MINUTES

 **ST. IGNACE DDA MEETING**

**January 12, 2018**

**(official)**

Members Present: Chairman Jim North, Barb Brown, Pat Ramsey, Heather Aukeman, Mayor Connie Litzner, Tom DellaMoretta, Phil Ruegg, Linda Bell, Secretary Barb Yshinski

Members Absent: none

Staff Present: Renee Kosor, DDA Director; Shirley Sorrels, Museum Manager

Others Present: City Manager Mike Stelmaszek; City Council Member Kayla Pelter; Kevin Hess, St. Ignace News

Chairman North called the meeting to order at 8:01 a.m.

1. **MINUTES:**

**Motion** by Tom DellaMoretta; support by Phil Ruegg to accept the minutes of December 8, 2017. Motion carried.

# FINANCIAL REPORTS:

Renee discussed making a change to the reporting style, allowing for a balance-sheet style of reviewing the financial records.

**Motion** by Heather Aukeman; support by Tom DellaMoretta to accept financial reports for December 2018. Motion carried.

# BUSINESS:

**Excuse Absent Members** – **N/A**

**Officer Elections** – Renee shared her satisfaction working with Jim North in his current capacity as Chairman. She indicated an ability to speak directly with him and that they have a good working relationship. Renee then shared an initial connection with Tom DellaMoretta, speaking to his past board experience on the City Council and his valued opinion as a downtown business owner. She believes he would make a good Vice Chairman. Motion by Tom; supported by Phil that Jim North remain as Chairman. Mayor Litzner nominated Tom DellaMoretta for the Vice Chairman position; supported by Heather. Motion carried.

**New Member DDA Paperwork** – Renee shared that she mailed the DDA Act to the new board members and indicated that she would add to that the current By-laws by the next board meeting. Connie explained that there were packets shared with new board members and asked if Renee could locate any extras. Renee indicated she would or would create new ones to include the 30-year-plan.

Barbara Brown asked whether any of the new board members had been sworn in. As discussion continued, it was discovered that none of the board members had ever been sworn in. City Manager Mike Stelmaszek went downstairs and brought Sherry back up to administer the oath of office to all DDA board members.

**Director’s Role & Responsibilities** – Renee asked the board members to consider what they believe the focus of the DDA and the Director is. She reviewed many of the elements of the 30-year-plan and its focus on projects. Renee then pointed out that the DDA exists and is funded to assist with improving property values of the businesses within the district. Renee would like the board to consider business development as an element of the director’s responsibility and, in so doing, would like to put some funding into that effort.

Linda shared that there was a consultant who came to the area and hosted a seminar and conducted a study focused on our local businesses. Renee said she would look that person’s information and the resulting study up for more detail.

Jim commented that the combination of following through on current projects and moving forward with some business development and marketing opportunities meets his expectation for the director.

Linda shared that she is most excited to hear what kind of marketing ideas Renee has. She also complimented the DDA on the projects that have been completed in the past.

Mike Stelmaszek mentioned that he liked the marketing slogan, ‘Going Strong since 1671’.

**District Extension Request: St. Ignace News** – Renee was approached by Wes with the request to extend the DDA district to include his business. Barbara Brown wondered where the current boundaries are. Discussion about whether the extension would be solely for one business or would include other businesses on the same street. Renee clarified that the district could be extended (based on the Act governing the DDA) solely for one business if we so chose but to do so, we would have to have City Council approval. Mayor Litzner asked for the amount of tax dollars the city would stand to lose and indicated that this would likely be the deciding factor. Renee said she would look into the extension’s real value and come back to the board with that information.

1. **PROJECTS**

 \*Mayor Litzner made a motion to go into closed session to discuss with an attorney accounting discrepancies, the concern being that conversations in an open meeting could be detrimental to current employees. Pat Ramsey supported.

 Entered Closed Session at 0906

 Exited Closed Session at 0924

**St. Anthony’s Restroom Park** – Renee provided a balance sheet breakdown of funds raised and funds spent on the project. Tom questioned whether a cost savings could be found in removing the steps and retaining wall from the back of the park. Renee indicated that the engineer had no issues with that and so the steps were already removed from the project. The back wall, being largely made of rock, does not require a retaining wall in the traditional sense. Renee shared that William’s idea was to smooth out the back wall of the park and the back yard of the property directly north, creating a nice green hill. Doing this is both cost effective and in keeping with Renee’s plan to create a zen garden feel surrounding the restroom structure.

Jim and Linda both expressed a desire to finish this project and wondered how much more money would be needed. Renee explained that she would need approximately $30-$40k to put in the concrete, fencing, and landscaping, and to finish paying the contractors for the work on the restroom structure. She indicated that this money would need to come from the proceeds of the Chamber of Commerce building.

**LBE** – Renee shared that she recently attended the recreation board meeting and was asked to see if it was possible to change one of the softball fields into a baseball field. The rec board members pushed back on the project design, asking who was going to maintain it, who would man the concession stands, who would keep the restrooms clean. Renee responded to the questions and agreed to take a look at the plans to see if a baseball field was possible. After researching it, she reports that the original plans must stand. The wetlands are protected and prohibit the required 100 foot extension for a baseball field.

Renee said that she had some interaction with the grant coordinator who is unhappy with the current project’s progression. Plans have not been approved and the process required by the grant authority has not been followed. Renee assured her that things were going to move forward smoothly and that an extension request would be submitted on time.

Budget concerns for the project were discussed. Initially, it was believed that DPW would handle excavation but Bill does not believe that is feasible any longer. Cost for excavation could negatively impact the budget. Costs to have the project plans re-drawn for a stick-built building will also have an impact on the budget.

Mayor Litzner said we need to be more diligent when budgeting out our projects. She also mentioned the need to have the City Council’s approval on DPW in-kind labor.

Renee is excited that the LBE project will be the official launch pad for the Railroad Grade project and will work to keep the granting official satisfied and to remain under budget. She is currently relationship building with local contractors.

Phil is concerned about the expenses for the project and will take a wait-and-see approach to keeping this project going.

**Streetlight Project** – Renee shared that, due to budget constraints, funding the streetlight project will have to be put on hold. However, due to the TAP grant we are waiting to hear back from, we may be able to approach the streetlights as a much larger project at a later time. Renee also mentioned that, as the DDA carries no debt, this is the kind of project that would rise to the level of need if the board wanted to have it financed through a loan.

Barbara shared her thoughts on the community-wide value of having nice streetlights. She definitely wants to see this project completed at some point.

Tom shared his struggle with the current height of the light poles. The height makes the light shine right in his eyes as he drives. He also mentioned that the light itself does little to actually light the streets.

Renee added that making the project a much more comprehensive one would address each of the issues brought forth. The board agreed to return to the lighting project and discuss options for a more thorough replacement strategy.

**Budget Amendments** – Renee requested to make adjustments to the sundry amounts in the budget, moving the vast majority of sundry budget into a façade improvement line item and into the amount needed to budget for the work Carol Bell does with the flowers. Chairperson North recommended that Renee make the necessary changes. Mayor Litzner made a motion for the amendment; supported by Heather.

**Other** – Tom shared that there is a ‘Welcome to St. Ignace’ sign in storage. He believes the sign was created for the North side of St. Ignace. Renee said she would follow up and retrieve the sign, even though the location of the sign is outside the DDA district. She will work with Bill and the DPW staff to get it put back up.

**Public Comment** – Kevin asked about the information discussed during the closed session. Mayor Litzner indicated that he would likely receive an email at the day’s end with the information discussed.

There being no further business: Meeting adjourned at 10:20 am

Respectfully submitted: Barb Yshinski, Secretary