

CLEARWATER DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT BOARD MEETING  
June 2, 2015 – 5:30 PM – City Hall – Council Chambers

Members Present:	Paris Morfopoulos	Chairman
	Dennis Bosi	Vice-Chairman
	Chelsea Allison	Member
	Craig Rubright	Treasurer
	Thomas Wright	Member
	Tony Starova	Member
	Stu Sjouwerman	Member

Also Present:	Bill Jonson	Ex-Officio/Councilmember
	Jay Polglaze	Ex-Officio/Councilmember
	Anne Fogarty France	Board Administrator
	Geri Campos Lopez	Director, Economic Development & Housing Department

1. Chairman Morfopoulos called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. The Chairman asked the Downtown Development Board (DDB) members and Ex-Officio members to introduce themselves.
2. Citizen Comments – Items Not on the Agenda. – There were no comments.
3. Sea Blues Festival Post Event Report – Kris Koch, Clearwater Parks & Recreation Department provided the post event report to the Downtown Development Board (DDB). He noted that eleven businesses participated and there were four local bands on Cleveland Street. The event was advertised in Creative Loafing, Clearwater Beacon, and Tampa Bay Times. The Clearwater Sea-Blues Festival had a record-breaking 26,894 attendees with an estimated total economic impact of \$4,719,700. The estimated direct expenditures were \$2,369,800.
4. Downtown Farmers Market Post Event Report – Pat Fernandez, Market Manager was not present and this item was continued to the next meeting.
5. Presentations from Downtown Groups Regarding Ideas for Downtown Revitalization

Chairman Paris Morfopoulos read a statement: The revitalization of our downtown core will require innovative ideas, a coordinated effort and bringing together a critical mass of the right components to be successful.

The Park and the entire Bluff are magnificent but under-utilized assets and should be leveraged to provide the maximum advantage to our downtown. We need creative ideas on how to transform this area and how to more-effectively link it to the main shopping district on Cleveland Street.

In an effort to take the initiative and to build on the momentum generated by the City's efforts to implement the ULI recommendations, we have invited several of the key players in the downtown to present their ideas on what can be done to provide significant improvements to the downtown core and/ or the Coachman Park, Clearwater Bluff area.

Today, we will hear presentations from the Downtown Neighborhood Association, the Church of Scientology and the Clearwater Downtown Partnership. At a future date, we hope to hear

from other interested parties, among them, Mr. Zev Buffman, the Chairman of REH and the Cap.

We want to encourage the presentation of bold ideas. To do this we need to maintain a friendly, encouraging attitude where all ideas are welcome and where the good ones are validated and supported. Nothing is quite so inimical to the origination of new ideas as their reception with invalidation or criticism, especially on a personal level. Let's be receptive to all ideas, even those that may at first appear to you to be silly or foolish. I would encourage all of us to show respect for the opinions presented and not to engage in any nay saying or carping criticism. Let's elevate the conversation and encourage thinking "outside the box".

If you agree and support a particular suggestion or idea, then by all means indicate your support. If you do not, then simply refrain from showing support. We are not voting on or deciding anything at this point; we simply are soliciting the widest possible range of ideas from which to choose.

Let us approach this process with a spirit of play and let's have some fun generating support for those initiatives that most appeal to us. The DDB has an important role to play in the revitalization of our area and we can and should provide a forum where these ideas can be heard. Our city fathers have some difficult decisions to make in the coming months and I know that that will have a receptive ear for our recommendations. They and our city staff will need our support in implementing a successful strategy for our downtown's re-birth.

Our format will consist of a 7 to 8 minute presentation followed by 3 to 5 minutes of questions and answers for each segment. Each board member will have a minute or two for their comments at the end of all three presentations. Please refrain from comments and stick to questions during the brief period allowed for questions.

- a. Downtown Neighborhood Association – Board members David Lillesand and Carol Ann Logan provided a presentation to the DDB. They noted what the residents cared about and what their top three priorities were. Priority one was Urgency, priority two was a Coachman Park Master Plan and priority three was to Update Downtown Redevelopment Plan to make downtown more business friendly.

In response to questions from the DDB, Ms. Logan stated would like to see the ability to increase signage to attract customers and feels that people that move downtown would like to see vibrancy. In response to questions about what the residents would like to see in downtown, the suggestions were a dry cleaner, shoe store, more clothing stores, inexpensive jewelry and more restaurants

- b. Church of Scientology – Lisa Mansell, Community Affairs Director addressed the board and stated that the Church of Scientology was the largest taxpayer in downtown. They are in the middle of an approximately \$20M project including sidewalk update on Ft. Harrison Avenue. In the spirit of cooperation with Clearwater and the Downtown Property Owners, the Church has hired a retail strategist to come forward with a list of shops and restaurants that will be successful downtown.

Ms. Mansell has met with business owners in the 300, 400 and 500 block of Cleveland Street and they have come up with many of the same ideas as the Downtown Neighborhood Association. A retail broker, Hybridge was hired by the Church of Scientology. They felt the focus should be what can be done now and provided a list of suggestions the DDB could do to assist:

1. Assist the present retailers and those that will be coming in to develop a much better signage program to direct people to parking.
2. The DDB could subsidize and/or fund the existing parking validation program in Garden Avenue Garage. This would be at no cost to merchants and would give customers up to two hours of free parking.
3. People need to shop and visit restaurants that are already downtown. The best recruitment tool is other successful businesses.
4. The City set up a website, ClevelandStreetDistrict.com, where the existing retailers are described and should be used more.
5. 87% of the pedestrian malls in the United States fail. Successful ones have these things in common: They have less than 74,000 people; they have a major anchor such as a university or other facilities that provide people living in that area.

In response to questions, Ms. Mansell believes another entertainment anchor is needed. They are targeting a couple of signature restaurants, a couple of quick service eateries, boutiques for sporting goods and exercise wear, formal wear, pet shops. As someone who enjoys the outdoors she would like to see Coachman Park expanded, the band shell reconfigured in the park, activities for mothers with children, a botanical garden, splash pad, skate park, better access to the water, i.e. a river walk and better facilities for concerts.

c. Clearwater Downtown Partnership – Bill Sturtevant, Chairman

Mr. Sturtevant stated that the focus has been on the 400, 500 and 600 blocks of Cleveland Street. The Capitol Theatre has made a huge impact. Within the next 18-24 months the demographics will change with the completion of the Nolen Apartments. People will be walking to work, using our restaurants and shops.

The groundbreaking has created more interest. Three acres at Laura Street and Martin Luther King has become of interest for more residential construction and they are hoping for a resolution of the Strand.

The Clearwater Downtown Partnership has created two committees, the Economic Development Committee chaired by Matt Becker and the Code Adjustment Committee with David Allbritton and Tony Starova.

Responding to questions from the DDB, Mr. Sturtevant feels the number one priority is residential and urged the board to think about the need for businesses that need to be across the street from all the young professionals at the Nolen.

Paris Morfopoulos stated that this was the conclusion of our presentations for today. He thanked the participants for their efforts and their ideas.

Board members shared their thoughts about downtown which included: the ULI recommendations and timeline; Coachman Park; Downtown Redevelopment Plan; Charter Review Committee recommendations regarding commercial use on the waterfront; working together for the ultimate goal; acting now versus later; applying different rules for downtown; incentives for businesses wanting to locate here; more façade improvement funds; helping current businesses now; having a train like Largo to draw people up from the park; installing an interactive fountain or skate park; allowing small model sailboats in the lake; having a waterfront restaurant along the harbor to watch a sunset and changing the route of the Pinellas Trail to extend down Drew Street to bring users up through the park and on Cleveland Street to the businesses.

Member Wright stated that he agreed with other board members that the Harborview Center needed to come down. He called for leadership from one councilmember who could spearhead the project and be the single point of contact.

Questions arose regarding the status of the Harborview Center and the Clearwater Marine Aquarium lease. Geri Campos Lopez advised the board that the lease would be coming before council in the next couple of months and that it would be a month to month lease if approved.

6. Approve the Minutes from the May 6, 2015 DDB Meeting

**Vice Chairman Bosi moved to approve the minutes from the May 6, 2015 meeting as amended to read, page 5, paragraph 2, last sentence “Demolition of the Harborview Center would be great and there may be some things they want to keep or repurpose in the Harborview Center footprint”. The motion was duly seconded. Upon roll call, the vote was:**

**“Ayes”:** Chairman Paris Morfopoulos, Vice-Chairman Bosi, Treasurer Craig Rubright, Member Allison, Member Starova, Member Sjouerman and Member Wright

**“Nays”:** None.

7. Adopt April 2015 Financial Statement for Filing

**Member Wright moved to adopt the April 2015 Financial Statement for Filing. The motion was duly seconded. Upon roll call, the vote was:**

**“Ayes”:** Chairman Paris Morfopoulos, Vice-Chairman Bosi, Treasurer Craig Rubright, Member Allison, Member Starova, Member Sjouerman and Member Wright.

**“Nays”:** None.

8. Adopt Fiscal Year 2015-2016 Preliminary Budget – Treasurer Craig Rubright

**Member Wright moved to adopt the Fiscal Year 2015-2016 Preliminary Budget as presented by Treasurer Rubright. The motion was duly seconded. Upon roll call, the vote was:**

**“Ayes”:** Chairman Paris Morfopoulos, Vice-Chairman Bosi, Treasurer Craig Rubright, Member Allison, Member Starova, Member Sjouerman and Member Wright.

**“Nays”:** None.

a. Chairman’s Report – Chairman Paris Morfopoulos provided the following updates

1. New Banners funded by the DDB have been installed on Cleveland Street and were completed this week.
2. A Banner alerting visitors to the downtown that more merchants are beyond the SkyView Condominium project has been installed on the SkyView fence.

Thank you to the SkyView management team for allowing us to place the signs on their fence. Visit Skyview.com for more information about this project which we hear is 50% sold. Members were not in favor of current sign. Staff was asked to request a blue and white sign alerting visitors from the Winter's Dolphin Tale Adventure that there were additional businesses east of this attraction.

3. A map of the Cleveland Street District was placed in the PSTA bus terminal display board.
4. New inserts for the second side of the directory kiosks were being worked on.
5. Staff discussed the directory sign located at East and Turner Street with Rod Irwin, the CRA Executive Director. This sign was approved by CRA management, as well as previous DDB members and will not be moved.

**Member Wright moved to get a bid to move the Kiosk at East and Turner to a more appropriate location to benefit the Cleveland Street District. The motion was duly seconded and discussion ensued. Upon roll call, the vote was:**

**“Ayes”:** Member Starova and Member Wright.

**“Nays”:** Chairman Paris Morfopoulos, Treasurer Craig Rubright, Member Allison, Member Sjouwerman

**The motion did not carry.**

**Member Wright moved to investigate who could take us into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with proximity technology. The motion was duly seconded.**

After continued discussion Member Wright withdrew his motion and it was agreed to discuss this at a future meeting. Member Sjouwerman agreed to research the subject.

6. The board received the emails from Ms. Fogarty France that included links to Florida Department of Transportation sign requirements and video of how another local city has a traffic message on the signs. As you can see City staff must follow these FDOT rules.

## **9. Topics for Future Meetings**

Chairman Morfopoulos asked board members to please remember that staff has to fit topics for future meeting in with items that are already scheduled and what's already on their work plans so the topics brought up during this section may not be on the agenda for the next scheduled meeting.

Member Sjouwerman would like to discuss a DDB Mailing List.

Member Allison asked to have the Farmer's Market added again to the agenda.

Member Wright would like to add push technology for proximity advertising.

Member Starova would like to add usage of parking garage on daily basis and during special events.

**10. Final Comments**

Treasurer Rubright thanked the groups who came in to do presentations to the board. He felt it was important to listen to all ideas for downtown. He asked for urgency from the City Council, knowing that it is a long process but noting that people were excited about downtown, and he wanted to keep this momentum going.

Member Wright seconded Treasurer Rubright's comments.

Member Starova commented that he felt it was a mistake not to move a sign that is not useful where it was presently located. He thanked everyone who promoted the parade and stated that the signage was great and if that could be done for every City event, can you imagine how Blast Friday and Downtown would be?

Member Sjouwerman also seconded Treasurer Rubright's comments.

Member Allison thanked everyone who came to the meeting and those who stayed for the entire meeting to share ideas for downtown.

Ex-Officio/Councilmember Polglaze addressed Member Wright's comment about someone on the City Council taking a leadership role. He noted that he wished it were that easy but the city did not have a strong mayor form of government. He encouraged residents and interest groups to continue to be involved.

Treasurer Rubright asked if interested groups got together and asked the City Council to appoint one person to take ownership would the Council listen.

Ex-Officio/Councilmember Polglaze responded there was one person who does that, the Economic Development Director. He added that the council was behind this revitalization. It may not be going as fast as we all want it to, however the councilmembers are not experts. We will have to get an expert in community development to assist us. We will have all the ideas but someone with the knowledge will have to assemble them in the best way for the community. We need to put together a master plan and felt that we had one chance to get it right.

Chairman Morfopoulos thanked Councilmember Polglaze and stated that it is a lot more complicated than everyone thought. He thanked the public that attended and presented and participated in the meeting. He thanked all board members saying they may not always agree but he valued everyone's opinion.

**11. The meeting was adjourned at 7:52 p.m.**