

**AURORA DOWNTOWN
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**

Minutes

January 8, 2015 – 8:00 A.M. – 5th Floor Conference Room B – City Hall

Members Present: Jimi Allen (at large), Kim Granholm (at large), Dan Hites (at large), Benjie Hughes (at large), Eva Luckinbill (Aurora Public Library), John Nachtrieb (at large), and Bob Reuland (ex-officio)

Members Absent (Excused): Karen Kramford (at large)

Members Absent: Doug Cheatham (Old Second National Bank, Terry Michels (Hollywood Casino)

Others Present: Bill Wiet (COA), Ed Sieben (COA), Gina Moga (COA), Joe Hopp (COA), Cadence Peterson (Seize the Future), and Brett Michaelson (Seize the Future)

Meeting Highlights

Call to Order and Chair's Remarks

Kim Granholm called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

Approval of Minutes

John Nachtrieb made a motion to approve the August 7, 2014, September 4, 2014, October 2, 2014 and the November 6, 2014 minutes. This was seconded by Eva Luckinbill. The motion was unanimously approved.

Treasurer's Report – Doug Cheatham

There was no Treasurer's Report, as Doug Cheatham was not at the meeting.

Old Business

None.

New Business

- a. Financial Outlook – Kim Granholm and Bob Reuland

Kim Granholm said we don't really have any new business per se this year. The Committees are already formed. You should have gotten the list of committees that went out when Sue sent out the e-mail along with the new Board members and everyone's terms on there. All of the Chairs have been chosen. There is a BAR Committee meeting today. Bob and John and Benjie and I are meeting next week just to go over some of the finances. The reason we want to talk about the financial outlook is that we, well I'll let Bob because he can tell you a little bit of the history of the general fund that we used to have that now don't have.

Bob Reuland said we used to have a little slop in our funds so that if a project came up we thought was worthy we could fund it. This year the Budget Committee has committed all of the budget money to the committees, so there is no extra money available. For example, trying to fund Roots Aurora this year, which really we shouldn't and I'll tell you why. The funding agency is outside of our area and the venue is outside of our area too, so we would turn them down. That's \$1,000. But there are going to be other issues as they come up of what are we going to do and so we're going to have to talk to our Committee Chairman and say do you want to take this out of your budget because the vast majority of the money is tied up with the committees, but I think it is a very good thing because it puts the decision making process back at the committee level and moves it one step away from Kim and myself. We act like parents in the committee because one guy will say to me I talked to Kim and says it is okay to send \$300, so I say okay. Then I talk to Kim and she goes I didn't tell him that.

Kim Granholm said and I say you better check with Bob, I don't think that is a good idea and it gets twisted around to I checked with Kim and she said it was okay if you approve it. There's been some of that that's been going on.

Bob Reuland said so we are going to tighten that up this year.

Kim Granholm said I get approached independently for fund requests, so I wanted the Committee Chairs to realize that you will probably, when Bob and I are turning these people down saying we can't send you a funds request form because we don't have any additional monies, I'm assuming they will probably go straight to the committees and ask the Committee Chairs and that's when you guys bring it to your committee. That will be the next step, that people will soon realize that they will have to go to the committees themselves and ask them for money and then if the committee itself decides that that's worthy to market or worthy for business attraction, then it kind of fits a little bit better. But I know we've struggled with whether or not to fund certain things in the past anyway, so this might make it a little bit easier for us to really focus on what we want to focus on. We'll also be sitting down with the Committee Chairs and giving them a little bit of direction and this is where we want to go. Maybe we'll have a quarterly or a 6 month review and then hopefully everyone will be on board with that. If it doesn't work out, obviously next year we can certainly add back in that general fund, but I think that we have a lot of events and a lot of really great things going on this year and I think that we should really, instead of opening up a new can of worms, really focus on some of that and that's, I think, going to be our intention this year. We are getting the trolley in February for First Friday's and if it goes well, we've looked into, which I can send the bid over to you so you can discuss it at Marketing, but she did say this is how much it is for just one month and here it is for the rest of the year. We are pretty excited about that. You can drink on the trolley. However, you cannot bring the drinks out of the trolley, so you have to put it in the

garbage before you get off. Her idea was actually to have someone sponsor the trolley and then they can mix up drinks and hand stuff out on the trolley and kind of make it like a captive audience.

Consultant Report

Bob Reuland said we have an issue with our holiday decorations. We've had a number of lights blowing out because of the ground fault interrupters being tripped. I met with Joe Hopp and the city electrician with Dan Hites and the city electrician said our decorations are getting old and we may have to rewire some of them. We are going to have the Holiday Decorations Committee meet and discuss this. This could run into more money and it could impact the decorations for next year. It is foolish to put decorations up that trip the GFI's because what purpose does that really serve, so that's an issue that's coming up that would affect the budget again in some regard. I just wanted to let you know that on the horizon there is another issue. The trolley I'm all in favor of. That's going to be Benjie's committee to worry about that and Benjie's got a lot to worry about this year. He's got a lot of money, but he's got a lot of different asks that are coming.

Gina Moga said I used a trolley last year for the Experience Aurora Homeowners Expo. I did get some prices from the company about doing a regular trolley downtown. I can forward you that information. I did not use Naperville Trolley because they have the word Naperville slapped on the side of each one of their trolleys. I believe it was out of Bensenville. They were great to work with.

Benjie Hughes said we have Naperville for February, but it might be worth comparing.

Dan Hites said along with the electrician's report, he was saying that the city's funded them like \$150,000 to light the bridges. He would take suggestions from us as far as how to light underneath the bridges.

Joe Hopp said how long do you plan on keeping the holiday lights up?

Dan Hites said I think it was until March.

Joe Hopp said because I think we have be careful with that. We have an ordinance about leaving holiday decorations up.

Dan Hites said we tried to extend them a little bit further into the winter so it doesn't turn gloomy.

Joe Hopp said but there is an ordinance with a certain amount of time.

Bob Reuland said isn't it like February Joe?

Joe Hopp said I honestly don't know. We would have to look it up because we could get some really bad press on that.

Committee Updates

John Nachtrieb said Business Attraction is meeting this afternoon. We're going to talk about continuing the Rent Subsidy Program, rethinking it in some ways, and also expanding our outreach to include existing businesses so that we can support and nurture and help those businesses get or stay healthy.

Dan Hites said how do we want to coordinate the general marketing? Would Benjie's committee be handling the flyers and everything else?

John Nachtrieb said it is going to be case by case, I think. I think there should be an ongoing dialogue so that Benjie is aware.

Bob Reuland said I have been getting calls about the Rent Subsidy Program and I asked them to call me tomorrow after your meeting so I would have more information.

Benjie Hughes said is that the same number as last year or do we know yet?

John Nachtrieb said we don't know as yet. I think it has been too generous and I'd like to lower it, but I'll put that to the committee and see what they say.

A discussion followed on the procedures for handling requests that come before the committees.

City of Aurora Updates

Bill Wiet said we've talked about doing a year, or a year and a half review of the parking downtown. In talking with Charlie Koch of Revenue and Collections, it is not really set up to get a whole lot of specific data on where the tickets come in. It doesn't produce unless you do some more algorithms and every time you do that it costs money. What we thought we would do is work with the Parking Committee to actually do interviews this winter. We'd open it up to anyone. I don't think the whole get everyone together for a 2 hour public hearing is a good way to do it. To be quite honest, running into people over the holidays or in the last couple of months, I would have a 5 minute conversation with someone about downtown parking. I would qualify that as an interview and I've already taken notes about it. I think that could be more of a personal way to get stories on their experiences with downtown parking, the good and the bad. Through the interviews, we can then probably categorize a lot of them. We are also interviewing all of our enforcement guys, so we'll get a feel as to the hot spots. I'd like to try to work that through the winter.

Dan Hites said I heard a rumor that they are tearing down the VNA this year.

Bill Wiet said we are working with the developer to do a number of things. He is the same developer that has the 30 acres to the south. The adaptive reuse of that building is probably long gone. We were looking at a way to redo kind of both agreements for that development down

there and part of it might be the demolition of this and maybe going out to bid on developing that whole block or something.

Dan Hites said what about Frantz Gym?

Bill Wiet said that is still kind of up in the air. It is a typical bank thing. There is not any eminent danger in that building. It is just kind of in an ownership limbo like we've experienced in so many other projects.

Dan Hites said what about the Masonic Lodge?

Bill Wiet said the same thing. Our legal staff is still working with the owner.

Dan Hites said I've heard there is movement on the Terminal Building. How is it going?

Bill Wiet said it is going good. In November the State Historic Preservation Officer actually came out and we toured the building. What's happening is that there is a Historic Tax Credit Program that the State offers because we are 1 of 5 communities in this River Edge Redevelopment Zone that the State passed in 2006 and they did a 5 year pilot program that you can get the 25% state tax credit lumped with the 20% federal tax credit so you can get a 45% historic tax credit for a qualifying rehab. The State initiated this pilot program in and toward the tail end of the recession and so there was kind of a 2 or 3 year lull in interested developers, except for Rockford. They've done some really good things with the program, but then again, they are kind of a stand-alone large city with no competition for developing buildings and they had one developer in Rockford that really was passionate and so he went and tackled a few projects. Nobody else had any projects done. So we are working on legislation to extend that pilot program 5 more years because 2 of those 3 buildings you've mentioned have had recent developer inquiry and activity, but they would pursue only if they knew the historic tax credits would be extended longer.

Dan Hites said I heard there are 2 larger buildings that low income housing is looking at redeveloping. Is there any policy on the city's part of introducing even more low income housing into the downtown area?

Bill Wiet said no. The Waubensee developer was a low income developer as well. He just chose to look more at artist lofts because most likely they would all qualify. A lot of developers come and they look at the low income tax credit program and they try to bundle it with the historic tax credit program to try to make a project work. What do you mean a policy on low income?

Dan Hites said well the general perspective is that we are surrounded by low income housing and it is continuing that a lot of the housing is being developed and redeveloped into low income and it just undermines the businesses as far as trying to redevelop downtown.

Bill Wiet said low income housing is a regional issue, but it is not taken that way when it comes to funding. While we try to extend the qualifying criteria for housing to other communities up and down the valley, we still would qualify if someone wanted to, and these low income tax

credit programs usually do need support by the community. In some cases, the administration would and would not support projects. It just kind of goes along that line.

Dan Hites said I have a new tenant, who is a professor who used to teach art at the colleges and he said in the 70's or 80's he lived in So Ho and the city was giving out artist licenses, which allowed these artists to go into buildings and make them into their own little private art studios and living spaces even though they weren't up to code. Could some sort of program like that be...

Bill Wiet said I like the front half of the program, but not letting people into not up to code buildings. Gorman was looking kind of at that model for Waubensee's building for the artist loft live/work concept. I'm sure you'd find a building that can serve that purpose definitely.

Gina Moga said up to Mary Poppins, the largest selling show for the Paramount was 42,000 tickets. Mary Poppins sold 62,000 tickets, so 20,000 more and to put that in perspective, the 2010-2011 season pre-Broadway total sold 54,000 tickets for the whole season, so this one show did 62,000 tickets. They are the jewel of the downtown. I think they are really shining right now. What they are doing is amazing. Tommy opens in 2 weeks.

Joe Hopp said during the winter we go to 2 shifts with our downtown so we can cover snow events. You probably have noticed that we haven't done anything in the last 24 hours with the snow removal in the downtown. That's basically because of the cold weather. A lot of times, if we remove the snow we have to salt afterwards and if we salt when it really gets cold it really turns into ice because salt loses its effectiveness probably at about 20 degrees. You'll see us start removing the wind rolls in parking areas only. We should start that maybe later today, tonight and tomorrow. The Landscape Committee is meeting at 10:00 o'clock and we are going to be talking about what the downtown sidewalk pot flowers are going to be. We are going to order them up here in the next month.

Announcements

Eva Luckinbill said as far as the library, we had our submissions for the large exterior sculpture at the west entrance and we chose our sculpture. I will be working on that and we will have a press conference. We have an art contest too. We are having an Open House on the 28th of January.

Bill Wiet said it is a 60 day Christmas light period, so February 25th.

Adjourn

Dan Hites made a motion to adjourn the meeting. This was seconded by Benjie Hughes. The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 a.m.