

**Minutes**  
**Business Improvement District**  
**December 8, 2011**

Board Present: Stacey Schaefer, Steve Alley, Doug Lorello, Garry Hackett  
Board Absent: Hayley Leray, Julie Duffy, Andrew Ferrin  
Staff Present: Joan Redeen, Bob Milford  
Guests Present: Alison Fried, Brant Birkeland, Brett Doney, Brian Russell, Steve Erwin, Jori Erwin, Ryan Smith, Tim Peterson, Dani Cloutier, Jolene Bach, Theresa Stevens

- I. **Call to order:** Stacey called the meeting to order at 9:08am.
- II. **Guests:** Steve Erwin, with Erwin Insurance, was present at the request of the Board. Steve noted that he was the agent for the BID when his office was located downtown, but the Board had moved the policies a few years back as they felt they needed to be with an agent downtown. His office is downtown again and he plans to remain. Steve added that he would recommend simply transferring all of the policies back to his firm, premiums would remain the same. Joan inquired about insuring the Arctic Cat. Steve noted that it's not difficult to insure, just expensive. He added that the current policy is improperly written. He noted that the ideal time to transfer the policies will be May 1, when the liability policy is due to renew. Joan inquired about the Johnson Hotel building and the EDA grant and coverage for that. Steve noted that the BID should request that the association add the BID as additional insured on their policy.
- Jolene Bach with Rural Dynamics, Tim Peterson, Ryan Smith and Dani Cloutier with L'Heureux Page Werner and Theresa Stevens, the manager for the Elmore Roberts building, were present to discuss the pocket park project for the Elmore Roberts. Jolene noted that this is a direct result of the Downtown Master Plan. They are interested in creating a community space for children in the building, as there are approximately 60 children under the age of five living in the building. They have a dilapidated playground that has been locked up for the past year. Dani noted that their goal is to establish a stronger perimeter, better sight lines and accessibility so the park is safe for all ages. They would like to add murals to the back of the buildings as well. Ryan noted that there are three components to the project: 1. Playground; 2. Periphery area; 3. Back of the buildings. He noted that their main goal right now is to make people aware that there is a need and they wish to work on this project. Tim added that Forde Nursery is already on board and will donate the landscaping; Rocky Mountain Hardscapes will likely be on board as well. He noted that they estimate the project to cost between \$90 and \$100K and when donations are taken into account they will need approximately \$60 to \$70K to fund it. The Board inquired where the property owners are in the project. Theresa noted that they are on board but she is not sure what amount of funding they will put into the project yet. Doug suggested that they talk to the current Leadership Great Falls class. Alison suggested that they talk with Carol Bronson with Weed & Seed. She added that owner buy-in will be a necessity. Stacey inquired about the time line. Tim noted that they hope to have it complete by summer 2012. Joan noted that the BID will want to know what other funding sources are being used and then the Board can determine how we might be able to help.
- Brett Doney with Great Falls Development Authority reported that he was present to report about the completion of Phase I of the branding initiative and request funding for Phase II of the project. He reminded the Board that "your brand is what people say about you when you aren't there; branding is what you do about it". He noted that Downtown was mentioned throughout the report as it is the heart of the City. Phase I was completed with free staffing support from GFDA, a \$25K commitment from GFDA as well as financial support from the BID, DGFA, MSU-COT, TBID, CVB, and the Chamber. Phase II will take \$25K and GFDA will again provide staffing. In addition to the BID, he is approaching the TBID, the Realtor's Association, the Home Builder's Association and the City for funding Phase II. He noted that this is a long-term effort and it should mean more business downtown; the brand should last 10-15 years. He added that currently the City is showing a leakage of 43% in women's clothing. Brett went on to inform the Board that GFDA is currently in

their five-year strategic plan process as their current plan expires 6/30/12. The proposed new plan calls for \$5M to be raised to cover the five-year plan. This plan does call for a Brand Manager to work long-term on the branding initiative. He summarized by noting that Phase I cost \$46K + \$3K in expenses plus GFDA's staff time. Phase II will cost \$28K and they have \$3,600 in state grant funds set aside to put toward it.

Brant Birkeland noted that he is going to be joining the BID Board meetings on a regular basis.

**III. Approval of minutes from 11-10-11 meeting:** Garry motioned to approve the minutes from the 11/10/11 meeting. Doug seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**

**IV. Financials:** Joan reported that the bank statement just arrived and has not been reconciled yet so the November financials are not ready.

**V. Grant Programs:** Joan reported that the interior grant for Feather Your Nest at 423 Central Avenue has been paid out for \$600; she added that Kandy built an entire wall, not just a counter. Joan reported that Kandy had also completed a Business Incentive Grant application but Phil Kiser, the owner of the property, does not utilize written rental agreements. Phil requested that the Board pay Kandy's 7<sup>th</sup> month of rent, once she's rented for six months – since the grant requirements call for a minimum 6-month rental agreement. The Board noted that they have set criteria and if they made an exception for one applicant they'd have to make exceptions for everyone. Feather Your Nest's Business Incentive Grant was denied, unless a written minimum 6-month rental agreement can be provided. Joan reported that Public Drug has submitted their receipts to have their grants paid out. A check for \$5K has been written to cover their interior grant. All of our grants note that payment may be postponed if funds aren't available so the façade grant of \$34,850 will be paid out at the January board meeting as both CD's renew in January and funding to cover the grant will be available then. Steve commented, in regard to the Business Incentive Grant, he does not feel that a six-month time period is enough of a commitment. Joan added that her original proposal to the Board was to pay the 13<sup>th</sup> month rent for a new business downtown. Garry noted that he thought the grant was created to assist the folks at Westgate Mall and it was never meant to be a permanent grant program. He added that we need to review this grant and decide whether we keep it or not.

Stacey tabled the Interior Grant Program Criteria until the next meeting due to time constraints.

#### **VI. Old Business:**

**Beautification:** Downtown Sound System: Joan noted Good Vibrations was given the go-ahead to re-install the transmitter for us and make sure the rest of the system is functioning properly. The transmitter was received back by Good Vibrations so they are going to get to work on re-installing it and getting the system back up and running.

Joan introduced our new Community Ambassador, Bob Milford, to the Board. She noted that our Community Ambassador is in need of warm winter gear, specifically a warm coat. The Board instructed Joan to send Bob shopping for Carharts and a warm winter coat.

**BID Board:** Stacey noted that she requested that Joan create a tracking sheet for board attendance at our board meetings. The sheet was provided to all present. The attendance policy from the City was also provided to all present – Board members are able to miss up to four (4) meetings per fiscal year. Stacey inquired with Doug if he wished to remain on the Board and would be present for board meetings from here on, as he has already missed four meetings this fiscal year. Doug noted that he wishes to remain on the board and his travel should be wrapped up. Stacey noted that she will contact Hayley and inquire about what she'd like to do as she has missed five meetings this fiscal year, including this one.

**Downtown Action Alliance:** Alison noted that the DAA is still meeting on a regular basis with good attendance. Discussion followed on transitioning the DAA into the soon-to-be formed Downtown Development Partnership. Brant noted that it makes sense to transition but we can't make the decision for DAA members; they will need to be asked. Alison noted that the BID running the DAA will cease upon creation of the Downtown Development Partnership.

**Downtown Master Plan:** Stacey moved this agenda item as it ties directly to the Downtown Action Alliance. Brant reported that a group of individuals met yesterday to discuss the creation of the Urban Renewal Plan and TIF as well as the Downtown Development Partnership. Their next meeting will be January 4<sup>th</sup> and the goal of that meeting is to formalize the DDP. Joan noted that at yesterday's meeting everyone present was asked to review the immediate and short term goals of the master plan and come up with three that could easily be completed in three months. She noted that Brant issued a '100-day Challenge'; completing one master plan strategy in one month, two months and three months. She noted that a key strategy that the BID would like to see completed is the Complete Streets Policy so we can move forward on our CTEP project next summer. The Board asked Joan to send them copies of the strategies. Brant added that it takes 100-days to establish the TIF district and while that is taking place other small projects could also be worked on.

**Downtown Great Falls Association: Marketing:** Joan informed the Board that a formal request has been received from DGFA for \$10K to use for marketing funds for their fiscal year 2012. The Board inquired about how much DGFA is putting in their marketing budget. Joan noted that the marketing budget is \$26,625 and they've requested \$10K from the BID. She added that they have a separate event marketing budget of approximately \$16K that they will also fund. Their goal this upcoming year is that all events cover their own marketing costs. Garry noted that we've asked several questions that DGFA doesn't answer, for example, where is the money going? Joan noted that their budget for \$26,625 notes where they plan to spend those funds. A copy of that budget was provided to those present. Steve suggested that the BID fund no more than 1/3 of DGFA's marketing budget. Stacey noted that the Board has discussed putting more funding into concrete projects and we were provided with one today, the pocket park project at the Elmore Roberts. She added that with the approval of the Downtown Master Plan we'll have the opportunity to put money into more concrete projects. Doug motioned that the BID provide no funding to DGFA for marketing for 2012. Steve seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Joan reminded the Board that the BID/DGFA 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Open House is tonight from 4 to 6pm.

**Downtown Safety:** Joan informed the Board that the next Business Watch meeting is scheduled for January 10<sup>th</sup> and the topic will cover identifying wrongdoers. Joan added that the Business Watch program is still in need of sponsors.

**Great Falls Development Authority:** Joan noted that she is excited about the results of the branding initiative. She informed the board of the 10 attributes that Great Falls has, other cities would give their right arm to have two or three of; she shared the list of attributes with the Board. The end result was that we were informed that Great Falls has a confidence problem. She also read the branding platform to the Board. She reminded the Board that the BID has been an investor of GFDA and as such will also be approached to help fund their new five-year strategic plan on an annual basis. Discussion followed on providing funding for Phase II of the branding initiative. The Board decided to table any decision on the branding initiative until January.

**Insurance:** Joan informed the Board that they have met all of the agents who have expressed an interest in working with the BID. At this point the Board doesn't have to make any decisions until next May but the Board may want to do something sooner so that the Cat will be properly insured. Joan noted that, as previously requested, she had inquired with the City about insuring the Cat for the BID. If the City were to do that the Cat would have to become property of the City and then BID employees would not be able utilize the equipment; the same issue we ran into when we initially approached the City about using their equipment prior to acquiring the Cat.

**Johnson Hotel:** Joan reported that she has been digging through the files trying to find back-up for writing a letter to the tenants in the incubator about length of stay in the incubator. She noted that everything in the file simply says "Downtown Technology Center" there is nothing formal that says 'business incubator'. She added that there are several articles in the file that suggest a 'guideline' ranging from two to five years but there is nothing official that notes that tenants were notified of a time line when they moved in. She reminded the board that the rental agreements for the current tenants are month-to-month and do not note any time limit. Joan added that there have been inquiries but no one is ready to commit. She inquired if the Board would be okay leaving the tenants

as they are now but if someone is interested and wishes to commit a 30-day notice could be given to a tenant who has been there for a long period of time. The Board was in agreement with this suggestion.

**Parking Commission:** Joan reminded everyone that the City will not be patrolling parking on Saturday's until after Christmas, so there is no two-hour time limit on Saturday's and they are also offering free parking the week of 12/19 to 12/24. Garry suggested that a flyer be created that could be distributed. Joan noted that last year DGFA placed ads in the Tribune but they are out of marketing money for this year. Alison informed the Board that the BID had previously approached the parking commission to request meter bags that noted free parking that could be utilized on holidays and the parking commission had denied the request. Joan reported that the City has done a press release and we'll continue to make folks aware via the social media avenues available to us.

**TIF Funds:** Joan noted that Greg Doyon had sent an e-mail yesterday in response to the BID's letter about using funds from the TIF that sunsetted in 2009; the Board was copied on that e-mail. Greg's e-mail noted that the TIF fund does not have any additional funds to use and "There was some hope that additional revenue would be generated before the TIF expired, but that revenue was not realized." Joan noted that Wendy Thomas had also called to explain and had commented that the City appreciates the innovative ideas the BID keeps coming up with.

**Work Plan:** Joan noted that she continues to follow the work plan.

- VII. **New Business:** Joan reminded the Board that Greg Doyon has requested input from the community on what attributes the new police chief should have. She noted that Alison had sent an e-mail to Greg noting the importance of a downtown friendly police chief; a copy of that e-mail had been forwarded to the Board. Discussion followed on the BID sending a letter to Greg about what attributes the BID would like to see. The Board instructed Joan to e-mail Greg that the BID feels a downtown oriented police chief is vital.

Joan informed the Board that she is on the radio the first Tuesday of every month at 9:20am on KINX 102.7. The new owners of Star Radio (formerly Fisher Radio) have created a Great Falls highlight program and they have different guests lined up for every month. The BID is scheduled at 9:20am on the first Tuesday of each month and it is between two to four minutes in length. Joan noted that she continues to encourage the radio and DGFA to get a time set up for them as she has felt that she's talked more about DGFA's events than BID things; she added that she's going to work on changing that and focus on BID. She noted that it is very gray outside of this office as to who does what but it's DGFA's job to bring people downtown while it's the BID's job to make it nice and welcoming for when they come; this monthly radio spot will hopefully begin to help folks understand the difference.

VIII. **Public Comment:**

IX. **Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 11:57am.

Stacey Schaefer, Chair

Joan Redeen, Staff

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_