A regular meeting of the Downtown Advisory Commission was held on Thursday, November 9, 2017, at 4:00 p.m. Simantel Workshop, 311 SW Water Street, 2nd Floor, Peoria, IL 61602, with Chairman Mark Misselhorn presiding and with proper notice having been given.

ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 4:05 p.m.

Roll Call confirmed the following Commissioners physically present: Mark Misselhorn, Ray Lees, Jon Jenkins, Katy Shackelford, Alma Brown (at 4:40 pm) (5).

Absent: Becky Frye, John Gibson (2).

City Staff Present: Chris Setti, Leah Allison

Note: There was not a quorum of the Commission in attendance until 4:40 p.m. The Commission handled discussion items first and took actions later in the meeting.

Chairman Misselhorn thanked Simantel for hosting the Commission meeting.

PRESENTATION BY LISA CLEMMONS SCOTT OF DOWNTOWN SPRINGFIELD, INC.

Ms. Scott gave her professional background and discussed her role with Downtown Springfield, Inc. (DSI). She stated that she was jealous of Peoria for its riverfront, downtown campus, state historic tax credit and the City’s “One Stop” business development model. She discussed the shrinking population of Sangamon County as well as its general aging and loss of jobs. She stated that Downtown Springfield had lost 2600 jobs over the past decade. She discussed the strengths of downtown Springfield, including its low cost of living, historic tourism sites and educated workforce. She also discussed its weaknesses, including racial segregation, competing economic priorities, and a business-unfriendly development process.

Ms. Scott stated that DSI’s mission was to increase the economic and cultural vitality of downtown Springfield. She discussed their creative place-making efforts, including public art and parklets. She discussed their weekend and weekday farmer’s market and commented on similarities with Peoria’s market. She also discussed Springfield’s many cultural festivals.

Ms. Scott also described success with attracting businesses to downtown, especially creative entrepreneurs. She discussed Innovate Springfield, a business incubator, and the opening of the “Kidzeum” in June 2018. She further outlined steps to improve vitality, including improve wayfinding, parking solutions, and a designation of an entertainment district. Ms. Scott showed examples recent residential developments. Finally, she described DSI’s efforts to match potential businesses with empty space.

In response to a question from Commissioner Shackelford, Ms. Scott promised to send some additional information on entertainment districts. In response to Doug Leunig (citizen), she commented that their
public art efforts were very popular and modelled on a Decatur program. Ms. Scott also stated that residential developments in downtown were 99% occupied. She stated that their city struggled with homelessness and panhandling. In response to Assistant City Manager Setti, she stated that DSI received no financial support from the City. They are currently investigating the creation of a Special Service Area.

Chairman Misselhorn thanked Ms. Scott and explained that he had offered to make a reciprocal presentation to her group. Chairman Misselhorn also introduced Dr. Gary Roberts and Paige Dodson, who will be appointed as Commissioners at the next City Council meeting. He thanked them for their attendance.

**DISCUSSION OF WAYFINDING WITH A REQUEST FOR THE COMMISSION TO RESOLVE TO SUPPORT THE CITY’S APPLICATION FOR FUNDING**

Assistant City Manager Chris Setti discussed an opportunity to receive funding for a wayfinding study through Tri-County Regional Planning Commission (TCRPC). He explained that TCRPC had some transportation planning funds that could be used for any project that fit their criteria. He described the City’s previous efforts to develop a comprehensive downtown wayfinding system. He stated the City would request $50,000 to fund a study that would produce a plan, suggested design of signage, and budget for implementation. He said that the systems would accommodate the needs of motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians. He asked for the Commission’s support of a resolution that would be sent to TCRPC.

Chairman Misselhorn stated that similar letters of support were being sent to TCRPC by the Peoria Riverfront Association, Downtown Development Corporation, Peoria Riverfront Museum and other similar organizations.

Commissioner Brown motioned for approval of a resolution in support of the City’s request for funding of a wayfinding plan (attached). Commissioner Lees indicated he would be abstaining as he is an employee of TCRPC. The motion was approved unanimously.

Doug Leunig (citizen) discussed how public art could be incorporated into a wayfinding system. Commissioner Shackelford discussed her positive experience with wayfinding. Randon Gettys (citizen) voiced his support for the effort.

**MINUTES**

Commissioner Shackelford motioned for approval of the minutes of the regular Downtown Advisory Commission (DAC) meeting held on October 12, 2017 with a correction to indicate that Commissioner Alison Daly was present at the meeting; seconded by Commissioner Lees. The motion was approved unanimously.

**UPDATE ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE WAREHOUSE DISTRICT FORM DISTRICT**

Michael Frelinger, CEO of the Downtown Development Corporation (DDC), discussed three changes to the Warehouse District Form District guidelines that have been submitted to the City: elimination of the three foot elevation from the street for residential units; allowance of vegetation as a parking buffer; and creation of a side yard setback to allow windows to be placed on zero lot line buildings. He stated that the changes would be discussed by the Planning and Zoning Commission at their December meeting and then by the City Council in January.

Mr. Frelinger also discussed the threat to the federal historic tax credits contained within the Republican tax reform bill and efforts to get that program restored.
In response to Commissioner Shackelford, Mr. Freilinger outlined how the side yard setback issue was critical to being able to develop certain buildings in the Warehouse District. In response to a comment from Pat Sullivan (citizen), Mr. Freilinger disagreed that creating the setback was the equivalent of a government taking. He further stated that the City’s legal department was researching the issue and would provide an opinion.

**UPDATE ON BOUNDARY SURVEY AND NOMINATION OF DOWNTOWN AND PARTS OF THE WAREHOUSE DISTRICT TO THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

Assistant City Manager Chris Setti stated that the City had engaged the Lakota Group to conduct a boundary survey of downtown and the Warehouse District and prepare one or more nominations to the National Register of Historic Places. The goal is to capture as many historic buildings as possible so that developers can take advantage of the state and federal historic tax credits. He described the value of this project insofar as it saved time and money for buildings to be individually listed. He stated that the work on the boundary survey should be completed by the end of the year and nominations would be prepared in early 2018.

**NEW BUSINESS**

In response to a question from Commissioner Shackelford, Mr. Setti described the Tri-County River Valley Development Authority (TRVDA). He explained that TRVDA was an entity created by state law that served as conduit bonding for certain types of projects. Bonds issued through TRVDA have a double tax exemption: interest earned is free from both Illinois and federal taxes. This feature lowers the interest rate for the borrower. Projects must be manufacturing, medical, educational or affordable housing. The board, of which Mr. Setti is a member, is comprised of representatives from the three counties.

At its recent board meeting, TRVDA issued a pre-approval for potential developments in the Warehouse District that would utilize the bonding authority. The vote does not approve the bonding but gives the developer an indication that his project is eligible.

Chairman Misselhorn asked Grace Elisco (Bradley liaison) if any progress had been made regarding utilizing Bradley business students to develop a survey for downtown. Ms. Elisco reported that she had shared pertinent contact information with Mr. Setti. Mr. Setti said he had yet to follow up but would do so immediately. Ms. Elisco offered to ask some of her professors as well.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Doug and Eileen Leunig (citizens) described their plans for the “Big Picture Festival” to be held in September 2018. The festival would be centered on public art, especially murals. It would be held in concert with the Peoria Art Guild’s Fine Art Fair. They stated the theme would be the community working together to create public art. They described some of the plans for the festival, including live music, mural painting at Gabbert Art Park, and working with Peoria Public Schools students. They are seeking individuals to help organize the event.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The Downtown Advisory Commission Meeting adjourned at approximately 6:00 pm.

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Chris Setti, City of Peoria
City Manager’s Office
A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF PEORIA DOWNTOWN ADVISORY COMMISSION CONCERNING SUPPORT OF THE CITY OF PEORIA’S REQUEST FOR FUNDING FROM TRI-COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION FOR THE COMPLETION OF A STUDY OF WAYFINDING IN DOWNTOWN AND THE WAREHOUSE DISTRICT:

WHEREAS The Tri-County Regional Planning Commission has disseminated a call for proposals to utilize Special Transportation Planning funds; and,

WHEREAS The City of Peoria on October 24, 2017 submitted a request for said funds to help pay for a study of a new wayfinding system for Downtown Peoria, the Warehouse District and surrounding areas; and,

WHEREAS Wayfinding is a critical part of infrastructure for a community and assists motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians; and,

WHEREAS Soliciting the input of the public is a critical part of any planning activity.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it hereby resolved, this 9th of November 2017, that the Downtown Advisory Commission of the City of Peoria endorses and supports the City of Peoria’s application for such funding and furthermore pledges to assist in its capacity as a Commission with public outreach and input activities.

APPROVED:

Chairman, Downtown Advisory Commission