

Business Improvement District
318 Central Avenue
Hybrid - In-Person and via ZOOM
Recording available via the City of Great Falls records request
October 12, 2023

Board Present: Jason Kunz, Sherrie Arey, Alison Fried, Michelle Houghton, Keith Kron
Board Absent: Neal DuBois, Max Grebe
Staff Present: Kellie Pierce
Guests: Christian Leinhauser, Tony Houtz, Allen Meadors

- I. **Call to order & Roll Call:** Jason called the meeting to order at 9:03am; roll call of all present, a quorum was established.
- II. **Guests/Public Comment:** There was no public comment at this time.
- III. **BID Board: Conflict of Interest:** Jason noted that his building is one of the buildings included in the alley lighting project, as are Sherrie and Alison, as well. Sherrie added that she is the representative for the owner of her building, and she will not personally gain financially with this project.
- IV. **Approval of minutes from 9/14/23 Board meeting:** Michelle motioned to approve the meeting minutes from the 9/14/23 Board meeting, as presented. Keith seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**
- V. **Financials: Audit:** Kellie reported that the auditor has provided the final copies of the audit. Keith motioned to approve the audit for FY2023, as presented. Sherrie seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**
CD/Money Market/Savings options: Kellie reminded the Board that there had been discussion about transferring funds to an interest earning account. She noted that with the wayfinding transactions she held off on making that transaction. However, the City Commission approved the BID assessments in September and the BID budget will be over \$40K in assessment income due to the reassessment of all of the parcels. Kellie inquired if the BID would need to do a budget amendment, the City has noted that if the Board chooses to put the excess into savings and not spend it there would be no need for a budget amendment. The Board requested that Kellie come back with some ideas on what to do with the additional funds.
Monthly Financials: The Board received the September financials via email. There being no further discussion on the September financials, Keith motioned to approve the 9/30/23 financial statements which include the Balance Sheet, P&L, and the P&L/Budget comparison. Michelle seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**
- VI. **BID Business:**
Beautification: 1st Ave N Underpass: Kellie noted there is nothing new to report on this.
ArtsFest: Kellie reported that the expenses were down; about \$76K was spent in FY22 and \$59K in FY23.
Alley Lighting Project: Kellie reported that Tony and Allen are present to discuss the Alley Lighting Project; the bids came in much higher than the TIF funds allocated toward this project. The BID was approved for \$125K TIF Funds to light ten (10) buildings. Tony shared that the preliminary estimate the BID received was what the TIF request was created from; the bids came in much higher. The contractors noted that there was a huge difference in the approach of what the contractors thought versus how we think it should be done. Allen noted that he designed it with the same light fixtures used in Missoula. The contractors had priced out the umbrella lights, not strip lighting. The biggest difference was the fixtures themselves. The bids were from United Electric and Liberty Electric; with Liberty coming in lower but still higher than the TIF funding available. The majority of the cost difference was in the fixtures. Discussion followed on possible options to pursue, noting that the top priority is safety.

Discussion followed on inquiring directly with lighting distributors to seek lower prices; inquiring with Northwestern Energy to support the project. Tony noted that they need direction from the Board; do they prefer to prioritize a few buildings being done; or a hybrid and reduce the fixtures and do six properties. He added that they don't want to prioritize the properties for the BID, that will be up to the Board. Keith noted that we need to decide based upon the location and the intent; noting that the key locations should be the alleys. The Board reviewed images of the locations of murals that were to be included in this project. The Board noted they'd like to look into finding the fixtures at a lower price, if possible, and look at reduction in linear footage of lighting on some of the buildings.

Downtown Great Falls Association: Kellie reported that they are working on the Christmas Stroll and the Montana Downtown Conference. There will be no ghost tours this year as the trolley has been sold outside of Great Falls. The Stroll buttons will be out for sale by Halloween. Ladies Night is in November; they have 16 confirmed participants. The early pay discount ends tomorrow, the fee goes up after tomorrow.

Downtown Partnership: Downtown Lighting: Kellie reported that there is not a lot of movement on this yet.

Downtown TIF District: Kellie reported that the DDP is getting reimbursements from the TIF for operating costs.

Wayfinding - Kiosks: Kellie reported that they are currently being manufactured; all locations have been identified. This project is being funded by the Montana Main Street Grant.

Parking Commission: Kellie noted that Brock Cherry, the new director of the Planning & Community Development Department is taking an analytical view of the entire program; no meeting will be called until he's had a chance to complete his review. Brock is on board with sticking with a three-person advisory commission.

Downtown Safety Alliance: Kellie reported that the DSA met on October 3rd; there was a presentation on the safety levy. They continue to meet the first Tuesday of every month.

Expansion: Kellie talked with the City Manager's office about getting on a Work Session agenda with the City Commission. It was noted that the Work Session could be scheduled sometime after January 2025.

Grant Programs: Kellie reported that there are no grants at this time.

Great Falls Development Alliance: Christian reported that they have four new projects in process now; hoping to make announcements on some of these at Ignite in January. Rib N Chop House will open this month. He reported that he had a great BRE meeting yesterday, met with a new business owner who is interested in C-PACE. They also had a target in town who is excited about what is happening Downtown. He shared that the RFP closed on the Downtown Market assessment; they received eight proposals, they've compiled them and will get them sent out to the DDP selection committee to begin the grading of the proposals. The purpose is to create a road map; they want things they can implement. Invest Downtown is being directed to developers. There will be two panels: the first panel will be tools & resources; and the second panel will be downtown market opportunities. He noted that DDP will be presenting their annual numbers, as well. He added that he wants the developers to hear how the DDP is valuable to them. He shared that they would have one announcement.

Hello Lamp Post: Kellie reported that they are looking at adding in the content for the new murals. She noted that the stickers that are out will probably need to be replaced in the spring. She thinks that next year they should put stickers on walls, instead of on the sidewalk. Board members noted that they like the sidewalk stickers.

Montana Downtown Conference: Kellie reported that they have approximately 60 registrations. She noted that there is turnover around the state and many offices are staffed by one employee who can't leave their office unattended. She will email the Board the agenda. Kellie shared that she wanted to recap the workshop she attended in Washington. The National Main Street is changing their accreditation standards. It is a big deal to be an accredited community and we need to highlight that more. They want there to be one common goal that everyone can work towards. She noted that our

downtown's accreditation process renews in May 2024. She noted that once the ball is rolling in this, she would like to host a joint board meeting with BID, DGFA and DDP.

Personnel: Jason, Neal, and Sherrie are working on this; it will remain an action item for next month.

Streetscape: Kellie noted there was nothing new to report on this at this time. Kellie reported on the BACI group; they met regarding the rendering of the proposed downtown park. The question that came up was who would own it and maintain it if it were to be created.

Work Plan FY2023: Kellie reported that she continues to work on the Work Plan for FY 2024.

VII. **New Business:** Snow Removal: Kellie noted that Hudson's Trash Removal would like to bid the snow removal work.

Trash Removal: Kellie inquired when the Board wants to go down to one day a week on trash removal, adding that it is normally in October. The Board noted that it is up to Kellie.

VIII. **Public Comment:** Christian noted that a building was tagged with graffiti.

Sherrie shared that the Baatz groundbreaking will be held from 10am to 12pm during the Montana Downtown Conference; Kellie added that it will follow the housing panel being held on Thursday morning.

IX. **Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 10:30am.

Jason Kunz, Chair

Kellie Pierce, Staff

Date: _____

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