A regular meeting of the Downtown Advisory Commission was held on Thursday, February 8, 2018, at 4:00 p.m. 813 SW Washington, Peoria, IL, with Chairman Mark Misselhorn presiding and with proper notice having been given.

ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 4:02 p.m.

Roll Call confirmed the following Commissioners physically present: Mark Misselhorn, Ray Lees, John Gibson, Becky Frye, Paige Dodson, and Alma Brown

Absent: Katy Shackelford, John Jenkins, President Gary Roberts

City Staff Present: Dr. Leslie McKnight, Anthony Corso, Jamila Wilson, Leah Allison, Stacy Peterson, Scott Reeise

Council Members: Sid Ruckriegel

Chairman Misselhorn thanked Peoria Corps for hosting the Commission meeting.

MINUTES

Commissioner Lees motioned for approval of the minutes of the regular Downtown Advisory Commission (DAC) meeting held on January 11, 2018; seconded by Commissioner Gibson. The motion was approved unanimously.

INTRODUCTION OF PEORIA CORPS PROGRAM, ANTHONY CORSO, I TEAM CHIEF INNOVATION OFFICER

CIO Officer Corso explained the purpose of Peoria Corps which is to develop career pathways for youth through national service.

PEORIA CORPS PRESENTATION BY JAMILA WILSON, PROGRAM MANAGER

Ms. Wilson presented the goals and current activities of PeoriaCorps. PeoriaCorps teaches soft skills, leadership, job skills, and credentials in green infrastructure. PeoriaCorps is affiliated with the national AmeriCorp Program. The cohort consist of 10 positions and 8 positions are filled.

UPDATE ON FOUR POINTS SHERATON HOTEL PROJECT, JOHN BRINKMAN, HOTEL GM

Mr. Brinkman stated that Four Points by Sheraton is a multi-million dollar development which is taking longer than anticipated to be completed. The property is owned by Hawkeye Hotels. The goal is to have the hotel open by mid-summer. There was a recent pipebreak that caused delays. Once open, all rooms will be available. Craft 309 will be a local restaurant with 32 craft beers, and is casual dining. The hotel is part of the Marriot Group. Dr. McKnight asked about the current pace of booking rooms for upcoming
events. The hotel has groups booked for softball games, March Madness, and larger conventions. Dr. McKnight suggested that the hotel also get the Riverfront concert series schedule as well for booking opportunities. The hotel has 322 rooms, 22k sq ft meeting room space.

PRESENTATION FROM MICHAEL FREILINGER, PRESIDENT AND CEO, DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION REGARDING THE PROPOSED DOWNTOWN SPECIAL SERVICE AREA WITH A REQUEST FOR STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FROM DAC

Mr. Freilinger gave a presentation on the proposal of a downtown Special Service Area (SSA) and highlighted the major components of the proposal:

**Boundaries:** Includes 5 Districts; Riverfront District, Warehouse District, Central Business District, Medical District, and covers a portion of the East Bluff Growth Cell TIF District.

**Services:** Services focus on high impact improvement such as branding, decorations, seasonal marketing and power washing. Services are concentrated in pedestrian corridors. The Special Service Area Task force is comprised of 9 property owners in the proposed area and they made the decisions.

**Funding:** The State of IL gives the City statutory authority to establish SSA to raise assessment for municipal services. 65 cents per/$1,000 is the proposed SSA assessed valuation. The budget also consists of $150k from the City and $75k from the County. Also, payment in lieu of tax (PILOT) arrangements are being negotiated with the tax-exempt properties willing to participate. The annual revenue is projected at $329,754, annual expenditures projected at $327,276.

**Timeline:** The SSA assessment is limited to 5 years. After 3 years, the City Council can decide if they want to re-authorize the SSA or conclude. The proposed SSA is a pilot project with a limited budget and services.

**Governance:** The DDC would be the designated governing body with the establishment of 13 advisory board seats based on contribution. Their charge would be to make decisions about services and budget recommendations to the DDC for approval. The City will be the fiscal agent. 6% of the SSA annual allocation would go to DDC for operational costs. There will also be a residential seat on the advisory committee.

Mr. Freilinger concluded that the SSA filing was delayed from last August due to the decision to gather more public input. The goal is to have the downtown SSA established by June 2018. Revenue would begin to come in June 2019. The SSA proposal will be submitted in March for City Council approval.

CHAIRMAN MISSELHORN OPENED UP THE MEETING FOR QUESTIONS FROM COMMISSIONERS AND MEETING ATTENDEES.

Commissioner Dodson asked what the range is to hire contractors for work. Mr. Freilinger stated that the DDC would not hire staff to do the SSA work. The DDC will seek contractors from the community and negotiate prices.

Commissioner Brown asked why the City has more seats than the County. Mr. Freilinger stated that the seats are relative to the level of investment. Commissioner Brown also asked who will do the marketing (specifically the calendar of events). Mr. Freilinger stated that the DDC intends to contract with the Peoria Riverfront Association (PRA) for marketing, along with other local marketing firm partners.
Rob Parks, Chairman of DDC, and Chair of the SSA Task Force stated the task force made estimates to create the proposed SSA budget. The advisory board will make final selections on bids and will seek local vendors.

Commissioner Lees questioned the services versus the cost regarding snow removal. Ms. Parks stated that some commercial properties want to handle their own snow removal.

Chairman Misselhorn noted that DDC had a series of public input sessions and focused stakeholder meetings and two public presentations to the DAC. Changes have been made by the DDC to the proposal based on public input. City Council will still have to review and give their input.

Chairman Misselhorn introduced an email from Joe Richey, stating Mr. Richey’s opposition to certain aspects of the SSA formation (attached). The e-mail asks the DAC to hold on approval of the proposed SSA, until it is known whether the Open Meetings Act applies and the legal process to oppose the SSA is reviewed by the City attorney. Mr. Freilinger submitted written responses (attached) to Mr. Richey’s concerns and plans to proceed with a request to the City Council on the establishment of a downtown SSA. Paper copies of Mr. Richey’s comments and Mr. Freilinger’s responses were made available to all in attendance.

Commissioner Frye asked if the City and County have agreed to their annual portion of the SSA budget. Mr. Freilinger said they are in conversations with the City and County. There is discussion about possibly using CSO revenue to transfer to DDA. In regards to PILOT, the State statutory can be mandatory however it is difficult to assess value on tax-exempt properties. About 1/3 of the properties are tax exempt properties in the proposed district.

Chairman Misselhorn presented the responses of Mr. Freilinger from questions he asked regarding the function of SSA Commission, SSA Advisory Board, process, assessment, and functions of the SSA (attached). He noted the following examples: For a $300,000 building, the SSA assessment is $65/year. For a $3M property, the SSA assessment is $650/year. SSA services will be visible and valuable. Chairman Misselhorn had asked about duplicating services with the City on landscaping. Mr. Freilinger says the DDC can contract with PeoriaCorp and any volunteer organization. The DDC would manage the landscaping projects and would reach out to MBE businesses.

Mr. Freilinger identified the SSA Task force: Rob Parks, Kert Huber, Chuck Gabbert, John Blossom, Mike Chihoski, Devin Birch, Joe LoMonaco, Jeff McLinden, and Bob Hall. Advisory commission will advise and come up with standards.

Sharon Gramm, Peoria Riverfront Association, stated the PRA Executive Board formally agreed to support the SSA.

Commissioner Frye noted that she was contacted earlier that day by a downtown property owner who was not in favor of the SSA as written, and had discussed separating the entire Warehouse District from the proposed SSA boundaries. Ms. Frye said that she did not support that possible change.

Chairman Misselhorn stated that it should not be surprising that not every single property owner or stakeholder would be in favor of the SSA, particularly because the SSA involves a property tax increase.

Chairman Misselhorn requested a motion. Commissioner Lees made a motion to support the DDC’s SSA proposal; seconded by Commissioner Gibson. The motion was approved unanimously.
UPDATE ON PROJECT FOR SURVEYS OF DOWNTOWN EMPLOYEES AND RESIDENTS

Professor Mitch Griffin, Marketing Professor at Bradley University, is working with the DDC and the DAC on surveys for the downtown. Two teams of 5, one team on downtown employees, one downtown residents. Angie Walker and Chairman Misselhorn met with the team. Angie says she talked to students about the area. The survey will help developers know more about what people like that live and work downtown. The residents and employees information will be used, among other things, for marketing promotions.

UPDATE FROM PUBLIC WORKS REGARDING DOWNTOWN WAYFINDING

Leah Allison, John Walker, Dr. McKnight, and Chairman Misselhorn are members of the Downtown Wayfinding Committee. The Tri-County Regional Planning Commission received a grant award to conduct a study. The wayfinding study consists of research, design pallete, and places for sign installations. The Tri-County Regional Planning Commission received 14 RFP’s nationwide. A firm will be selected in the next two weeks and work should be completed by the end of June 2018. The wayfinding study will be coordinated with the efforts of the downtown SSA.

NEW BUSINESS

Public Works Director Scott Reeise provided an update on the Riverfront Village platform demolition. His department has received four bids and the item is scheduled to go before City Council in late February or the first week in March. The goal is to have the Riverfront platform demolished and additional parking spaces completed by May 11, 2018.

Sharon Gramm reported on the pilot Winter Market in the former River Station. She stated it was a good turn out, close to 2,000 people attended. There was a line out the door to get through the market. The summer market is scheduled for May 19, 2018.

ADJOURNMENT

The Downtown Advisory Commission Meeting adjourned at approximately 5:20 p.m. Motioned by Commissioner Frye; seconded by Commissioner Lees. The motion was approved unanimously.

Next meeting is March 8, 2018.

Leslie L. McKnight, PhD, City of Peoria
City Manager’s Office