

CLEARWATER DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT BOARD
February 1, 2012 – 5:30 PM – City Hall - 2nd Floor Meeting Room

Members Present:	Thomas Wright Paris Morfopoulos Tony Starova John Herndon	Treasurer Member Member Member
Also Present:	Paul Gibson (till 6:25 p.m.) John Doran (till 6:45 p.m.) Geri Campos Lopez Courtney Orr	Ex-Officio/Councilmember Ex-Officio/Councilmember Director of Economic Development and Housing Downtown Manager

Ms. Lopez stated that she was not sure what the Downtown Development Board's (DDB) bylaws say about conducting a meeting when both the Chairman and Vice-Chairman are not present. Member Wright volunteered to chair the board.

Member Wright called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m. at City Hall.

1. Citizen Comments - Items Not on the Agenda

Shelley Jaffey stated that she was the President of the Downtown Clearwater Merchants Association (DCMA) and she wanted to inform the board that they are still an active organization. They are currently working with the city on the Sea Blues Festival. They are going to have a blues walk on Friday, February 17th and the merchants are going to help put that together. They will also participate in Coachman Park Events.

Ms. Jaffey stated that they are considering group advertising options and are currently brainstorming on how to promote and bring more people to downtown Clearwater. The DCMA holds a meeting on the third Tuesday of every month at 6:30 p.m. at the Chamber of Commerce.

Member Morfopoulos asked who the board members are to which Ms. Jaffey responded that she, Vice-Chairman Bosi and Nancy Beckmann are on the board and that they are in the process of holding elections for the Vice-President position.

Member Morfopoulos asked what the number of paid membership was to which Ms. Jaffey responded that Vice-Chairman Bosi has that information but she knows that some members have not yet paid.

Member Herndon asked how many merchants are in the association to which Ms. Jaffey responded that there are a total of 68 merchants in the Cleveland Street District. Member Herndon asked how many retail merchants are there to which Ms. Jaffey responded 32.

Member Starova asked if the merchants are doing anything for the Friday events to which Ms. Jaffey responded that they want to but they need to find out what the guidelines are for funding the events.

Member Starova stated that the DCMA had no chairman at the time the Friday events were discussed. The money was put aside for these events but the DCMA was not ready.

Ms. Jaffey stated that they are talking to Capitol Theater as well to see if they can coordinate the events to bring more people to downtown. She needs to talk to Stephanie to see how soon they can start putting on the events.

Member Starova requested that they try to speed things up so that they can start having the events every Friday especially since the money has already been set aside.

Ex-Officio/Councilmember Doran stated that the DCMA would have a much better chance at getting people to join the association if they change the name to 'Clearwater Business and Professional Association'.

Member Wright thanked Ms. Jaffey for giving the board an update.

2. Approve the Minutes from the January 4, 2012, Regular Monthly Meeting

Member Morfopoulos moved to approve the minutes from the January 4, 2012 meeting. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

3. Coachman Park Enhancement Coalition Presentation – Howard Warshauer (15 minutes)

Howard Warshauer stated that he was a member of the Coachman Park Enhancement Coalition (CPEC) and gave a presentation to the board.

Mr. Warshauer stated that the CPEC is a group of Clearwater citizens interested in transforming Coachman Park into a signature park for Pinellas County. They have gathered historical information on Coachman Park, researched other downtown parks, and studied park design, elements, funding, management, and programming. They have conducted a visioning survey of area residents and based on the results they have formed a vision to make Coachman Park a signature Park that will be connected to downtown Clearwater and actively used by many Clearwater area citizens and organizations.

Mr. Warshauer stated that besides him the members of the CPEC are Bob Clifford, Frank Dame, Bob Fernandez, Anne Garris, Jack Geller, Jeff Ginn, Joy Grubb, Felicia Leonard, Louis Leousis, Brett Lezon, Jack Mortimer, Karl Schrader, Sean Schrader, and Ken Smith.

Member Morfopoulos stated that he liked the idea of specialty adage to the park and asked how he sees the park linking to downtown Clearwater. In the past the board has not promoted events in Coachman Park because they were not sure if it was benefitting Cleveland Street. Mr. Warshauer responded that the wall between Coachman Park and the city has to come down. The park has to be brought into the city. There should be a playground at the top of the block. That would have the most impact on the Cleveland Street District.

Ex-Officio/Councilmember Gibson asked if Mr. Warshauer said that they should tear down Harborview Center because the park is already in downtown Clearwater to which he responded yes.

Member Herndon stated that they should tear down the Harborview Center and build a parking lot so that people can park there when they visit downtown Clearwater. Ex-Officio/Councilmember Gibson stated that they do not have problems with parking on nights and weekends.

Ex-Officio/Councilmember Gibson stated that a park like this would be a magnet for the homeless and asked if they have a solution for that to which Mr. Warshauer responded that if the park is successful and filled with lots of people there will not be a problem since the homeless prefer to be isolated and in unpopulated areas.

Ex-Officio/Councilmember Gibson stated that Station Square Park has a big homeless problem and asked what Mr. Warshauer has to say about that to which he responded that it is a dead park and that is why they have the problem.

Ex-Officio/Councilmember Gibson stated that the park will not be drawing tourists to downtown but will be drawing locals. One thing they have to contemplate is how to keep the homeless issue from getting to be a bigger problem. The homeless are now being consolidated in a center in Pinellas County. As a result, they have had a big decrease in the number of homeless people but the city would still like to see a lower number in the area.

Mr. Warshauer stated that he is not an expert in dealing with homeless people to which Ex-Officio/Councilmember Gibson responded that he needs to become an expert otherwise the situation will get out of control.

Member Starova asked what makes him think that having something else at the Harborview Center will not work to which Mr. Warshauer responded that the waterfront and the bluff are the two biggest assets in downtown Clearwater.

Member Starova asked if the aquarium decides to move to downtown Clearwater will it bring more people to the park to which Mr. Warshauer responded that they will have to see. If downtown is not enhanced they will not be able to bring tourists to the city.

Member Wright asked who makes the decision on Coachman Park to which Ex-Officio/Councilmember Gibson responded that anything that happens in Harborview does not require referendum.

Member Morfopoulos asked if Water's Edge required referendum to which Ex-Officio/Councilmember responded no because it applies to public property.

Member Starova asked if they have any professionals looking at the plans to which Mr. Warshauer responded that the professionals who wrote that plan sent a proposal to them but they will be looking for more bids.

Member Starova asked how long does it take from development to completion of a park to which Mr. Warshauer responded that the time frame varies for different parks and that it can take anywhere from one year to three years. They estimate that Coachman Park will be completed in approximately one to one and a half years.

Member Herndon stated that he agrees with most of what Mr. Warshauer had to say and asked Ex-Officio/Councilmember Gibson if he knew what the city council would say regarding this issue to which Ex-Officio/Councilmember Gibson responded that he is not sure.

Elaine Granata stated that she is a citizen of Clearwater and that when she was living in Sarasota, she heard about the Sea Blues Festival on the radio and decided to come to Clearwater to attend the event. She had such a great time that she ended up moving to the city. She informed the board that the reason people do not come to downtown Clearwater is because of the homeless and the Scientologists.

Ms. Granata stated that the homeless need to be dealt with compassionately and asked if there was any way they can build low income housing to help them. This problem is only going to get worse with the poor economy she said. They need to be concerned about other people's family values. Ex-Officio/Councilmember Gibson responded that they are already five points above the national average in low income housing. If they build more housing they are only going to attract people with low income and this will stifle the city's growth.

Ms. Granata stated that having the homeless live in tents in 100 degree weather is not the answer to which Ex-Officio/Councilmember Gibson responded that he was talking about Safe Harbor and that they have fully functional facilities.

Ex-Officio/Councilmember Gibson stated that it is not accurate to state that council is not doing anything and that people just do not know what they are doing. He also stated that building additional housing requires more money and the citizens of Clearwater will not like it if they have to raise taxes. They like the ideas that the city comes up with but the answer is always no when it involves spending money.

4. Planning Discussion - Geri Campos Lopez

Ms. Lopez stated that she was sorry she was not able to attend last month's meeting. The promotions budget for 2008 was \$60,027.46, for 2009 was \$94,829.07, for 2010 was \$140,260.86, and for 2011 was \$109,622.01. The board needs to discuss whether they can maintain that level of advertising or if a portion of the budget needs to be allocated to something else. They need to discuss where their priorities lie.

Ms. Lopez stated that one of the concerns is that sponsorship forms are due by May 15th so if the board decides they are not going to sponsor events this year they need to let people know by April so they do not fill out the grant forms.

Ms. Lopez stated that they are expecting revenues to drop again so the board needs to decide what their target number is for promotions and what they want the dollar amount to go toward.

a. Event Sponsorship vs. Advertising Philosophy

Ex-Officio/Councilmember Gibson stated that it was not long ago that they were handing out flyers as a means of advertising. Now they are using social media. They have seen a seven percent increase in tourism since they started advertising online. People no longer stop at the visitor's center to book their hotels; all hotel booking is done online.

Member Wright asked what the return on investment was in terms of bringing more people to the Cleveland Street District so that they can decide if it is worth continuing in the same direction. Ms. Lopez stated that she does not have information on the return on investment for small events. The only way they can have an idea is by polling merchants to find out how they did on Blast Friday or other events. The \$50,000 budget increase was due to Blast Friday.

Member Morfopoulos stated that right now they are having difficulty figuring out how successful the board is with events because they have nothing to measure it against. They need to figure out what the reason is for bringing people to downtown Clearwater and if the board is successful in that process. They need to try and figure out how to develop downtown Clearwater and what the DDB's role is in making that happen.

Ex-Officio/Councilmember Doran stated that the DDB is about redevelopment and that is why it was created. Redevelopment is the key but the board has been focusing on promotions for the past number of years. These promotions have brought people to downtown for a few hours but they are not creating repeat customers. There are three things the board can do in terms of measuring success:

- 1) The board can look at tax evaluation since there is record of that. What they will find is that property tax values went up significantly over the past few years. Staff can get the records for them and they can compare it year by year.
- 2) The board needs to look at net new businesses. Although there are empty stores now, the board can look at what stores have opened in the last three years and how many have closed.
- 3) The board can look at sales tax records. If more people are spending money in downtown Clearwater there will be an increase in sales tax. He believes that sales tax can be broken down by zip code.

The board can use the above measures as a benchmark for future decisions. Ms. Lopez responded that they have the information for property tax and net new businesses but they will have to look into getting the sales tax information.

Member Starova stated that downtown means the heart of the city and it is made by citizens not tourists. Since downtown has its own boundaries it should have different rules from the rest of the city. They need to make it a place where people can work, live and play. If they do that, the area will grow. They will be able to develop it and bring new businesses in which will result in an increase in the amount of sales tax. He does not think that the DDB is going in the wrong direction. Part of growing an area is promoting it and putting on events. The board just has to be selective in the events they sponsor. Five years ago they sponsored everyone who requested funding but now they do not have the money for it.

Member Starova stated that when he first joined the board he said that they need to connect Coachman Park to Cleveland Street District and he still feels that they need to put an entrance on Cleveland Street. Downtown Clearwater has docks, a post office, a main library, two banks, bus terminals, and the Clearwater Chamber of Commerce but none of these are connected. People do not know what businesses are there in Cleveland Street District.

Member Morfopoulos stated that they support a lot of different things but what is missing is something to align them with. They need to evaluate each request and what its impact will be on the Cleveland Street District before they decide if they should grant sponsorship. Tax payers of the district agreed to pay an extra one percent to form the DDB so that improvements can be made to downtown Clearwater.

Member Herndon stated that the key is to fill the vacant spaces. They need to have someone actively searching and trying to bring people to downtown Clearwater. They should have four to five people making cold calls to bring new tenants in. Member Wright responded that they have discussed this before. They need to dedicate funds to support acquisition of people and the main thing is to impact the three things that Ex-Officio/Councilmember Doran mentioned. Ms. Lopez stated that Ms. Orr's job is to recruit new tenants and it has been very difficult. Ms. Lopez focus is to try and get new businesses and

Ms. Orr has been helping her with that. The problem is convincing them that there are things to do in downtown Clearwater. She is also working on the empty buildings and their infrastructure to see if it is ready for a new tenant to immediately take over. They can try and find out where to pull some of the data from but the problem is that it is very time consuming and they do not have enough staff for that.

Member Wright stated that these are all good ideas and asked if the board can use some money to hire an intern to do the research and create a database with all the information he/she gathers. Ms. Lopez responded that the board can put some money aside for an intern and that they have had an intern in the past from the business college.

Member Morfopoulos stated that one thing that will make downtown successful is having more people living there and asked if there is a growth or a decline in tenants. Member Wright responded that there is an increase in the number of tenants in downtown and Ms. Jaffey responded that Water's Edge is seventy-five percent occupied.

Ms. Lopez stated that census figures are the only way to really find out if there is tenant growth or not and that is not done very often. Also the information is difficult to get. However, the DDB will be able to get details if there is new construction.

Member Wright stated that they need to let people know that they do not have much money to spend. In the past few years they have seen a higher level of events competing for funding.

Member Starova stated that the board is making good strides. They now have the Winter's Dolphin Tale Adventure, public parking signs, and digital signs but they still need to do more. Downtown Clearwater is still not very welcoming. They need to install welcome signs as well as directional signs. They also need more parking lot signs. The public parking at Station Square does not even have a sign to show that it is a parking garage. They also need to install banners with messages of happenings on Cleveland Street. People do not know about Cleveland Street and what is available there. People come downtown to visit the aquarium and they do not know that there is a Starbucks right around the corner. He also stated that they could not put 'Welcome to Cleveland Street' signs last year but there is a Dolphin Tale sign installed and asked how that happened.

Ms. Jaffey stated that there are a lot of cities going through the same hardship of trying to bring businesses to downtown. There was a large article in the New York Times about Sacramento. The city has come up with programs where they are giving a chance to businesses for six months to see if they are successful or not. For example, Hyde Park is empty and they are desperate to bring people in that the Landlord is taking a percentage of the profits because the tenants cannot pay the entire rent amount. They need to have Landlords work with the businesses. The rents are so high that it is very difficult to get people to fill the empty spaces.

Member Wright stated that he has heard that the Landlords are not willing to work with anyone to which Ms. Jaffey responded that some are willing to work with people and some are not.

Member Wright stated that he is open to the idea of what happened in Sacramento.

Member Morfopoulos stated that they need to be more strategic in this meeting or they will not accomplish anything. He thinks that filling spaces in downtown Clearwater is part of the mandate for the DDB. Other businesses as well as the landowners will benefit from it. They should not look at how good

a project is; instead they should see if it benefits downtown's strategic plan. If it does not contribute to the development of downtown Clearwater then they should not spend the money. He does not see the long term value of spending large amounts of money to have people visit the area only once.

Member Starova stated that they should help merchants with advertising. If a store has a budget to only advertise for one month, maybe the DDB could match that amount for the second month. Another option is to give twenty-five percent to businesses who provide entertainment.

Member Wright stated that they might not have a direction right now but they have very good ideas and that the board could subsidize someone's advertising budget.

Member Morfopoulos stated in the past the board has sponsored events that have not benefited the redevelopment of downtown Clearwater solely because they sponsored them the previous year.

Member Starova stated that events help bring people to downtown Clearwater and that he has had return customers at his pizzeria. He also stated that the Jolley Trolley numbers were high during the Dolphin Tale opening. They had thousands of people in the area between Christmas and New Year's and he had three times better businesses for a week straight.

Ms. Jaffey stated that Ms. Orr put her in contact with the person in charge with Dolphin Tale and that she sent her an e-mail to try to coordinate advertising.

Ms. Lopez stated that they have a poster inside the aquarium as well as walking maps. Member Starova responded that it would be better if they could put a kiosk outside the aquarium.

Member Herndon stated that he rode the Jolley Trolley to see what was going on with it. Member Wright asked what the route was to which Member Herndon responded that it goes over the bridge down to Osceola Avenue and then to the beaches. Member Wright stated that they need to reroute the trolley to Cleveland Street. Member Starova stated that Mr. Longenecker informed him that the number eleven bus cannot make it around the curve. Member Wright stated that the big Scientologist buses go through there so he does not see why the number eleven bus cannot make it through there as well. Ms. Lopez stated that the area was designed for buses so she does not know what the problem is. Member Wright asked Ms. Orr to suggest to Mr. Longenecker to reroute the trolley to Cleveland Street.

Ms. Lopez stated that the Farmers Market has seen a big increase in numbers since the opening of Dolphin Tale. Ms. Jaffey responded that every time the Farmers Market is open they lose business and she is not the only one who has noticed that.

Member Herndon asked if the 400 block of Cleveland Street can be closed on Fridays and Saturdays for events to which Ms. Lopez responded that the last thing they would want to do is close the road to traffic. It would be much easier if cars drive through and see the events that are taking place. It would be different if there were major events but small events will not be successful if they do that.

Member Starova asked if they can move the kiosk from the trail to the Dolphin Tale location to which Ms. Lopez responded that it will be complicated to move. Member Wright asked why don't they install another one right outside Dolphin Tale. Member Starova stated that the kiosk on the trail is against the wall and is not of much use there.

Member Starova moved to research the possibility of removing one of the information kiosks from the south side of the trail to the Dolphin Tale Adventures. The motion was not seconded and therefore not approved.

Member Wright suggested that Member Starova go look at the kiosk before the next meeting and see if it really is not serving its purpose there. He also stated that Member Starova has good advertising ideas and suggested that the board form an advertising committee with Member Starova as the Chairman.

Member Herndon moved to create an advertising committee and have Member Starova as Chairman of the committee. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

Ms. Orr asked who else is going to be on the committee to which Member Wright responded that Member Starova can pick his committee. Member Herndon volunteered to be a part of the committee. Ms. Lopez reminded them that they will not be able to discuss any advertising issues outside of their meetings. They will have to have regular meetings and advertise these meetings plus they will need someone to take the minutes.

Ms. Lopez asked Members Starova and Herndon when they would like to schedule their first meeting. Member Starova asked when the DCMA was going to hold their meeting and suggested that they have the advertising meeting at the same time. Ms. Jaffey responded that the meeting will take place on February 21st and it has already been advertised.

Member Morfopoulos moved to adopt a financial strategy of reducing the promotional budget in favor for an increase in coop advertising and small events on Cleveland Street. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

Member Morfopoulos stated that he is not in favor of subsidized advertising but he is in favor of coop advertising.

Ms. Lopez asked if they would like to talk to the other board members or do they want to take this strategic direction to which Member Wright responded that it is the strategic direction they are taking.

Ms. Jaffey stated that they are looking at advertising that has been successful in the past and are trying to find out how much it will cost. When they have negotiated a rate they will come to the DDB to ask for help. This coop opportunity will be promoted to every business in the Cleveland Street District.

Member Wright asked if Ms. Jaffey can expand promoting the coop opportunity to include anyone in the Clearwater tax district to which Ms. Jaffey responded that it will be advertised to everyone in the DDB district and that if they get enough people taking advantage of this opportunity they might even be able to take out a two page newspaper advertisement.

Member Wright requested Ms. Orr to give Ms. Jaffey a map of Cleveland Street District as well as the tax district to which Ms. Orr responded ok.

Member Morfopoulos moved to send a courtesy letter to let events know that due to budget shortfalls and shifting priorities the board will be reducing the amount of funding given to them. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

Ms. Lopez stated that they can send letters out to the events but it would be more efficient to inform them through e-mail since they have all their e-mail addresses.

Ms. Jaffey stated that the Sea Blues Festival is going to include merchants on Cleveland Street and that they are going to work with Capitol Theater and the DCMA. There will be a merry go round on Cleveland Street.

Member Wright stated that they sponsored the Sea Blues Festival in the amount of five thousand dollars and having a Cleveland Street component was part of the requirement for funding.

Member Wright stated that he is happy that the DCMA is partnering with the DDB and requested that Ms. Jaffey look into changing the name of the association. Ms. Jaffey responded that she will look into it.

5. Final Comments

Member Herndon asked when the construction on Cleveland Street will officially end to which Ms. Orr responded that they will finish construction of the phase two, the current phase, in April of this year. Ms. Lopez stated that they do not have funding for phase three as of yet. They still need to discuss it with the city council.

Member Starova asked if there was any way to give Station Square Park to a private entity so that they can take care of putting on concerts and events to which Ms. Lopez responded that it is doable and that it has happened before. Ms. Orr stated that since it is a public park they cannot close it for private events. Ms. Lopez stated that they would need money to do that to which Member Starova responded that he is not talking about giving them money. Ms. Lopez stated that the logistics will be tough.

Member Morfopoulos stated that the board is moving in the right direction and that they are going to have to make painful cuts in the future but the sooner the events know about it the easier it will be for them to find other sources of funding.

Member Wright thanked everyone for their input and their participation.

6. Adjournment

Member Wright adjourned the February 1, 2012 regular meeting of the Clearwater Downtown Development Board at 7:56 p.m.

CLEARWATER DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT BOARD MEETING ACTION AGENDA

Wednesday, February 1, 2012 - 5:30 pm

02.01.12.01

Member Morfopoulos moved to approve the minutes from the January 4, 2012 meeting. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

02.01.12.02

Member Starova moved to research the possibility of removing one of the information kiosks from the south side of the trail to the Dolphin Tale Adventures. The motion was not seconded and therefore not approved.

02.01.12.03

Member Herndon moved to create an advertising committee and have Member Starova as Chairman of the committee. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

02.01.12.04

Member Morfopoulos moved to adopt a financial strategy of reducing the promotional budget in favor for an increase in coop advertising and small events on Cleveland Street. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

02.01.12.05

Member Morfopoulos moved to send a courtesy letter to let events know that due to budget shortfalls and shifting priorities the board will be reducing the amount of funding given to them. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.