

CITY OF ST. IGNACE
DDA MEETING MINUTES
April 14, 2023
City Council Chambers

Members Present: Chair Heather Aukeman, Quincy Ranville, Erik Heffernan, Julie Lipnitz, Vice-Chair Pat Ramsay

Members Absent (or on Zoom): Cheryl Schlehuber, Tom Cronan, Barb Yshinski, Kristi Gustafson

Staff Present: DDA Director Scott Marshall, Museum Director Shirley Sorrels

Others Present: Erich Doerr (St. Ignace News), Jim Drazé (Vice-Chair of St. Ignace Planning Commission), Chris Byrnes (Director of Mackinac Economic Alliance), Kari Visnaw (Superintendent of St. Ignace Schools)

Meeting called to order at 8:07 AM by Chair Heather Aukeman (technological issues with zoom, Barb and Cheryl called in on cell phones)

- I. **MINUTES:** Motion by Ramsay, support by Ranville to accept February 10th meeting minutes as presented. Motion passed.
- II. **ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA:** Marshall: Planning Commission presentation by Vice-Chair of the Planning Commission Jim Drazé. Aukeman: swing set at American Legion Park.
- III. **FINANCIAL REPORTS:** Overview of February and March bills and balance sheets. Motion to accept the financial reports by Ramsay, support by Lipnitz. Motion passes.
- IV. **BUSINESS:**
 1. **Excuse Absent Board Members:** Motion by Ranville, support by Heffernan to excuse absent board members Cronan and Gustafson. Motion passed.
 2. **Superintendent Kari Visnaw RE: Bond Millage:** Superintendent Visnaw and her team have worked diligently to ensure that the community has been fully informed about this millage, why it's necessary, and what it means for the school and the community over the last few months. She brought in pamphlets for the DDA board members to see what the millage would and wouldn't support and how it would impact taxpayers. She also explained the extensive studies and research to determine the best plan for the school that would be the most fiscally responsible approach for the community. Thank you Kari for taking the time to present.
 3. **Mackinac Economic Alliance Chris Byrnes:** Chris briefly explained his Mackinaw Marine Mobility Innovation Corridor he has been working on, and how it impacts the Straits area as a whole from an economic growth standpoint. He noted that MEA recently secured a \$3M grant for the electric conversion of the Mackinac Island Ferry Company boat and potential federal

funding for other public infrastructure. Aukeman asked what specifically he was requesting today and Byrnes noted that he was looking for support on 2 matters; 1) that the DDA consider expanding to the north to include Mackinac Marine Services and 2) the potential of moving some downtown ferry parking lots off State St and onto Cheeseman Rd with an expanded I-75 interchange exit/entrance ramp. Marshall asked for a tangible map/proposal of what this would look like so boards and committees can visualize his plan and he agreed.

4. **Boardwalk Project Update:** the DDA raised \$80,000, with an initial goal of \$40,000. The \$40,000 match from the MEDC gives us a grand total of \$120,000. This is a big win for the community and shows how the community can accomplish great things when we come together. We have new brochures coming out with donor tiers and recognition breakdowns. Scott is working with local agencies as much as possible, supporting local business. Scott would like to discuss this at another upcoming Projects Committee meeting. He is making progress with Azzar's office.
5. **Property Management Update RE: Gyftakis Property:** The Property Management Committee has made the suggestion for the house to be removed (sold), to put in the parking lots, and also to add a pop-up business market instead of renovating the house into a rental. Pop up shop buildings are much less expensive to construct. Lipnitz suggested moving the parking back toward Ojibwa Trail and farther away from State St. Jim Drazé noted that this fits in perfectly with the Planning Commission's vision of our downtown. Lipnitz noted that the pop ups are great for new businesses getting started, Schlehuber agreed. Aukeman noted that it's a perfect location with all that has been added to Little Bear. Schlehuber wanted to discuss the risk of losing the house impacting the historical significance of the site. Jim Drazé noted that in his research, he discovered that it is the land the house sits on that has the true historical significance. The house is over 50 years old and as such technically "historic" but the grounds it sits on were the home of the Huron and Ojibwa villages. Schlehuber thanked Drazé and followed up with a request that the community be kept informed of any changes because of the historical significance. Jim Drazé also suggested that Scott consider working the school shop class to construct the structures. Erich Doerr asked Shirley what her input was and Shirley noted that she likes the idea and doesn't want to cause the unsustainable financial burden on the museum that renovating the building would create. She thinks the pop up businesses would be a far more feasible route for the museum and noted the option to buy a small modular building for the offices. Shirley's vision for an outdoor museum expansion would fit in nicely. Lipnitz noted that the vendor village could be themed to have a tribal significance and Ramsay noted that the

small building could be turned into public restrooms. Motion to move forward with a presentation to city council by Lipnitz, support by Ramsay.

6. **Hometown Hero Banner Program Update:** Tom Wyers has come up with a great design. Scott and Shirley are hoping to have banners on every pole since they are significantly less expensive to produce locally and will discuss with DPW.
7. **Pavilion Project Update:** There is about \$40k left in this budget. The pavilion still needs electricity, landscaping, artistic additions, and donor plaques. Scott is moving forward with collecting bids on the electric and will start working on landscaping. Shirley wants to plan a grand opening. They plan to work together tactfully thank the Earl family as well as the additional donors.
8. **St. Ignace Entrepreneur Club:** this group had it's first meeting in March with 5 attendees. They meet the first Monday of the month at 6 PM (just prior to council). He plans to have guest speakers at every meeting highlighting different challenges entrepreneurs face and how to overcome them. Jim Drazé noted that the planning commission has been working to define working businesses that operate out of a home and the challenges those businesses face. This led to a discussion of several such businesses in St. Ignace that could be interested in this club and in potentially presenting how they overcame their own challenges. Lipnitz hopes this program can be expanded to the high school at some point.
9. **Marshall Interim Recreation Director Update:** Scott explained that the city offered Cathy Lamb the position at the recommendation of the Recreation Advisory Committee's subcommittee for hiring. Cathy and the city are currently in negotiations regarding rate of pay and are set to meet again on April 17. If all goes well and Cathy accepts the position, she needs to give her current employer 30 days notice. This means that Scott will need to fill in as interim for longer than initially expected. Aukeman noted that it wasn't ideal but it is necessary and that it's important for the community to support its members in difficult times. Ranville noted that as long as Scott was ok with the continued extra workload, she supported, and that hopefully the work load would taper off as he gets more and more of the facility in operating order again. Scott agreed and said that he saw the necessity and can handle the work, and that his DDA work is not suffering. Ramsay offered praise for the immense progress that Scott has already made and continues to make. Heffernan had to leave during this discussion so there was no quorum but general support for Scott to continue as needed was vehemently expressed by the remaining board members.
10. **DDA Director Report:** Lots of projects going on going into the busy summer season. Scott noted that the Visitors Bureau will pay \$4,000 toward the preliminary engineering for the recreation trail, which constitutes about half

of what is needed. Scott wrote a few additional grants as well and once the full amount is secured, engineering can begin. Upon completion of this stage, more funding can be secured for actual trail construction. He also wrote a grant for security cameras in the Pocket Park. Also working on the table tents

11. **Museum Manager Report:** Shirley thanked the board for their continued support of her projects. Her “Welcome to the Ojibwa World” exhibit was awarded a \$15,000 grant from Michigan Humanities. She is waiting to hear back about Community Foundation and 2% grants she also submitted. She is going for another \$25,000 Michigan Humanities grant that would support an education series for 1,125 youth in our area. She is also pursuing Kellogg Foundation grants. A film about the reburial of Father Marquette’s bones has been submitted to several film festivals including the Marquette Film Festival that she, Tom, and Francie hope to attend.
12. **Agenda Addition from Scott: Jim Drazo Planning Commission Presentation:** The planning commission is beginning work on updating the Master Plan that was adopted in 2019 and will be renewed in 2024. Jim is suggesting to the planning commission, the DDA, the city, and other organizations that these entities get together and discuss adopting the Michigan Municipal League model as a road map for community governance and development. The model suggests a more complex approach to measuring community success that simply focusing on economic growth which can be fragile, and can leave out huge sections of our community. The model includes focusing on building community wealth by balancing economic prosperity, sense of place, natural assets, and cultural substance as well as safety, health, and well-being of residents. This presentation was purely informational at this point.
13. **Agenda Addition from Aukeman:** Heather wanted to check on the status of a citizen request for a swing set at American Legion Park. Scott noted that he would like to include this discussion and this citizen in the next Projects Committee meeting.

There being no further business or comments, the meeting adjourned at 10:17 AM

Respectfully submitted by Quincy Ranville, filling in for Barb Yshinski