

CLEARWATER DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT BOARD MEETING
March 5, 2014 – 5:30 PM – City Hall – Council Chambers

Members Present:	Paris Morfopoulos	Chairman
	Thomas Wright	Vice-Chairman
	Craig Rubright	Treasurer
	Dennis Bosi	Member
	John Doran	Member
	Stu Sjouwerman	Member
	Tony Starova	Member
Also Present:	Paul Gibson	Ex-Officio/Councilmember
	Jay Polglaze	Ex-Officio/Councilmember
	Anne Fogarty France	Board Administrator
	Denise Sanderson	Assistant Director, Economic Development & Housing Department
	Geri Campos Lopez	Director, Economic Development & Housing Department

Absent:

- 1. Chairman Morfopoulos called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.**
- 2. Citizen's Comments – Items not on the Agenda.**

Ms. Tina Palermo, representing Il Muretto Italian Restaurant, 601 Cleveland Street, advised the board that they would like propose that the event area for the events on Cleveland Street be extended to Angie's Restaurant. She thought that all the merchants would benefit and would stay open later. She advised that the owners Mixx Bar and Grill, Socrates Dance Studio, Path Bike and Ride Shop, and Daddy's Girl Gourmet Deli also feel this way. Ms. Palermo also commented that they felt that Station Square Park should be used more often. Another thought was that if the buses that went to the Clearwater Marine Aquarium (CMA) stopped nearby, it would help the restaurants.

Member Bosi suggested that Ms. Palermo contact Bill Sturtevant, with Clearwater Downtown Events as they have planned to hold events on the 500 and 600 blocks.

Member Starova said that the Blues Walk was a perfect example of a good event. He asked if Il Muretto had a blues band that night. He also suggested they become involved with the Business Alliance and that the next meeting would be on Tuesday night at 5:00 p.m. at the Mixx Bar and Grill.

Member Doran advised Ms. Palermo that the board could only make recommendations to the event organizers.

Socrates Charos, 627 Cleveland Street, advised that he would like do a Clearwater Classic Music Event to bring people downtown to Station Square Park. He asked if there was a budget to help them with expenses.

Chairman Morfopoulos explained that every year the board receives sponsorship requests from organizations. He suggested getting an application from Ms. Fogarty France in order to submit a request to the board. The budget for this year was fixed but advised that the board starts budget discussions in June.

Ms. Fogarty France said that organizations would need to provide the application by May 15, 2014 for consideration for the next fiscal year budget.

Vice Chairman Wright suggested that Mr. Charos contact Bill Sturtevant of Clearwater Downtown Events for possible funding.

Member Starova said it was a great idea to utilize the park. An option might be for Mr. Charos' business to rent the park and get the vendors. This way funds could be raised without the need to ask for funding from DDB.

Vice Chairman Wright advised that Jeff Hartzog, General Manager for the Capitol Theatre was injured at an event and suggested sending flowers to him from the board.

Member Wright moved to send a floral arrangement to Jeff Hartzog from the DDB at an amount not to exceed \$50.00 and funded from the office expenditure line item. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

3. Approve the Minutes from the February 5, 2014 Meeting

Member Doran moved to approve the minutes from the February 5, 2014 meeting. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

4. Adopt January 2014 Financial Statement for Filing

Member Wright moved to adopt the January 2014 Financial Statement for filing. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

5. 2013 Annual Financial Report and Audit Results.

Laura Krueger Brock, CBIZ/MHM provided the board with a presentation of the 2013 Financial Report and Audit Results.

Ms. Krueger Brock thanked Anne Fogarty France and Monica Mitchell for their assistance during the audit. There were no audit adjustments, disagreements with management or weakness in areas of internal controls.

Member Bosi asked if the board lost over \$7,000 in investments and what those investments were.

Ms. Krueger Brock answered that they were tied into city investments.

Monica Mitchell, Assistant Director of Finance Department for the City of Clearwater added that the city investments are held to maturity and that the board was not really losing money.

Chairman Morfopoulos asked about the loan identified in the financial report.

Geri Campos Lopez, Director of Economic Development and Housing, advised that the loan was for a property bordering the Clearwater Auto salvage yard on Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue. In 2003 the City did a land swap with a couple of pieces of property and the DDB assisted the CRA in purchasing the land. She said they had a “No Further Action” letter from Department of Environmental Protection in regard to environmental cleanup done on the property. They were waiting for market timing to be better to sell.

Vice Chairman Wright asked Ms. Krueger Brock’s opinion on an amount for the board’s reserve funds.

Ms. Krueger Brock stated that it this was hard for her to determine but 15-20% of the budget was a good figure but noted that the amount needed to be a number that the board was comfortable with.

Vice Chairman Wright referred to page 26, item (7), and asked if the board had to fund that every year?

Ms. Krueger Brock said that those were the board’s notes and their decision.

Member Wright moved to accept the 2013 Annual Financial Report and Audit Results as published. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

Chairman Morfopoulos asked for a volunteer from the board to be on the selection committee for the Request for Proposal (RFP) for the auditing firm. The current auditors had a five year contract and this was their last year.

Treasurer Rubright volunteered but felt that the board should be able to negotiate for a cost reduction for next year with the current auditor since it was a quick clean audit.

Member Sjouwerman asked what was the cost for the audit, how it compared with previous years and why a five year term?

Ms. Fogarty France stated the board paid \$8,800 this fiscal year and that the amount for the annual audit had increased \$300 per year over the five year contract.

Ms. Campos Lopez said that it would be in the board’s best interest to go out for RFP.

6. Economic Development Strategic Plan Update

Denise Sanderson, Assistant Director, Economic Development and Housing Department presented an update to the Economic Development Strategic Plan that was adopted in November 2011. She reviewed the plan’s goals, strategies, action items, priorities, the 2013 areas of focus and incentive programs.

Ms. Sanderson introduced Audra Aja, the newest Economic Development Coordinator in the area of Business Retention and Expansion.

Ms. Sanderson discussed the 2014 goals which include the incentive policy, business retention and expansion, new business development, marketing and promotion, and to expand the use of the Salesforce, a database program to document and manage these activities. She added that Laura Canary, of the City Manager's office, has been hired and will also be working in the department.

Member Bosi asked about the city's economic plan for the street level vacancies and about the amount invested for bringing in jobs.

Ms. Sanderson said that they didn't create the businesses.

Member Bosi said that there seemed to be a disconnect at the merchant level. They are not getting the same incentives as the technology/incubators for retention programs. He asked if there were some type of programs for them.

Ms. Campos Lopez said they took that tack with the Retail and Restaurant Recruitment Grant but it was not successful due to the economy. They worked very hard, but gained no ground and began to work with the second floor offices to get more feet on the street. The direction given to them by the CRA was to increase the number of jobs and bring more people to the merchants.

Member Bosi said that recruiting the companies bringing in 100 people is great, but they go home at 5:00 p.m. They have the events, but what will be done to get people to the 500-600 blocks? What major effort is there to assist with retention?

Member Sjouwerman said that he was on the Clearwater Downtown Partnership (CDP) for six years and part of his job was business recruitment. It's a complex mix and there need to be people living here to attract retailers. They need to get some interaction to buy local instead of going to the mall. He said that events don't bring successful retail.

Member Bosi said that other smaller towns don't have the empty storefronts; density wasn't part of it.

Member Sjouwerman said they will need to create policy to attract entrepreneurs like the owners of Il Muretto Italian Restaurant.

Ex-officio Councilmember Gibson said that Prospect Lake will be a start with 257 rental units. He added that when Mandalay Beach Club was built on Clearwater Beach, they were the first residential units in a long time and it was a slow process. He felt that there are new projects coming downtown, the CMA will be opening in 43 months, and there needs to be more people living downtown. He said it will happen but they must be patient.

Ms. Campos Lopez added that the market needed to be good. The incomes were there, but the products they wanted to see were not; the product has to match what the market demands or people won't go downtown.

Member Bosi asked what to do to get the merchants here.

Ms. Campos Lopez said that landlords needed to invest in their property to get their spaces ready.

Ex-officio Councilmember Polglaze stated that the infrastructure was there and that the city had done what it could do. The critical mass was almost there, the objective was to get the private investors who would help create the place. He felt they would locate in the open spaces on the 500 and 600 blocks.

Ex-officio Councilmember Gibson stated that the City knew they had hit it big on Clearwater Beach when RonJon Surf Shop and Hooters opened up.

Member Starova agreed with what Member Sjouwerman and added that they needed to create the environment and to make it fun. He suggested relaxing the codes for signage and for parking. He mentioned that the 400 block had no parking spaces with a sold out show at the Capitol Theatre. It would take personal initiative and hard work from each private company to get the people here to have fun. The board could help make it convenient.

Member Sjouwerman asked if there was a program for starting entrepreneurs to help them get the word out about their business.

Ms. Sanderson said they have looked at bringing those services to a central location. They could make referrals.

Ms. Fogarty France said that when the new businesses come in they need help public relations and marketing and added that she provides them with information on where they could market their businesses.

7. Clearwater Downtown Partnership & Clearwater Downtown Events Update.

Mr. Sturtevant, Chairman, Clearwater Downtown Partnership was unable to attend due to family issues. He will attend the April meeting.

8. DDB Mission Discussion

Chairman Morfopoulos distributed a list of purposes that he created from the Interlocal agreement and code sections to members.

Member discussion ensued about the list and comments were heard about revising the list.

Members asked what the next steps would be.

Chairman Morfopoulos said they would prepare a draft, discuss and vote on it.

Ms. Fogarty France said the Downtown Development Board section of the city code needed some updates. Staff is making some recommendations which would be brought back to the board, the City Clerk and the City Council.

9. Chairman's Report

Chairman Morfopoulos asked if members had additional changes to the letter they were sent requesting feedback from property owners.

Board members requested that the letter be sent to all property owners.

A suggestion was made to have all board members listed on the letter and members agreed to this change.

Chairman Morfopoulos asked if there were funds available to send letter out.

Ms. Fogarty France advised that funds were available.

Member Sjouwerman moved to send a letter to all property owners within the district requesting feedback. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

10. Final Comments

Treasurer Rubright alerted the board and viewers about the new business in Water's Edge along Osceola Avenue. Gala's Gelateria opened and the owners were from Verona, Italy and hoped they did well.

Vice Chairman Wright stated that he had stopped in Gala's and added that they did a great job on the build out of the space and that the espresso was awesome. He encouraged everyone watching to visit them. He thanked Ex-officio Councilmember Gibson for his service and said he would be missed.

Member Bosi also thanked Ex-officio Councilmember Gibson. He added that Gala's Gelateria was his new favorite place. He thanked Chairman Morfopoulos for taking the initiative to get the board on the right path.

Chairman Morfopoulos thanked Ex-officio Councilmember Gibson for his service to the board.

Member Starova thanked Ex-officio Councilmember Gibson. He stated he had some great crepes at Gala's.

Member Doran also thanked Ex-officio Councilmember Gibson. He added that it's a good idea to sit back and ask why we are here as a board. There are some items that are there because the attorneys will say they need to be there. He felt that the board was moving in the right direction. Two years ago there was a lot of money in the budget and now there's not. The economy is changing and property values are increasing. There are more roofs in downtown Clearwater. The city is anticipating and hiring more people and he is happy to see that. For us as a board, we still have to wait for more money. In simple terms, we are here to increase property values in the downtown area. We are answerable to people in the downtown area and felt it was an exciting time to be here.

Ex-officio Councilmember Gibson said these were his last comments. He felt that downtown was where Clearwater Beach was five years ago. He noted that it was about patience and he was confident that when the Clearwater Marine Aquarium (CMA) was built, when the Prospect Lake project is built and when more buses are here, then they will parallel the progress of Clearwater Beach. The City spent \$35M in the downtown and they can't do more. Keep the faith.

Ex-officio Councilmember Polglaze thanked Ex-officio Councilmember Gibson and said it was a pleasure serving with him on this board. They shared similar visions as strong supporters of the Super Boat Races; champions for the CMA and for continued support of Blast Friday. He added that it was a difficult process. He disagreed on one point as he thought that we will see changes in one to three years, not five years out.

11. The meeting was adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

CLEARWATER DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT BOARD MEETING
ACTION AGENDA
Wednesday, March 5, 2014

3.05.14.01

Member Wright moved to send a floral arrangement to Jeff Hartzog from the DDB at an amount not to exceed \$50.00 and funded from the office expenditure line item. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

3.05.14.02

Member Doran moved to approve the minutes from the February 5, 2014 meeting. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

3.05.14.03

Member Wright moved to adopt the January 2014 Financial Statement for filing. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

3.05.14.04

Member Wright moved to accept the 2013 Annual Financial Report and Audit Results as published. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

3.05.14.05

Member Sjouwerman moved to send a letter to all property owners within the district requesting feedback. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.