

**ANN ARBOR DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
RETREAT MEETING MINUTES
September 22, 2010**

Place: DDA Office, 150 S. Fifth Avenue, Suite 301, Ann Arbor, MI 48104
Time: DDA Chair Lowenstein called the meeting to order at 9:10am

1. ROLL CALL

Present: Gary Boren, Newcombe Clark, Russ Collins, Bob Guenzel, Leah Gunn, Roger Hewitt, John Hieftje, Joan Lowenstein, John Mouat, Keith Orr, Sandi Smith, John Splitt

Staff Present: Susan Pollay, Executive Director
Joe Morehouse, Deputy Director
Amber Miller, Planning & Research Specialist

Audience: Dave Askins, *Ann Arbor Chronicle*

Welcome and retreat process/purpose:

Joan Lowenstein welcomed everyone and outlined the DDA's purpose in meeting, which was to come to consensus on DDA short- and long-term objectives, which would give direction to the DDA's Mutually Beneficial committee members.

Status of Mutually Beneficial discussions:

Committee members reported that the MBC spent many months discussing parking and the possibility of the DDA taking over parking enforcement. The Committee had only recently shifted its discussion to the concept of the DDA acting as facilitator of development in the downtown, which seemed to have interest from Council members who serve on the MBC.

Initially City staff had put forward a concern that the DDA couldn't legally enforce parking, but this was later shown to be possible. However, in the course of discussions it had become clear that City enforcement revenues have steeply declined over recent years despite fine increases, and the number of parking tickets being written is in steady decline as well. Given this trend there was a concern that the DDA might damage its finances taking over parking enforcement.

Due to the lack of progress in discussions over the past many months concern was raised regarding the transfer of funds to the City without anything beneficial coming to the downtown in return, especially as this fund transfer was outside of the Parking Agreement. It was noted by a couple DDA members that there appeared to be a lack of understanding on the part of some at the City regarding the role and autonomy of the DDA. However, the general consensus was that Mutually Beneficial discussions should continue.

Moving forward

It was acknowledged that given emerging parking technologies and reduced staffing levels, the City's parking enforcement revenues were very likely going to continue their downward trend. There was DDA consensus that taking on this declining revenue stream was not in the best interest of the DDA. However, the "ambassador model" where enforcements staff were trained to provide more eyes on the street still resonated for some on the DDA. The DDA's MBC members were asked to ask the City if the Police Chief could retrain and redirect enforcement personnel to be friendlier and also to be watchful for potential crime concerns.

There was board consensus that the DDA could and should take a more prominent and proactive role in the process of downtown development. There was consensus that this effort should be done as a continuation of the earlier City planning processes, including the Downtown Plan, Downtown Residential Taskforce, Calthorpe and A2D2. Most of these earlier efforts did not generate site-specific recommendations and the DDA could help with this. There was also consensus that processes could be improved if consultants with expertise in business and real estate were brought in.

Many other ideas were put forward. For instance, it was suggested that the DDA's public process focus on who the tenants would be filling buildings. It was thought that focusing on the new jobs or new residents would not be as controversial. For instance, the DDA could encourage the next Google to move downtown, and direction suggested a closer partnership with SPARK and the University. There was an acknowledgement of the long lead time needed to construct a new building, thus it may not always be possible to have the future tenant at the same time a site plan was under consideration. There was a suggestion that the DDA's role should be to market downtown's assets, and to amass current information that would be useful to developers. There was a suggestion that the DDA continue transferring \$2Million/year to the City, and with each transfer the DDA would take possession of another City property. There was also a suggestion that the DDA take possession of non-city property in order to facilitate development. It was asked if an RFP is essential to sell/redevelop publically owned property, and DDA staff will research this.

Retreat outcomes:

1. Restructure DDA Committees and possibly reorganize their work plans. Suggested format:
 - Merge Operations Committee & Capital Improvements Committee. On its work plan the Ops Committee will oversee edits to the Parking Agreements as needed (e.g. add 415 W. Washington and 5th/William parking lots, etc.). The Ops Committee will also describe more fully what it hopes the City enforcement staff can accomplish in terms of serving more as downtown "ambassadors."
 - Economic Development/Communications Committee. Work plan items would include assembling/promoting information on downtown assets, conveying information about DDA activities and achievements.
 - Transportation Committee remains
 - Partnerships Committee remains but downtown development issues such as Brownfield grants, etc. would be assigned to the Economic Development committee.

Chair Lowenstein and DDA Director Pollay agreed to develop a framework for DDA discussion and feedback at the next board meeting.

2. DDA members serving on the Mutually Beneficial committee are to convey the DDA's interest in pursuing a role facilitating development of City properties, involving the community at the front end, as well as bringing in professional expertise.

Adjournment.

There being no further discussion, Chair Lowenstein thanked everyone for their participation and adjourned the meeting at 12:00 noon.