms. Corwin (who lives in Pinckney) to stop by to take a look at theirs.

Director's Report

Ms. Dashevich reviewed her Director's report and a copy is attached to these minutes.

Treasurer's Report

Mr. Hirzel wanted to speak about the year-end numbers, and although they are not official, they will not change much. The only thing out of the ordinary was the \$6,500 paid for a façade grant to Stratus. Our budget on the revenue side was \$201,000; we're actually at \$190,000. We're forecasting a dip next year of about 4% to 6% as well, so next year's revenue will be about \$176,000. Our expenses came in at about \$81,000, so there's about \$100,000 we didn't spend. We have \$647,870 in the bank, which is about \$6,000 more than we planned. Mr. Smith pointed out that we were under budget in almost every instance.

Sidewalks

In the interest of getting another opinion, Mr. Hirzel sent the proposed sidewalk project costs to Sidock Group, Inc.. During this process, the project was referred to one of their contract employees (previously a city manager) who is very knowledgeable about federal and state grant writing. He came out to Highland to visit, and investigate what opportunities might be a good fit for grants. He mentioned an idea he had seen work before called a 'business hotel' which could be a good concept for the vacant school. Much discussion ensued about this concept. Mr. Hirzel said the Sidock employee also brought up 'Safe Routes to School', but he told him we haven't received much school support for that. Also, he will be attending a symposium in February. This person is very experienced and could fill our need for grant writing. If Sidock Group, Inc. was allowed to bid and was chosen, the DDA could receive his services as a consultant to the sidewalk project and wouldn't be charged additional money for that. He felt there was great potential in Highland, and was very positive about our success in the future.

NEW BUSINESS

Committee Reports

Economic Restructuring: An advertising program has been laid out for the coming year; a page featuring a different category each month: restaurants, new business, professional; barber shop, hair salon, nail salons; etc. The intent is to cover all business categories in the district over one year. Mr. Smith presented the full page color co-op advertisement. Ms. Dashevich added that 500 window clings were ordered for area businesses.

Organization: Ms. Dashevich welcomed two new members, who were present at the recent meeting: Louise/Claudia and Diane. Fundraising was discussed at that meeting, and Ms. Lewis shared with the DDA the idea of having a Texas Hold-Em fundraiser. She has been involved with this as part of another fundraising group, so she has knowledge of the requirements and restrictions. Mr. Smith mentioned that the HVCA participates in this type as well.

Promotion: Ms. Dashevich stated that Ms. Pilchowski is the chair for this committee. With regards to the concerts, Gemini is set for the first concert, and Ms. Dashevich is working on getting Toppermost.

Mr. Smith brought up Pet-a-Palooza, which was part of Highland HeyDays. Ms. Lewis added that she had received a call from Hartland Insurance, who wants to participate next year as well. Many felt that it was a positive experience in general, but that it could use more organization and marketing. Ms. Pilchowski suggested the DDA request a plan from the HWLBA.

Design: Mr. Hamill welcomed two new members to the Design Committee: Glen Morningstar and Paul Young. There are also a couple more members from the Beautification Committee that are perhaps interested in joining the Design Committee. The Design Committee will begin meetings in February and is very interested in networking with enthusiastic, results-oriented people.

Mr. Hamill wanted to share that when he read the article Main Streets that Pop, regarding pop-up businesses, in Main Street Now magazine, he was impressed with how much it aligns with the ideas he presented at the last meeting. We need to be looking to the future to make plans for what our downtown can be, and although we don't have lots of foot traffic, we shouldn't discount the advantage we have of slow speed limits. We also need to look at business closings as additional opportunities to come up with ideas for the vacant real estate. Ms. Pilchowski talked about the carpet store being a perfect opportunity for a pet store during Pet-a-Palooza. Mr. Hamill added that the design committee could come with sets of guidelines for pop-up businesses, as far as steps they would have to take, including starting early enough with the township, to make it happen. This is another example of the DDA working together with the township for a common goal.

Mr. Hamill also found the article 48 Hours, 48 Months, 48 Years to be very inspiring and it also speaks to the type of planning we should be thinking of. This article speaks of creating a buzz with short term temporary makeovers the first 48 hours, having a 48 month plan for development, and how to keep that going and growing for the next 48 years. We should be planting seeds for generations to grow; attracting and motivating a younger crowd.

All in all, Mainstreet USA is an invaluable resource that we should utilize to the fullest. Ms. Pilchowski reiterated that they are always there for support, and provide active involvement, such as events, etc. Mr. Hamill asked that Ms. Dashevich get copies of the Mainstreet 'checklist' to all on the DDA Board so that we all can see the issues at hand, and see what things we should be focusing on and getting together to talk about. This will ensure that we are all headed in the same direction.

More ideas were discussed about how vacant properties and real estate might be used to attract the community and other businesses to the area. One area of concern is our lack of restaurants. Ms. Pilchowski added that we should be getting our county executives involved in some 'outside the box' ideas as well; they have valuable input and resources.

Regarding the sidewalk issue, Mr. Feigley was interested in determining what steps were needed to get it in front of the Township Board. Hirzel said that we were waiting to have a special meeting to answer any questions the board may have, but added that he would like to have the questions before the meeting.

Ms. Pilchowski mentioned that she has asked Mr. Robert Dado, financial county executive to attend the March Township Board meeting.

Mr. Hamill suggested that we present a visual package, including photos, of our plans after sidewalks. He felt that some board members would feel this is advantageous, even necessary, to see why we need sidewalks. He also felt the meeting should be in February, before the board, with the public and include the request for bonding based on the paperwork.

Ms. Pilchowski suggested that the concept boards, Mr. Hirzel's figures (minus the what-ifs), and the subcommittee recommendations including where we can pare back if needed, be emailed to the board asking for specific questions of things they want answered. This will give them an opportunity to think about what they might need clarification of, or additional explanation of, so they can feel that they are supporting a solid project that makes sense, is a good expenditure of taxpayer dollars, and shows your ability to repay and how. Mr. Feigley also added that separate meetings for individuals are an option as well, if that will help make them feel more comfortable with the project.

Ms. Chynoweth added that sometimes, in her experience, people need to see things more than once, even if briefly, a few times to help digest it. She also added that she thought the sidewalks would bring value to whatever opportunities there might be for the vacant middle school.

Ms. Pilchowski also added that she sincerely appreciates Mr. Hirzel's efforts, in particular, since she knows how much time he, like Ms. Dashevich and Mr. Smith as well, has devoted to this. Presenting to an audience as conservative as the Township Board can be very tedious.

Mr. Smith introduced a guest, Brian Rhodes. He is the twin brother of Keith Rhodes.

MS. PERRIN MOTIONED to adjourn the meeting. The MOTION WAS SUPPORTED BY MR. FIEGLEY and the MOTION CARRIED with a unanimous voice vote (8 yes votes).

At 7:47 p.m., Mr. Smith adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

A. Roscoe Smith

ARS/kb

APPROVED