

Minutes
Business Improvement District
November 8, 2012

Board Present: Andrew Ferrin, Garry Hackett, Rebecca Hughes, Sheila Rice, Kris Harrison
Board Absent: George Wheeler
Staff Present: Joan Redeen
Guests Present: Alison Fried, Travis & Janet Neil, Trina Knoche

I. **Call to order:** Andy called the meeting to order at 9:02am.

II. **Guests:** Introductions were made of Travis & Janet Neil, they are the owners of Bert & Ernie's and Travis has an interest in joining the BID Board.
Trina Knoche, a DGFA board member and founding member of the Downtown Chicks, joined the meeting to discuss the Great Falls Historic Trolley. Carol Place has been trying to sell the trolley. The Chicks' Ghost Tours were very popular and tremendous fun. Trina asked the BID Board if they would be willing to work with DGFA on figuring out if bringing the trolley downtown and in-house would be an effective thing. She noted that they are currently in the research phase, conducting a feasibility study. She suggested that the BID be the owner of the trolley and DGFA market it. Sheila noted that she'd be interested in the BID Board's thoughts, if the trolley is something of value. Trina shared some of her ideas. Trina noted that Tracy Houck at Paris Gibson Square and Sheila are on "Team Trolley". Garry expressed interest in participating in the feasibility study. Discussion followed on ownership interests, insurance issues, the current financial status of the trolley and keeping the trolley downtown within the master plan boundaries.

III. **BID Board:** Joan reported that Philip Riedel has resigned from the Board; his resignation was forwarded to the Board and the City upon receipt. The City has already posted the opening.

IV. **Approval of minutes from 10-11-12 meeting:** Becky motioned to approve the minutes from the 10/11/12 meeting. Kris seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**

V. **Financials:**

Bank Signature Cards: Joan informed the board that new signature cards will be drawn up once a new board member is appointed.

Monthly Financials: The Board received the July, August and September financials at the 10/11/12 board meeting. There being no discussion on the financials Sheila motioned to approve the 7/31/12, 8/31/12 and 9/30/12 financial statements which include the Balance Sheets, P&L, and the P&L/Budget comparison. Becky seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Discussion followed on petty cash expenses.

Discussion on closing the First Interstate Bank checking account, Joan noted that there has been no activity in the account for over two months. Garry motioned to close the First Interstate Bank checking account, Sheila seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**

The Board discussed bank balances and anticipated grant payouts. Joan noted that a large check will be expected from the City sometime in the first few weeks of January; this check would represent the November tax payments. Joan added that the City has not been as timely in its payments to us in the past year; it often takes a reminder email being sent to the City before they send our distribution.

Per Garry's request a 6-year financial was provided to the board with a spreadsheet reflecting finances from 2007 to 2012; Joan pulled the figures directly from the annual audits.

VI. **Grant Programs:**

Façade Grant Criteria: Joan provided a draft of the update to the Façade Grant program. Sentence #8 was added to the existing criteria. Joan noted that George has been emailed this change but she'd advise tabling it so that we can seek his input. The Board tabled the discussion until George can provide input.

Joan noted that the Business Incentive Grant application for Know Dice was approved via email. They've moved into 8 5th Street South and the grant is for \$1,100 payable to M&L Rentals (Mauri Novak). Garry motioned to approve the Business Incentive Grant for Know Dice for \$1,100. Becky seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Joan reported that she'd emailed the Interior Grant application for Easter Seals Goodwill to the board via email last week. The total estimate for interior improvements is \$2.7million. Garry motioned to approve an interior grant for Easter Seals Goodwill for \$10,000. Kris seconded.

Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion was held on anticipated grant payouts to Stockman Bank and M&L Rentals.

Joan provided the Board with a rough draft of an art grant program.

VII. Old Business:

Beautification: 1st Ave N Underpass: Joan reported that the original estimate for sealant was \$3,600; we were able to acquire what was needed for \$2,500. The first coat of sealant was completed on Tuesday, 10/30. This was the soft gel gloss and 12 gallons was ordered but only six (6) gallons were used so there should be plenty left over for next year. The second coat of sealant is the varnish and 15 gallons were ordered of this, nine (9) of those gallons are on backorder. If the weather cooperates and the product is here it will be applied. We will need to rent two paint sprayers to apply the varnish. Joan reported that she's sent emails to BNSF and the Tribune to inquire about the status of the grant applications submitted. BNSF responded that the grant application is under review. The Tribune hasn't responded. The applications were both submitted in August; the Tribune receives applications in February and August. Joan noted that she requested \$5K from each. Sheila inquired what the costs were in the project. Joan reported that as of yesterday it was approximately \$19K. Discussion followed on the plan for next spring. Joan noted that there will be some changes made in the contracts with the artists.

Downtown Sound System: Joan reported that she spoke to Steve Cloutier, the electrician. He has been given a deadline of 11/30 to have all of the speakers functioning. The only known issue remaining is the speaker by the Brighten Up Shop.

Pocket Park: Joan reported that Jolene has requested that Joan assist her with soliciting funds for the park. Jolene has suggested that there is a direct conflict with her job with GFDA. Discussion followed on the project and Joan's availability on soliciting for funds. The Board noted that they see no conflict in Joan assisting Jolene; Garry mentioned that he would be willing to assist provided the owner is supporting the project. Garry expressed concerns if the owner decided to sell his property in a year or two and the fact that the community needs some protection if that should occur.

Traffic Signal Box 2013: Joan reported that MDT has approved the BID doing the seven (7) traffic signal boxes on 1st Ave North. They have stipulated that they must be done in vinyl. Joan is currently working with Clean Slate out of Bozeman to figure out the costs associated with doing them in vinyl.

Chamber of Commerce: Joan reported that an email has been received about the Low Cost Air Fare Initiative. The Chamber has asked for a confirmation of the commitment of the organizations involved in the initiative. Joan informed the Board of the history, the BID has committed \$5K to the initiative of which \$2,500 has been paid. The TBID had committed \$100K to the initiative with the stipulation that those funds be used before anyone else's funds are used. At this point Frontier has not utilized any of the funds so all of the funds are still sitting with the Chamber. If Frontier never dips into the fund then those funds are returned. Sheila moved that the BID continue its involvement in the Low Cost Air Fare Initiative. Garry seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Downtown Partnership: Sheila reported that the model for the partnership is Downtown Billings. She said if you view their website you can see that there are three entities but the outside eye can't tell who works for what branch. Here in Great Fall's DGFA is the marketing arm. The BID is limited by geography and can spend money with the private owner. The P/S funding is TIF funding so those funds must be used on public projects. Sheila added that initially Billings went to the City with every project; eventually the City said to only come to them for projects over a set dollar figure.

Joan noted that there has been some concern expressed over tax abatements as they will affect the TIF. She added that she also visited with Billings and they informed her of agreements that they've established with developers to fund projects even if the TIF doesn't have funding yet. We could be establishing these agreements and getting these projects moving now.

Downtown Great Falls Association: Joan reported that DGFA is holding the Parade of Lights on 11/30; the Christmas Stroll is 12/7. Stroll buttons are available for sale now; Brian Morger is the artist who designed the button this year. DGFA is also hosting a window decorating contest as the theme for the Stroll is 'The Bright Lights of Christmas'. Joan discussed the history of installation of holiday lights. DGFA has purchased the lights; who purchased the existing décor is unknown at this time. The City used to install the lights with the bill being sent to the BID. Three years ago the installation was moved to a private contractor (Jonas) with an increase in cost. The BID asked DGFA to contribute to the installation costs. In 2009, DGFA noted that they would be willing to pay \$1K toward installation for three years as they are responsible for paying the electric costs for the lights. Joan added that she has not sent a letter requesting this contribution this year. Sheila noted that DGFA had budgeted for the expense but noted that DGFA did not have a successful Alive @ 5 season and would likely not be able to manage the expense this year. Garry suggested that a letter be sent to the entities that benefit the most from enjoying the lights, the downtown businesses. Joan expressed concern about generating a list. She has a list of addresses of the property owners, but not a list of all of the businesses. DGFA has its membership listing, but it is not all inclusive. Andy suggested that we explore the possibility next year; in the meantime the BID will cover the expense as it has been budgeted for accordingly. Joan reported the décor issue that Jonas came across last year. Cat Graphics has been contracted by DGFA to deal with the purple banners. Cat Graphics has been replacing the original black brackets as they break with new clear plastic brackets. Jonas was unable to hang the shooting star décor from these plastic brackets. Conversations were held last year with Cat Graphics and they were not able to make any adjustments so we were not able to put all of the shooting stars. Joan noted that the reality is that we are likely facing having to purchase new décor as eventually the shooting stars will not fit on the new brackets. Sheila mentioned that she will address the issue with DGFA. Joan reported that the 11 artificial Christmas trees are being prepared to go out in the rock planters. In 2009 new artificial trees were purchased. We have not done anything to replenish the trees since 2009 – the original bill was \$1,300 and BID/DGFA split the costs. Kreationz has been working on the trees and the bill is \$686; one tree had to be replaced, concrete had to be re-done, etc. The Board instructed Joan to have DGFA pay half of the bill for the replenishment of the artificial trees. Andy inquired about the light party, a date has not been set for that as of yet. Sheila reported that DGFA is holding their quarterly meeting on 11/27 at 5:30pm at NeighborWorks; Greg Doyon is the guest speaker.

Downtown Safety Alliance: Joan reported that Business Watch is being held on Tuesday 11/13 at 5:30pm. The topic is Gangs & Drugs with Officer Rob Lopez as the speaker. The Downtown Safety Alliance is getting ready to roll out the 'Coins for a Cause' program. The program will start with 10-15 businesses and the proceeds will go to the Rescue Mission. The Safety Alliance is meeting next week to set up the Business Watch schedule for 2013.

Great Falls Development Authority: Joan reported that Jolene Bach will be joining us to visit with the Board about Forward Great Falls. Joan noted that five years ago the BID committed to invest \$2,500 over a five year time period, \$500 per year for five years. They are in the process of visiting with their investors now to gain a commitment for the next five years.

Joan reported that the new City brand has officially been unveiled. The branding report was forwarded to the Board via email. Sheila noted that there are some pages in the report that are specific to downtown. Joan provided copies of the main brand options to the Board. The catch phrase is "Untame Your Spirit". The Branding Alliance is going to be meeting every month. BID and DGFA are both on the Brand Alliance.

Joan noted that an email had been forwarded to the Board where GFDA requested a letter in support of a Brownfield grant application they were submitting. A new email was just received noting that GFDA is not submitting the Brownfield grant application so a letter is no longer necessary.

Johnson Hotel: Garry attended an emergency association meeting yesterday. He noted that there has been a series of vandalism in the building and the elevator was damaged last weekend. The individuals who caused the problems were caught and they are our tenants in the incubator (the Great Falls Americans). The elevator was locked at the top of the shaft and the interior has been dented. To get the elevator operating was \$250 and that did not include repair of the dents. There were also light fixtures in the entryway of the building that had been broken. Randy Tarum's office will be sending a letter to the Americans noting their responsibilities and amounts that will need to be reimbursed to the association. Garry suggested that if the Americans don't take care of the bill and eliminate the issues he recommends that the BID evict them from the incubator. Garry motioned that the Americans be given an eviction notice if they have not paid the association back within 10 days of receipt of the letter from Randy Tarum. Sheila seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.** In addition there is an issue with the elevator as it only goes up to the 5th floor; it doesn't go all the way up to the roof. They are going to be installing a ladder on the interior of the elevator shaft. They also need to replace the elevator cables and will be getting a bid to do that, they received a bid about two years ago that was approximately \$12K. Lastly they discussed the door code and are looking at changing it. The association also needs to address the Nox Box and getting keys to the fire department for this.

Montana Downtown Conference: Joan noted that the conference is over and was a success. Next year's conference will be held in Billings. Joan informed the Board of the Montana Downtown Coalition, it is the Coalition that puts on the conference. The BID Board previously committed to being an official member of the Coalition. We were, at that time, asked to pay an annual fee of \$250. No fees have been paid as of yet as the Coalition is not formal yet. It is in the process of becoming formal and the likelihood is that Joan will be serving on the Board for the Coalition. Joan wanted the BID Board to be aware of the Coalition. Board members present noted that the conference was great and they were very pleased with the result.

Parking Commission: Joan reported that the Downtown Parking Survey is still available on the City's website. Last night was the Charette, approximately 50 people attended. The survey that was given last night at the Charette will be available on the City's website.

Work Plan: Joan reported that the BID continues to work the Work Plan.

VIII. **New Business:**

Five-year financial: Garry noted that he did a quick analysis of the six-year financial and the trend is in a positive direction. He added that there have been three or four very significant building improvements that have been done in the past few years. Joan reported that we previously had 156 properties within the BID but we are now at 164 parcels due to projects like the Montana Building.

Personnel: Joan noted that her four-year anniversary with the BID is January 5th. An annual review has been completed in December each year. She informed the Board that she is likely taking vacation the first week of December but will let the Board know when those plans are formalized. She added that she'll be out of the office on a personal day on 11/9 and out on 11/12 as it is Veteran's Day. The office will also be closed for the two days of Thanksgiving week.

IX. **Public Comment:**

No public comment at this time.

X. **Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 11:00am.

Andy Ferrin, Chair

Joan Redeen, Staff

Date: _____

Date: _____