Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, September 6, 2006

Place: DDA Office, 150 S. Fifth Avenue, Suite 301, Ann Arbor, 48104  
Time: DDA Chair Sandi Smith called the meeting to order at 12:00 Noon

1. ROLL CALL


Absent: Dave DeVarti

Staff: Susan Pollay, Executive Director  
Present: Joe Morehouse, Deputy Director  
Lindsay-Jean Hard, DDA Intern  
Joan Lyke, Management Assistant

Audience: Tony Bisesi, Republic Parking System  
Ron Dankert, citizen  
Ray Detter, Downtown Area Citizens Advisory Council  
Adrian Iraola, Washtenaw Engineering  
Frank Nagy, Republic Parking System  
Dennis Webster, The Earle Restaurant  
Chris White, AATA

2. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Mr. Detter announced a celebration of the next Downtown Historical Street Exhibit installation planned for November 16th at 5 PM on the Broadway Bridges. He said that the Downtown Area Citizens Advisory Council had supported Ashley Mews, the DDA Three Site Plan, Liberty Lofts, Kingsley Lane, Ashley Terrace and Washington Terrace, and that they opposed State Street Lofts, the Gallery Project and the Metro 202.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Smith presented the July 5, 2006 Board Minutes, the July 10, 2006 Annual Meeting Minutes and the July 10, 2006 Summer Retreat Minutes for approval. Mr. Aldrich said that on the retreat and Annual Meeting minutes his name was listed incorrectly. With that correction noted, Mr. Collins moved and Mr. Hewitt seconded approval of the three sets of minutes.

A vote on the motion showed:  
AYES: Aldrich, Beal, Boren, Collins, Gillett, Greff, Gunn, Hall, Hewitt, Hieftje, Smith  
NAYES: None  
Absent: DeVarti

The motion carried.

4. STATUS OF CITY TASKFORCE EFFORTS

Community Security & Public Space Taskforce: As a member of the Taskforce, Mr. Hewitt presented information on the report that will be presented to City Council on September 11. The Taskforce had reviewed the following options: do nothing; renovate and expand the Larcom building; construct a new municipal center in place of Larcom; or construct a new municipal center to house all City operations some place other than on the Larcom site. Mr. Hewitt said that the City doesn’t have the financial resources to take a comprehensive approach and a taxpayer millage is unlikely, so the Taskforce recommended that the City address its most immediate need which is space for the 15th District Court
and Police Department. They recommend that the City and DDA partner to build a 400+ space underground parking structure on the S. Fifth Avenue lot, atop which the City would build a Court/Police facility on the back half of the site with space set aside for a future construction of a new City Hall or to sell for private development.

Mr. Beal asked if the 400 parking spaces noted in the report included city spaces or would be an addition to the public system; Mr. Hewitt said that the City has agreed to pay the going monthly rate for any parking utilized by City vehicles or City staff. Mr. Gillett asked if the 400 spaces being paid for by the DDA would be the only financial contribution to the project; Mr. Aldrich said that he had proposed that the DDA provide $5 million toward the public elements of this building. Mr. Aldrich said once the report is presented, future steps would be up to City Council.

The Allen Creek Greenway Taskforce: As a member of the Taskforce Ms. Smith reported that the Taskforce is in the process of writing a report to City Council which will set forward multiple opinions regarding 415 W. Washington and 721 N. Main as the group was not able to come to consensus.

5. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

4th & William: Work began in early August bracing the lower level columns. Staff met with City staff to frame a plan to close portions of Fourth Avenue and William when a crane is in place.

Alley Repair program: Work on the northern half of the 4th & William alley is underway.

Fifth & Division: The project team presented proposed plans to City staff and the response was generally very favorable. City staff input included the recommendation that the DDA use LED street lights, which cost more upfront than traditional light fixtures. Mr. Beal said that he hoped the project would come to the Board for action at the October meeting.

Huron Street: This project team also met with City staff and received valuable feedback on such items as the refuge islands which they asked to have mid-block than at the intersections, similar to what is seen on Stadium Blvd. It is anticipated that the proposed design will come to the committee in October and then to the DDA in November. Once approved by the DDA, a site plan will go to the city for approval then to MDOT. Our first goal is to see a comprehensive plan approved so we can give design direction to the University and other developers along Huron. Secondly, the DDA can then determine which pieces of this plan the DDA wants to undertake and when. We understand that MDOT plans to resurface Huron in 2011 and we can choreograph our work to complement this, as many project costs can be absorbed by MDOT.

Sculpture Plaza: City Parks staff will provide a draft repair/maintenance/improvement plan on the website for additional community input before presenting the plan to the Parks Advisory Commission this fall. Mr. Beal reported that no major changes are included in the plan.

Wayfinding: The committee has begun to investigate a comprehensive way-finding program for downtown and connector routes. The committee plans to incorporate the program into the corridor improvement projects but also to include areas encompassing all of downtown. A RFQ is being drafted for review at the next Capital Improvements meeting. Ideally, the committee would like to work on the design and schedule over the winter and begin work in the early spring.

TIF Maintenance: Mr. Beal reported that many sidewalk/trip hazard repairs were undertaken in August and repairs to the tree pits along Washington Street have been completed.

New Parking Structure: The committee will wait to see if a decision is made to pursue a partnership with the City on the Library lot, and then immediately begin investigating the potential cost and design of the underground structure on this site.
6. OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

June 2006 Financial Reports: Mr. Hewitt reported that TIF income is under budget 4%; TIF expenses are over budget 3%; Parking income is under budget 2%; Parking operating expenses are under budget 3%; Parking Maintenance expenses under budget by 39% because work was delayed to next fiscal year; and Housing expenses are well under budget because the Avalon and Dawn Farms grants have not been requested. A motion to accept the June 2006 financial statements was moved by Mr. Hewitt, seconded by Ms. Gunn and unanimously approved.

4th & William Bond: Mr. Hewitt reported that the Committee discussed whether to bond the costs for the addition or use cash from the DDA fund balance. If a bond is secured, the DDA must provide 15% of the project costs ($800,000) and the total costs over the life of the bond would be approximately $7.5 million. Mr. Beal said that a minimum of $3 million should be kept on hand for upcoming parking projects. Mr. Aldrich stated that he would like the committee to discuss the issue again, and bring it back to the Board. He mentioned that the revenue from the new spaces was not reflected in the report of bond costs. He noted that $2.6 million looks like a lot of money but this is calculated at 20 years. He would also like to see information regarding the flexibility if the bonds were paid off early. Mr. Morehouse said that he would bring this information to committee.

Parking Study: Ms. Pollay announced that David Fields, of Nelson/Nygaard, would be in Ann Arbor on September 13, at 10AM to provide an overview of the initial findings of the study and the scope of the project. She invited all interested Board Members to attend the meeting. Several City staff members and a representative of the University of Michigan have also been invited to the meeting. The survey distribution is scheduled for September 14 and 15, weather permitting.

7. PARTNERSHIPS COMMITTEE

Focus Areas: Ms. Smith reported that the committee approved strategic foci for 2006-07, including downtown density issues; assisting the City if possible with their police overcrowding/District Court displacement problem; completing the Kline lot RFP; reviewing and possibly rewriting the DDA Partnerships Grant Guidelines; making recommendations on DDA loan requests for historic façades and housing; and supporting the planning for the reuse of the 415 W. Washington site and planning for the Allen Creek Greenway as envisioned by the Downtown Plan.

Kline Lot RFP: Ms. Smith indicated that the committee completed as much of the RFP as possible and will revisit the RFP after we have our parking study results. The delay will also enable the committee to learn from the City’s negotiations with Village Green and get a better idea of the downtown development market in early 2007 to optimize RFP responses for the City.

Community Security and Public Space: Ms. Smith reported that the committee discussed the Taskforce Report as cited earlier.

Meeting Schedule: The committee decided to meet once a month for the foreseeable future. The next meeting is scheduled for September 27th at 9am.

8. RESEARCH AND OPPORTUNITY

Focus Areas: Mr. Boren reported that the committee decided to focus its efforts in the near term on DDA grants, communication plan, benchmarking, and alternative transportation (the “unparking”)

Communication Plan: Mr. Boren reported that we now have a new DDA logo and URL. The next step in the communication plan will be to develop a new web site.
DDA Grants: Mr. Boren reported that staff assembled a 5 year grant history, and the committee will review this information and the current grant guidelines at its next meeting. They will include in this discussion such ideas as whether the DDA should establish a targeted grant priority each year (e.g., green architecture, or alternative transportation, etc.) or allow for more general grant applications.

Downtown Benchmark Project: The DDA intern updated the biannual benchmark report on the DDA website in early August. The committee will continue to review monthly benchmark updates and determine if there is other data we’d like to see included.

9. OTHER DDA BUSINESS MATTERS

Summer Board Retreat: Ms. Smith asked for feedback regarding the summer retreat. Mr. Collins stated that he thought having an outside facilitator was a good idea. He suggested having Ms. Alexander return for the mid-year retreat to assess where we are with the goals set in July. Mr. Hewitt said that he also felt having a facilitator was a good idea as the Board made a lot of progress. Mr. Beal agreed about having a facilitator, because last year the Board got involved in a discussion regarding finances and did not set any priorities. This year the facilitator lead the Board in setting priorities first – followed by finances - which was a much more positive outcome. Ms. Greff agreed about the value of having a facilitator and suggested that the Board change the retreat schedule from July to September and from December to February or March. She said it seemed that the Board lost some of the energy set at the summer retreats due to vacations and summer break and the same thing happens over the holiday break in December; Ms. Gunn agreed regarding the retreat schedule change.

Ms. Smith moved and Ms. Gunn seconded the following resolution:

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE DDA STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS FOR THE NEXT THREE TO FIVE YEARS

Whereas, The DDA held an all-day retreat in July 2006 to discuss the role of the DDA given current downtown conditions and issues, and the goals set out in the DDA’s 2003 Renewal Plan;

Whereas, The retreat discussion enabled the DDA to determine its priorities for the next three to five years;

Whereas, These strategic focus areas are as follows:

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS COMMITTEE

Priority Projects
1. Work to quickly implement significant portions of the Huron Street and Fifth & Division Street corridor improvement projects. Confirm final design and budget in the fall of 2006 so that the projects can be locally and MDOT approved, bid out, funded (DDA funds, MDOT grants, and other sources?) and contracted in time for an early 2007 start to some approved portion of the project(s).

2. Start immediately to investigate and implement a comprehensive way-finding program for downtown (and connector routes to same). Coordinate the program into the corridor improvement projects above, but also go beyond those work areas to encompass all of downtown.

3. Manage site analysis, preliminary design development, and early cost review of a large underground parking structure at the Library Lot. Look at related Public and/or Private development options for the above ground space there, potentially in a partnership with City’s need for a replacement Police Court and/or City Hall facility. Bring recommendations to the board.

Secondary / Routine Projects - projects already in the pipeline
1. Manage the 4th and William Parking Structure Addition. Oversee improvements authorized in June 2006, including the addition of one complete/one partial level, a speed ramp, and misc. related work.

3. Continue with non-parking repairs using the TIF Maintenance Fund.

4. Continue with repairs to Sculpture Plaza

5. Review long term parking structure maintenance plans, and contribute expertise where appropriate to any current project needs.

6. Begin exploring the process toward transitioning Ashley and First to two-way traffic.

7. Look ahead toward future project support / management as directed by the board.

**OPERATIONS COMMITTEE**

1. Oversee the DDA’s downtown parking study. Once this study is completed, (estimated to be January 2007), provide data to the Downtown Development Steering Committee so they can facilitate the process toward establishing a parking strategy for the downtown.

2. Oversee the DDA budget and financial data, including monthly review of financial statements, annual preparation of the DDA budget, and quarterly review and changes to the Ten Year Plan.

3. Oversee ongoing parking operations management. Make recommendations for changes as necessary, including new hourly and permit rate adjustments, changes in hours of operation for on-street and off-street parking and implementation of new parking policies for such issues as the monthly permit wait list, meter bags and meter bag fee waivers. Create new reports as needed. Approve equipment upgrades as necessary and customer service programs as possible. Oversee annual facility maintenance and minor repairs.

4. Study ways to find greater efficiencies in the parking system to optimize income, such as the installation of signage to direct patrons away from full facilities to open spaces in other locations.

5. Locate additional sources of revenues (e.g. ATM’s, cell phone antenna, advertising, etc.)

6. Interrelate with other DDA committees to help facilitate their work plans.

**PARTNERSHIPS COMMITTEE**

1. Participate in downtown density issues, including rezoning and urban design guidelines. Provide a committee member as liaison to the Downtown Development Strategies Steering Committee.

2. Participate in discussions with the City to resolve their problems with police department overcrowding and 15th District Court displacement from the Washtenaw County building, including the potential for a new City Hall.

3. Assist as needed in the First & Washington site redevelopment.

4. Implement, review, and possibly rewrite the DDA Partnerships Guidelines. Make recommendations for Partnerships Grant requests, including requests for infrastructure reimbursement such as water hydrants and water main upgrades.

5. Work with those planning new developments to ensure that downtown planning goals, including the Downtown Plan goal that parking be included in new developments whenever feasible, are met.

6. Implement the DDA’s historic façade loan policies. Make recommendations on loan requests.

7. Work with developers of new residential projects in the DDA area to ensure that these developments meet DDA’s goals as set out in the DDA Housing Policy if DDA Housing Funds are requested.
8. Support the planning for the reuse of the 415 W. Washington site. Support the planning for the Allen Creek greenway as envisioned by the Downtown Plan.

RESEARCH & OPPORTUNITY COMMITTEE

1. Alternative transportation (aka “unparking”), including commuter rail, bike lanes, zip cars, bike lockers and hoops, bus, circulator, and other modes of transportation, review of getdowntown programs including the golpass, and discussions about regional transportation initiatives. This may also include a meeting between the DDA and AATA boards to discuss current and future transportation issues.

2. DDA communication, including development of a new DDA website, creation of a communication plan that will include regular information releases and other elements. Explore the potential of hiring another DDA staff member to oversee communication efforts with the public.

3. DDA grant recommendations, including reviewing all grant applications with the exception of requests for assistance from the DDA Housing Fund or Partnerships Grants. Review and update grant guidelines as necessary. Determine if the DDA should establish a set amount for grants in a fiscal year, as well as policies and procedures. Determine if the DDA should establish a specific, targeted grant priority each year to accomplish specific goals (e.g. green architecture, or alternative transportation, etc.) in part as a communication tool for the DDA to express its involvement in these issues.

4. Develop a regional communication strategy and tools in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, Convention & Visitors Bureau, Spark, and UM.

5. Important miscellaneous programs. This will be the committee that will discuss the DDA’s role with such initiatives as Wireless Washtenaw, etc.

6. DDA benchmark project, including biannual updates to the DDA website and regular review to determine trends and issues of note.

RESOLVED, The DDA approves this list of strategic focus items as its priorities for the next three to five year period.

A vote on the motion showed:
AYES: Aldrich, Beal, Boren, Collins, Gillett, Greff, Gunn, Hall, Hewitt, Hieftje, Smith
NAYES: None
Absent: DeVarti
The motion carried.

Percent for the Art Program Taskforce: Mr. Collins reported that he is serving as a member of the taskforce and will begin reporting to the DDA on the activities of the taskforce in the near future.

10. OTHER AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION
None.

11. ADJOURNMENT
As there was no further discussion the meeting was adjourned at 1:25 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Pollay, Executive Director