

Business Improvement District
318 Central Avenue
Hybrid - In-Person and via ZOOM
Recording available via the City of Great Falls records request
April 20, 2022

Board Present: Jason Kunz, Neal DuBois, Sherrie Arey, Alison Fried, Karen Reiff
Board Absent: Michelle Bebbington, Max Grebe
Staff Present: Joan Redeen
Guests: Christian Leinhauser, Joe McKenney, Kellie Pierce

- I. **Call to order & Roll Call:** Jason called the meeting to order at 10:09am; roll call of all present, a quorum was established.
- II. **Guests/Public Comment:** No guests wished to address the board at this time.
- III. **BID Board:** Conflict of Interest: No board members expressed a conflict of interest, at this time.
- IV. **Approval of minutes from 3-10-22 Board meeting & Work Session:** Sherrie motioned to approve the meeting minutes from the 3/10/22 BID Board meeting and Work Session, as presented. Karen seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**
- V. **Financials:** Budget FY2023: Joan noted that the draft budget will be presented to the Board within the next month. The Board will have time to discuss it during the May board meeting and will need to take formal action on the budget at the June board meeting.
Monthly Financials: The Board received the March financials via e-mail. There being no further discussion on the financials, Alison motioned to approve the 3/31/22 financial statements which include the Balance Sheet, P&L, and the P&L/Budget comparison. Karen seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**
Budget vs Actual was presented to the Board, through April 20.
All board members present signed new signature cards, updating the bank account due to the legal change of name for one board member.
- VI. **Grant Programs:** Joan asked the Board if they'd like to bring back the Interior Grant and the Business Incentive Grants on July 1; she noted that she is proceeding forward in this manner so if the Board wishes something more or less, they need to make staff aware of that. She added that she is doing what the Grants Review Committee recommended. The Grants Review Committee recommended bringing back the Interior Grant with a maximum payout of \$5,000 and the Business Incentive Grant with a maximum payout of \$2,500. She noted that she and Sherrie have been working to budget for the Board to allow for ten of each of those grants in the upcoming fiscal year. Joan reminded the Board they can change anything they want, anytime they want, it simply needs to be allowed and followed by how the budget is set and approved. Discussion followed on those properties and businesses that have opened since February 2020. The Board has discussed applying for ARPA Funds to propose a grant program that would fund the businesses that have opened since that date. The Board also noted that our grant programs are never guaranteed for any property or business owner.

Neal Dubois arrived for the Board meeting at 10:17am.

- VII. **Old Business:**

Beautification: ArtsFest: Joan reported that there are two Indigenous Artists lined up, we are confirmed on that grant that would provide for up to three Indigenous artists, so we continue to seek out a third. A grant application is being submitted to the state from one of our local Great Falls artists to fund that artists participation in ArtsFest. Artists are being confirmed and building locations are being sought. Sponsorship letters are being send out. Joan is drafting a TIF application for the alley lighting project of the ten locations where murals are currently located. Sherrie inquired about how much property owners will be required to provide for the lighting; Joan responded that the TIF application would cover the costs of the light fixtures and installation of lights, the property owners will be responsible for the monthly electrical bill.

Flowers: Joan reported that Tilleraas has provided a bid for hanging baskets and rock planters and watering for about \$11K, this would be half of the quantity of flowers we have had in the past. We will be adding flowers to the 700 block of Central. The flowers would solely be located on Central this summer. Jason noted that if flowers were installed on his block he will water them. Joan said that she has instructed Tilleraas to provide the invoice for flowers by 6/30 and the remainder of the funding would be in FY23.

Sound System: Joan noted that The Newberry is still expressing interest but there was nothing more to report at this time.

BID Vehicles: Joan reported that she added this item to the agenda as the Board has previously discussed selling the BID vehicles. She noted that she will be using the truck this summer; both vehicles are currently listed as in storage mode for insurance purposes, she added that she is the only one on the insurance eligible to drive either vehicle at this time. She added that she looked up the Arctic Cat, it is a 2008 that the BID acquired in 2011 for \$7,845. The current value on the Cat is approximately \$5K. Clean Slate has noted that removal of the wrap is not difficult. The Board noted they would be in favor of selling it.

City of Great Falls – ARPA Funds: Joan reported that she, Kellie, Alison, and Sherrie met with Tom Hazen from the City yesterday regarding ARPA funds and what the BID may be eligible to pursue. The key is to address negative economic impact of the pandemic; the aid must go to specific industries such as Hospitality, Tourism, Hotel and Travel. If you were planning to do something before the pandemic and didn't do it because of the pandemic may be a project that is deemed eligible for these funds. Joan noted that the BID budget pre-pandemic was \$515K and during the pandemic was \$316K. The BID didn't install flowers, we lowered our trash removal, snow removal, funding for ArtsFest and employees were let go. All these items took a hit because of the pandemic, so we may be able to pursue recouping these funds. One possibility discussed was the alley lighting project. During the meeting with Tom the discussion was held on Pedlets, and Tom noted that any business that may wish to pursue funding for a Pedlet would have had to be open prior to the pandemic, Joan noted that the businesses that have inquired about pedlets were not in business in March 2020. There is still the thinking that pedlets provide for outdoor dining, which fits with ARPA fund guidelines. Joan indicated that Tom also discussed CDBG funding, the BID may be eligible for pursuing CDBG funding. Joe noted that you need to look at a loss of income due to COVID, where you were and then saw a loss and can justify that loss you can ask for a grant to make up for that loss. Joan stated that she'd like to have a small committee consisting of Joan, Sherrie, and Alison to continue to work on the possibilities. It was noted the deadline for the application is July 15, 2022.

Downtown Great Falls Association: Kellie reported that they are prepping for Craft Beer Week, June 5-11. It kicks off with the Obstacle Course on Sunday Gibson Park, Trivia Night Monday at Enbar, etc. Many events will be held that week and it wraps up with the Golf Scramble Friday and Brew Fest Saturday. They continue to seek sponsorships. They already have 20 breweries confirmed and are seeking over 40. Cruisin' the Drag is going to happen on May 7th, it is being done by a private group as Lithia will no longer be doing it. The private group is looking at how to put it all together.

Downtown Partnership:

Downtown TIF District: Joan reported that \$470,00 was previously approved for work on the parking garage, \$183,785 of this has not been spent. The new TIF programs has \$500K designated annually for the three programs, they have approved \$143,105 this fiscal year. The Civic Center façade project bond debt service is \$412,425 annually. The balance of the Downtown TIF is approximately \$3.5 million. Christian noted that they will be hosting another educational session about the TIF programs in May. He added that a building that has a condominium setting with an association will not be allowed to have individual parcels apply for these programs. He noted that there is an individual who is buying a parcel in a condominium so that individual is not eligible for the façade program; they need the Code Compliance program as well. Christian added that City staff has noted that they see the intent of the program to go towards the building, itself, and not individual parcels. Joan will inquire with the City regarding this.

Wayfinding: Joan reported that the contractor is out digging holes for the signs. MDT has not given permission on all 57 motorist signs at this time, they have approved the location of 32 of the signs and the contractor is working with them on the minor adjustments needed for final approval on the remaining signs. The 20 pedestrian signs are all on City rights-of-way, so those holes are being dug as well.

Downtown Safety Alliance: Joan reported that the Downtown Safety Alliance did not meet in April, the next meeting is scheduled for the first Tuesday of May at 9am.

Expansion: Joan reported that the BID expansion effort was approved last night at the City Commission meeting. Twenty additional parcels will be brought into the BID on July 1, 2022. She added that Jason has already expressed interest in continuing expansion efforts. If the Board wishes to pursue additional parcels it will be the same calendar we followed during this round. The BID can petition property owners from November 2022 to January 2023; petitions would be due to the City in February 2023 with any potential new parcels being added to the BID on July 1, 2024. Alison noted that we had twenty parcels in this recent expansion effort, with two voting no and two not voting at all (which constitutes as a no vote), 16 voted in favor of expansion reflecting an approval rating of 71.21%.

Great Falls Area Chamber of Commerce Low-Costs Airfare Initiative: Joan provided an update from Shane Etwiler with the Chamber. They set a goal of \$500K to \$1M this year; they have raised over \$600k so far and continue to seek additional partners. They will not know until late spring/early summer 2022 year if they are awarded the SCASD Grant that these funds are sought to match. When the Chamber last sought partners for a SCASD Grant the BID pledged \$5,000 in 2019 for this effort. Joan noted that she needs to know the Board's intention so that it can be budgeted for if the Board chooses to pledge this time around. Sherrie noted that NWGF has supported this with a pledge of \$5K and she'd like to see the BID support it. Joe added that his background is the hospitality industry and the Tavern Association pledged \$12K towards this effort. The Board would like to see \$5K budgeted for this item for Fiscal Year 2023.

Great Falls Development Authority: Christian updated the Board on his report; a copy of which was emailed to the Board with their meeting packet. He reported The Wild Hare has opened; Life in Bloom has opened in Times Square; Harvest Craft Kitchen has expanded and now has their second location downtown as they are running the kitchen in The Wild Hare. He added that last week he had two BRE's and has one tomorrow. Regarding business attraction, he has two restaurants inquiring about downtown and he is working on some housing possibilities. Invest Downtown is being held at The Newberry and is scheduled in October; Fire Within is being held in the Haute Hive on May 19th. Christian added that the C-PACE presentation by Seth Lutter in Billings during the Montana Downtown Conference was a great presentation. GFDA will be having a training on this. Christian is setting up a training for downtown building owners.

Joan noted that Jason Nitschke will be presenting to the BID Board next month on Accelerate Great Falls.

Montana Downtown Conference: Joan reported Jason and Alison both attended on behalf of the BID; Joan, Kellie and Christian also attended. She added it was a great conference. The C-PACE program was fantastic to hear about; there are three counties in the state that have approved the program so far and Cascade County is one of the three. Jason noted that he heard a good deal about one-way conversions; Alison mentioned that they discussed their safety issues, Billings has identified 93 repeat offenders and what that costs their police department. Joan added that the 93 frequent users of the system cost an average of \$111K per person, so the City of Billings is estimating that their police department is spending over \$10M annually. She noted that GFPD has been working with Billings and San Diego, which is where Billings based their program on. Billings noted that they can't state they have 100% success rate, but they have helped more than half of the identified frequent users and they are living independently. Alison noted that there are some things that the BID should discuss. Joan noted that the next Downtown Conference may be held this fall to get this conference back on the fall schedule, or it may be held again in Fall 2023.

Parking Commission: Joan reported that the Parking Commission did not hold an April meeting; they currently have one opening on the Commission. Joe noted that importance of serving on the various commissions the City has and asked the Board to help spread the word about the vacancy.

Personnel: There was nothing to report at this time.

Work Plan FY2023: Joan noted a draft will be presented to the Board for the May meeting; formal approval will have to take place by the June meeting.

VIII. **New Business:** Alison stated there are some items that were discussed during the Montana Downtown Conference that the BID should be discussing that don't fit into the agenda. It involves visioning and things other cities are doing that we should be doing. Some of those items include the safety program that Billings PD has implemented and the one-way conversion that Billings is working on. She noted that there is federal funding that may be available for one-way conversion. She wanted to know if the Board wished to have these as goals to work toward. She suggested leaving Montana Downtown Conference on the agenda and discuss three key points we'd like to pursue that we learned about.

IX. **Public Comment:** There was no public comment at this time.

X. **Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 11:10am.

Jason Kunz, Chair

Joan Redeen, Staff

Date: _____

Date: _____