

Business Improvement District
318 Central Avenue
Via ZOOM – Recording available via the City of Great Falls records request
September 10, 2020

Board Present: Max Grebe, Jason Kunz
Board Present via Zoom: Trista Besich, Karen Reiff, Neal DuBois, Sherrie Arey
Board Absent: Alison Fried
Staff Present: Joan Redeen
Guests: Christian Leinhauser, Brett Gaare

- I. **Call to order & Roll Call:** Max called the meeting to order at 9:05am; roll call of all present, a quorum was established.
- II. **Guests:** No guests present wished to address the Board, at this time.
- III. **BID Board: Conflict of Interest:** No board members had a conflict of interest, at this time. Joan reported that she provided the listing of the Board to the board via email. Joan reported that Karen Reiff was appointed to the Board. She informed Karen that she has a board orientation packet for her. She added that if any of the new board members have any feedback on the orientation packet to please provide that to her. Max noted that board members emails are subject to subpoena and the City attorney had, at one time, recommended that board members have a separate email that is used exclusively for BID related emails. He added that most board members do not choose to do this and simply use their regular email addresses, but it is an option for new board members to consider. Joan reminded the Board that we are a public entity and therefore subject to public meeting laws. She added that when an email is sent out to the Board, as a whole, responses should be directed solely to Joan and not to the Board. If a board member replies to all that establishes a quorum and is considered a meeting.
- IV. **Approval of minutes from 8-13-20 Board meeting:** Jason motioned to approve the meeting minutes from the 8/13/20 Board meeting, as presented. Trista seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**
- V. **Financials:**
Monthly Financials: The Board received the July financials via e-mail. There being no further discussion on the financials, Neal motioned to approve the 7/31/20 financial statements which include the Balance Sheet, P&L, and the P&L/Budget comparison. Sherrie seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**
Joan informed the Board that she has new signature cards for the bank account at Stockman Bank. She reminded the Board that the BID policy has been that all board members are signers, except the Treasurer and that two signatures are required on checks.
Joan provided the BID Budget versus Actual as of 9/9/20; she informed the Board that she provides this report every month, so the Board is kept informed of where we are in regard to budget versus actual. Joan informed the Board that the audit has been complete, a draft of the audit was emailed to the Board for their review. Jason motioned to move \$40,000 from Salaries to Contract Services on the budget for FY2021, as recommended by the auditor. Neal seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**
Joan introduced the Board to Brett Gaare, the BID's auditor with Douglas Wilson. Brett noted that an audit must be done annual as we are a special purpose district of the City; he added that it is governmental accounting standards. He noted that the audit went well, he pointed out the cash is much less than the prior year. The self-watering pots were added to Equipment; he pointed out the Contract Services for FY20; he noted that the Special Projects & Business Grants is quite high and is not sustainable as the sole source of income for the BID is approximately \$250K in assessments. He pointed out that they've added a note entitled Subsequent Events that notates the Resolution that went into effect on 7/1/2020 in regard to board members and grant programs and the fact that all grant programs were

suspended for the current fiscal year. Joan reported that the Audit will be provided to the City upon approval by the Board. Trista motioned to approve the audit for fiscal year 2020, as presented. Jason seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**

VI. Grant Program Committee:

The grant schedule for FY 2021 was provided to the board. Current grants approved remaining to still be paid out total \$329,214.00.

Joan reported that a letter had been sent out to DSB Tower, in regard to their façade grant, to get an update on the project from them. She read the letter to the Board; and noted that she provided a deadline of 9/4 to the owner to respond. She added that there had been no response to the letter, so she emailed the owner yesterday and he responded, "...I did receive the letter and apologize for not responding. Due to COVID, things slowed considerably and we had to use funds to finish our elevator installation. Hope to be able to restart the exterior project in the next six months or so. Not sure how long you can hold the grant funds, but would still like to utilize them for that part of our project." Joan inquired what the Board wishes to do in regard to this façade grant. Neal inquired if we have a history of denying applications for failure to follow procedure; Joan noted that the Board has been lenient. She added that letters requesting updates have never had a deadline, so that is a new addition. An update, with an estimated completion date, must be in writing, to satisfy our auditor. Neal noted that this response was not sufficient; Joan added that she did invite the owner to attend today's board meeting. She noted that has been a recent conversation among the Grant Review Committee, that property owners should attend Board meetings to discuss their projects and bring the Board up to date. Discussion followed, a comparison was made to Kellergeist and the updates the property owners provided at the last board meeting. Kellergeist received the same update request letter. Sherrie inquired if the Board were to rescind the façade grant for DSB Tower would the Board entertain an appeal; it was noted that the grant programs currently do not exist. Max inquired about the BID adopting a policy that without a formal response or construction starting that the Board will automatically rescind grants. Joan noted that is already the policy, all grant programs since 2016 have noted that if significant construction does not commence within a noted time period the grant will be rescinded by the Board. She added that her only concern is that our grant programs currently don't exist so property owners can't reapply at this time when they are officially ready to commence the work. Max recommended that the Board rescind the grant and that the Board be willing to entertain an appeal. Trista suggested that it sets bad precedent, the application and letter had clear deadlines with set expectations and neither have been met and she doesn't feel that the Board should start managing appeals. Neal noted, that on its own terms, the grant is expired. Sherrie added that based on the information that the BID Board has received the grant has expired and will not be extended. She added that based on the update from the property owner, it does not appear that the project has viability within our designated timelines, so the Board should not extend it. Joan noted that her typical process when a grant comes up on the grant schedule has been to send a letter requesting an update on the project with an updated estimate for completion. The letter has recently had the addition of a deadline to respond. Sherrie recommended that applicants be encouraged to attend the Board meeting where their grant(s) will be discussed. Max recommended that we adopt a formal policy for our grant extension process.

Max covered the remaining grants listed on the Grant Schedule and when they are due for updates. Joan added that the next grant to address, based on the grant schedule, is Faster Basset's interior grant. It was noted that in March 2020 they updated the Board that planned to open in the next six months, so their grant was extended to September 2020, at that time. Max recommended that we adopt the formal policy for our grant extension process in October, letters will then be sent out to DSB Tower and Faster Basset, based on that policy.

Joan reminded the Board that the grant program committee consists of Jason, Trista, Alison, and Travis Neil. The committee met on 8/6 and again on 9/3. She noted that the Committee encourages the Board to do some strategic planning. From that the Committee wants to know if Grant Programs jump to the

top of the list, do they become something that this Board wishes to continue to have and offer. The Committee has three options, 1. Continue to move forward with adapting changes to the programs; 2. Continue with the changes as presented or 3. Continue with no grant programs. She added that her recommendations, if any grant programs come back, are to bring back the Interior grant with a maximum of \$5K, and Business Incentive with a lower max. Adding to the grant criteria a maximum lifetime cap per parcel, and the question that remains in regard to this is whether that lifetime cap goes into effect when the grant programs return or retroactively. She noted that during the Grant Program Committee meeting Jason recommended that a survey be sent out to our property owners to seek their input. Joan noted that we should send out a survey, hold a strategic planning session and review the survey results and the Grant Review Committee then take the survey results and the strategic planning process into account when making their final recommendations. Joan asked that board members email her suggestions for four to five questions to be included in a survey. Max recommended that we also highlight what the BID does.

Joan reminded the Board that since the grant programs were suspended on 2/13/20, six grant applications were received after that date, all applicants were advised that grant programs were suspended. She has been holding an incomplete Interior grant application for Calvary Chapel of Cascade County received 2/14; received on 3/6 complete Interior and Façade applications were received from The Newberry; received on 3/11 a complete Interior application was received from Harlos Spa; and on 3/13 incomplete Façade and Interior grant applications from Cyrus Investments. She presented a draft letter to the Board that could be sent advising these applicants that the grant programs are suspended. The Board instructed Joan to email the draft letter for comments and then send it out.

VII. **Old Business:**

Beautification: Pressure Washer: Joan inquired with the Board about the BID acquiring a pressure washer. At this time, the BID contracts with Hotsy Wy-Mont to remove graffiti. In some instances, the BID could remove some graffiti issues faster if we had a pressure washer. An example was given of recent graffiti on the road. Hotsy provided a bid for some machines, ranging in price from \$895 to \$1,095. The Board was not interested in this idea, they wished for us to continue to contract with Hotsy. **Grffiti:** Joan reported that Hotsy removed a great deal of graffiti on the Underpass mural and a few other locations.

ArtsFest MONTANA 2020: Joan reported that ArtsFest occurred. She added that it is an economic driver and is an important event to continue. She noted that the BID provided lunch to the artists, daily and she used Downtown members for those lunches. There are some remaining T-shirts if anyone has any interest. Some buildings have already been identified for next year so the Board can anticipate a budgetary request to support ArtsFest 2021.

Downtown Great Falls Association: Joan reported that DGFA will be holding their final brothel tour this Saturday, tickets are still available. Craft Beer Weekend is 9/17 to 9/20; there will be a street party on Thursday, tap takeovers on Friday, a Golf Scramble on Saturday, and the Beer Mile on Sunday. The Call to Artists is out for Stroll Button artwork and the deadline is 9/15.

Downtown Partnership: Calvary Chapel: Joan presented a draft letter in regard to the Calvary Chapel that would be sent to the City Commission. This is specifically in regard to the CUP application as well as the code ordinance change that would allow for alcohol within close proximity to the Church. It is anticipated that this item will be on the City Commission's agenda for Tuesday 9/15. The Board approved the letter, Joan will send it to the City Commission.

TIF: Joan informed the Board that conversations are taking place with the City in regard to potential TIF programs. Some ideas that have been discussed are TIF funds for a façade grant program and potentially for tree work. She is exploring submitting an application for TIF funds for tree work within the BID, as the BID did back in 2009. Joan noted that a gentleman who used to do tree work for Tilleraas has approached the BID to trim the trees; but Joan noted that she'd prefer to seek TIF funds rather than utilize BID funding. The Board was in agreement on seeking TIF funding for tree work. Joan added that

the other area that is being explored for TIF funding is safety compliance issues for property owners that could potentially include fire suppression and ADA compliance.

Wayfinding: Joan reported that Wayfinding is on target. The Core team meets this morning and the Steering Committee meets next week; a preview of the sign design is on the agenda for those two meetings. It is estimated that the Wayfinding planning process will finish up by November. The final funding was approved by the City Commission, \$5,050 from the West Bank Landing TIF district.

Downtown Safety Alliance: Joan reported that the Safety Alliance did not meet in September; she added that she will continue to cancel the meetings until the Alliance becomes more task oriented. She asked that the Board come up with safety related tasks that can be assigned to the BID, DGFA, NWGF and the Neighborhood Council. She reported on the status of the Race Relations committee with GFPD that she is serving on. She noted that Chief Bowen has already modified the PD's policies, procedures, and trainings as a result of this committee. They are working on creating a traffic court, similar to the Veteran's Court. The goal of this program would be to guide individuals who meet income eligibility requirements and help them avoid penalties in regard to traffic citations.

Great Falls Development Authority: Christian is tracking 35 projects; this includes leads and 18 active projects. Yarn & Honey has moved downtown; Farmer's Daughter Fiber is expanding and moving in next door; P2P Mobile is moving into the 600 block; Luna Coffee is opening on 5th Street; and Falls Print Works has taken over Blend's on 5th. There are four companies that are looking to expand; five new SBDC clients have been added; there are 21 businesses being targeted for business attraction. He reported that Keith Cron, with the Metropolitan building, was approved for TIF funding for his sidewalk and demolition work. He was denied for the first suppression and ADA compliance, but his application has prompted conversation among the City Commissioners, so those programs are being drafted. They continue to work on their website content. He is working on a virtual Invest Downtown event that will be held on October 13th, it will be a one-hour session format. Barbara Wold will be doing five workshops and consulting with five of our local businesses, this will take place throughout October.

Parking Commission: Joan reported that tomorrow is PARK(ing) Day, it is our 7th year we've participated in this (previously) national event. Tilleraas will be setting this up at the corner of 2nd St N and Central Ave. The next meeting of the Parking Commission is 9/17. The Commission is proceeding forward with re-installation of meters on side streets and procurement of pay stations on Central.

Personnel: Joan reported that the BID truck has a recall on it; the closest Mitsubishi dealer is in Billings. The recall has to do with the passenger airbag; the vehicle never has a passenger and should rarely be exceeding 25mph as it is always downtown. The Board acknowledged the recall and the issue with addressing it.

Work Plan - FY 2021: Joan acknowledged that the Work Plan, as always, continues to be worked.

VIII. **New Business: Montana Downtown Conference:** Joan reported that that Montana Downtown Conference will be held virtually, likely the week of November 9th. Registration is free, she encouraged all of the Board to register. The Montana Main Street program is covering the costs related to the Conference. It will be five hours total, online and accessible after the fact, as well.

Grant Extension Policy: As noted under Grants, the Board instructed Joan to draft a Grant Extension policy.

IX. **Public Comment:** No public comment, at this time.

X. **Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 10:54am.

Max Grebe, Chair

Joan Redeen, Staff

Date: _____

Date: _____