



Board of Directors
Public Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, May 17, 2023 | 5:30 PM
City Council Chambers
312 E. Charles Street, Hammond, LA 70401

I. CALL TO ORDER: Elsbet Hollywood

II. Roll Call: Michelle Kendall, Executive Director

Todd Delaune	Present
John Exnicios	Absent
Elsbet Hollywood	Present
Chelsea Kessenich	Present
Kali Norton	Present
Cassie Ragan	Present
Evan Singer	Present

Old Business

1. Approval of the April 2023 financial report

Elsbet Hollywood made a motion, seconded by Cassie Ragan, to approve the April 2023 financial report as written.

Todd Delaune	Yes
John Exnicios	Absent
Elsbet Hollywood	Yes
Chelsea Kessenich	Yes
Kali Norton	Yes
Cassie Ragan	Yes
Evan Singer	Yes

Motion carried. Yes: 6 | No: 0 | Abstain: 0 | Absent: 1

2. Approval of the meeting minutes from April 19, 2023

Evan Singer made a motion, seconded by Kali Norton, to approve the minutes from April 19, 2023 as written.

Todd Delaune	Yes
John Exnicios	Absent
Elsbet Hollywood	Yes
Chelsea Kessenich	Yes
Kali Norton	Yes
Cassie Ragan	Yes



Evan Singer

Yes

Motion carried. Yes: 6 | No: 0 | Abstain: 0 | Absent: 1

New Business:

1. Discussion of DDD Fund Balance

Ms. Kendall instructed the group that in front of them was a summary of the DDD general fund balance. She pulled history from 2023 through 2016 to view year net activity, end of the year balances and where financing came from for certain projects. In a previous discussion amongst Ms. Kendall and Mr. Singer, they agreed to create a baseline where the current fund balance is, how long it has taken to accrue, and an overview on how the budget operates every year. Ms. Kendall informed that historically, the DDD over budgeted unless they are dedicated funds to a capital project. The reason there is a deficit for the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2024 is due to the Hammond Welcome Sign Project – the fund balance is being used towards this in order to complete it. Ms. Hollywood questioned if property taxes goes towards the fund balance. Ms. Kendall informed this is not the case and explained money left over from budgeting for the fiscal year goes towards the fund balance. Ms. Kendall also reminded the board that she provided a fund balance history for loan programs, a topic to be discussed next on the agenda. Ms. Kessenich then asked to know what the benchmark is for the minimum and maximum for the DDD fund balance. Ms. Kendall replied with her understanding that any general government has at least two months of operating expenses in a savings account which is roughly \$40,000 for the DDD. Ms. Hollywood noted that although the fund balance has been depleted over the years, the money from tax-payer dollars is being used efficiently to improve the city instead of sitting an account. Ms. Ragan continued that although the budget is not itemized, the DDD is also using the money to match or share costs in sidewalk improvements, improve plant-life and overall use the money to invest back into the downtown community. Ms. Kessenich pointed out that the string-lighting that are fixed along the top of some downtown buildings need improvement and wanted to know if that is something the fund balance can be used for. Ms. Hollywood replied that it is her belief it would be up to the board to make that decision. Ms. Ragan stated that the DDD took on the beginning part of the project but it would then become the responsibility of the building owner's to maintain it. It was then questioned if this could fall underneath a façade improvement category. Ms. Kendall gave perspective on the fund budget and informed that the current savings is most likely 26-30 years' worth of savings to get to this point. Mr. Delaune reiterated that a Hammond taxpayer wants to see that their money is being utilized for something constructive and he believes this is what is being done.

2. Discussion of DDD Loan Program and Application

Ms. Kendall provided an existing application and a revised application with edits from Mr. Singer for the board. Ms. Kendall believes the program has evolved over time but needs to be more simple and feasible for applicants. She informed that parts of the application still have standards set by USDA requirements. Mr. Singer informed that the changes made to the application would not go against USDA guidelines. Ms. Norton asked for a quick overview of said changes. Mr. Singer explained that the application was edited to a more simplified version and aspects of the application that were unnecessary were removed. Ms. Norton inquired to know if any changes included terms, funding, or certain agreements. Mr. Singer said a few rates were increased to see more net gain. Ms. Norton then



asked to know the purpose of having a profit from the loan program. Ms. Hollywood informed that the current minimum interest rate is 1.5% but for real estate, it is 2 points below Wall Street Journal prime. Discussed next was real estate loans and that there are few recent applicants for it. Ms. Kendall informed that their interest rate is .75% because the current minimum was not adopted until after some application adjustments. Ms. Kendall referenced the paper in front of members and explained that the information provided showcased interest rates for different types of loans. Across the board, interest rates would be increased. Ms. Hollywood commended the loan program for being an asset to downtown business owners but because it is a special privilege, interest rates should be kept low. She currently feels the adjusted rates may be a little too high. Ms. Ragan stepped in to voice that having this program is a perk and that the application should be easy without wavering from security and shouldn't be used as a way to profit money. She continued that this program is a way for a downtown business owner to improve their business, make it stronger, renovate, and more. Ms. Norton implored that it is a helpful reminder that the DDD is there to support downtown businesses. Mr. Singer pronounced he does not think there should be 1% or .75% loan. Ms. Ragan agreed there should be a minimum and that 1.5% should not be increased too much. Ms. Hollywood stated she would like to get feedback from business owners in downtown who have outstanding loans or previous loan program participants who can give input on the loan program. Late fees in the application were reviewed. Ms. Hollywood again mentioned it would be a good idea to gather information from current and previous program participants and know if this program helped their business thrive, if they could have still participated if the interest rate was higher, etc. Ms. Norton agreed that a questionnaire would be insightful. Mr. Singer ensured that the rates are not intended to overshadow the program and the adjustments made to simplify the application are meant to help business owners take advantage of the program. Ms. Kendall echoed from Mr. Singer that the loan program is friendly to new and active business owners being that it is designed for them to get better rates compared to a bank. The collected interest gets built into a fund which is then used to loan out more money to businesses for the program. Ms. Hollywood then inquired to know how much time the DDD spends per month to orchestrate the loan program, including sending out invoices to business owners and collecting payments. Ms. Kendall informed that between the DDD's accounting software, internal spreadsheets, and cross-referencing the City of Hammond's paper amortization schedule for twelve accounts it takes around 5-6 hours to complete invoices. Ms. Kendall informed the board there are no digital files to streamline to process to become swifter. This can naturally welcome unintentional human error. Mr. Delaune inquired to know what accounting software is being used. Ms. Kendall replied that the accounting software is MUNIS which is shared with the City of Hammond. Next, the group cross-compared what the current Wall Street Journal prime rates are and how they are reflected on the application. After the application gets cleaned up and revised again, the board plans to vote on the application.

3. Design Committee Report (*Cassie Ragan*)

a. Sidewalk Reimbursement Program

Ms. Ragan informed that Ms. Kendall has put an outline together of the sidewalk reimbursement program. It was decided to refrain from setting a monetary cap on a sidewalk reimbursement. It was also discussed that until sidewalks in certain areas are complete, the focus will remain on that area. Once the area is complete, new projects will expand out from that focal point. Board members reviewed the drafted and revised program application. Approval for sidewalk reimbursements is a



cooperative endeavor amongst the DDD and City Council members. Ms. Ragan welcomed any input on the application.

b. Approval of Façade Grant for 104 SW Railroad Ave

Ms. Ragan informed that the grant was reviewed by the design committee and met all of the requirements. The design committee recommends approval of the façade grant in the amount of \$2,000.

Evan Singer made a motion, seconded by Kali Norton, to approve the Façade Grant for 104 SW Railroad Ave in the amount of \$2,000.

Todd Delaune	Yes
John Exnicios	Absent
Elsbet Hollywood	Yes
Chelsea Kessenich	Yes
Kali Norton	Yes
Cassie Ragan	Yes
Evan Singer	Yes

Motion carried. Yes: 6 | No: 0 | Abstain: 0 | Absent: 1

c. Approval of Façade Grant for 109 W Thomas St

Ms. Ragan informed that the grant was reviewed by the design committee and met all of the requirements. The design committee recommends approval of the façade grant in the amount of \$2,000

Kali Norton made a motion, seconded by Chelsea Kessenich, to approve the Façade Grant for 109 W Thomas St in the amount of \$2,000.

Todd Delaune	Yes
John Exnicios	Absent
Elsbet Hollywood	Yes
Chelsea Kessenich	Yes
Kali Norton	Yes
Cassie Ragan	Yes
Evan Singer	Yes

Motion carried. Yes: 6 | No: 0 | Abstain: 0 | Absent: 1

Mr. Delaune inquired to know if members of the DDD are ineligible for façade grants. She confirmed that board members are ineligible for the grant. Ms. Norton requested that there should be more clarity and transparency of what business-exclusive perks are temporarily revoked once becoming a member of the board. Ms. Hollywood that when signing the conflict of interest statement, it could better lay out said revoked benefits. Ms. Kendall stated she can request that Andre focuses on that more. Ms. Kendall informed that the government code of ethics states that the DDD Board is a public body which stipulates

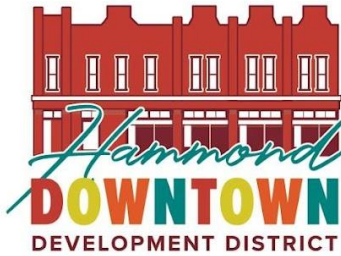


that no exchange of economic interest or economic value can occur between the organization and its board members or board members' immediate family members. The stipulation is effective two years after the service is performed.

4. Events Committee Report (*Chelsea Kessenich*)

Ms Kessenich went through the run of events for Hot August with the board elaborating on the events and what time of day they would take place. She then discussed the car show that would take place on Charles Street one block past La Carreta. Ms. Kendall then added to the conversation by saying it makes sense having attractions for the event and that it would be nice to have something for people to do. Ms., Kendall informed that she is waiting on a confirmation from the Hammond Regional Arts Center to coordinate the wine walk. It would be a fundraiser for the arts center while cross promoting both entities. Ms. Kessenich noted that traffic for the wine walk will still be present but more spread out due to moving the event off Thomas Street. Ms. Kendall conveyed that following her conversation with Hammond Police Department's Chief Bergeron, it may be a good idea to have someone from the committee volunteer to drop off food to police officers working the event. This would also incentivize restaurant owners to have quick-service and/or limited-menu options that evening. Ms. Norton inquired to know the stipulations for food trucks in the past to be a part of Hot August Night. Ms. Kendall informed that food truck vendor applications were created and available for potential vendors. The fee was either \$150 or \$200 per spot. Ms. Norton went on to ask if businesses downtown get charged a fee for having some form of pop-up vendor inside their company. Ms. Kendall responded that a downtown business does not have to charge a fee for a pop-up vendor inside their company. She questioned why the same rules don't apply to food trucks and wanted to know how the terms were different. Ms. Ragan joined in and explained that any form of vendor fee to operate inside a business would be up to the discretion of the business owner. Ms. Hollywood added that the DDD does not have authority concerning what a business owner chooses to do in that situation.

Ms. Ragan proposed that downtown restaurants and bars have the opportunity to have a block, where the car show would take place, to set up a pop-up booth/tent since the event is being moved to Charles Street. Mr. Singer chimed that if food trucks are going to be welcomed at the event, downtown restaurants and bars need to have the opportunity to be out at the event (outside of their brick & mortar) as well. Ms. Kessenich suggested that one idea would be to have a designated table at the event, in respect to each participating restaurant that functioned as a pop-up, that functioned as a to-go order pick-up area. Mr. Delaune voiced a concern that staffing may be an issue for this idea. Ms. Norton inquired to know that if staffing may be an issue for local restaurants/bars, why food trucks can't be brought in for the evening. Mr. Singer agreed. Ms. Ragan felt that if anything were going to compete with a downtown business, there needs to be full disclosure very soon. She also stated that restaurant should be given a first right of refusal choice from the beginning if they would like to have a tent/booth at the event. Ms. Kendall stated she would like to assess the capacity for downtown restaurants in a more realistic way and if the issue is seating or being able to get food out in an appropriate amount of time. If seating capacity is an issue, a pop-up sidewalk café could be an option. If there is another reason restaurant capacity is an issue, then other options need to be made available for event-goers. Ms. Ragan reminded the board that with the updated day of the event and updated format, big issues from previous years may not be as prevalent this year. Mr. Singer asked if food trucks, if brought in, could be limited and be potentially charged more per spot. Mr. Delaune stated it may be a good idea to run the event this year without food trucks and see how things go. Ms.



Kessenich asked what regulations can be done about a representative from a downtown restaurant walking around the event selling food and if a license would be needed. Ms. Kendall replied that if that was an option made available then she is interested in seeing how downtown restaurants could adapt to that method but it may still be likely to bring in food trucks. Mr. Delaune reminded the group that with a pop-up situation, the restaurant/bar will then need a portable POS system, Wi-Fi, and other necessities required to operate outside of the building. Ms. Kendall informed the board that there is no intention to sell vendor spots. She would like to assess restaurant capacity before a final determination is made on whether or not food trucks should be welcomed. The group then discussed the boundary map for the event and its borders. Ms. Kendall stated that she plans on orchestrating a meeting with downtown merchants to transparently discuss the event before a save the date is launched.

5. Hiring for Farmers Market Manager position – executive session may be called

Ms. Kendall and Mr. Exnicios conducted two round of in-person interviews. Unfortunately, there was no success in selecting a candidate for this position. Ms. Kendall stated she will open applications back up until a suitable candidate is found.

6. Staff Report

Ms. Kendall informed the board of two new summer interns. She updated the board that new bricks have been installed in Railroad Park. The design committee is going to review outdoor furniture options for Railroad Park in June. She stated that draft panel narratives are on display at the DDD office throughout the month of May. All final presentations and approvals will take place in July. She moved on to discuss the DDD's next public event which is Picnic in the Park during June. Next, Ms. Kendall discussed her involvement with the Walkability Action Institute. This partnership reviews the Metropolitan Transportation Plan in effort to align funding for infrastructure projects, walkability and bike-ability in Downtown Hammond to complete streets in compliance with the DDD Master Plan. She also joined the Louisiana Walking College which correlates with investing into downtown Hammond infrastructure and exploring what funding is available to make improvements. She moved on to tell the board that the DDD will be participating in Destination Downtown held my Main Street in September. She discussed that the City Council adopted a food truck ordinance where food trucks are not permitted to sell in the district unless they have an event permit/waiver.

Adjournment

