

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Special Meeting September 8, 2020
Zoom Meeting

The regular meeting of the DDA Board was called to order at 8:00 a.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: *Mayor Brian Turnbull, Carolann Ayers, DJ Boyd, Margene Buckhave, John Casey, Jim Long, Ryan McKindles, Greg Presley, Shawn Riley, Mary Starring*

Absent: *Aaron Cozart*

Also Present: *Patrick Sullivan/City Manager, Lori Ward/DDA Executive Director, Jeri Johnson/Marketing & Communications Director, Barbara Morowski-Browne/City Council, Dave Gutman/Resident, Lori Dow/ The Bees Knees, Amy Young/Dear Prudence/Blackbird, Pru Kaufman/Blackbird/Dear Prudence, Rebecca Goode/Rebecca's, Tim Cain/ Northville Square, Mishelle Lussier/Table 5 & Lucy and the Wolf*

AUDIENCE COMMENTS

Pru from Dear Prudence asked if Center Street Grille is planning to open for lunch. She expressed concern that there is not a lot of stuff happening on North Center Street and if Tuscan is moving the street will be even more empty. Pru also asked about restaurants using tents in the winter and how that would work with COVID restrictions. Ward said Center Street Grille is not serving lunch because of staffing issues. Ward also said that Tuscan will not be moving until November 1st. Ward said she did not know the details for winter indoor dining using tents yet. Sullivan said that both the fire and building inspectors would need to approve tents so that they will be safe and up to code. Pru said there were complaints from customers that Center Street is closed. Amy from Dear Prudence encouraged a decision to happen quickly so businesses can prepare. Pru wanted to clarify that if no one decides to be out in the street on Center Street that the City will open Center to traffic. Sullivan said the City Council has the power to revisit street closures if they are not being utilized.

EXTENSION OF REOPENING PLAN FOR DOWNTOWN NORTHVILLE" AND SOCIAL DISTRICT

Ward said the DDA, working with the business owners, developed a Reopening Plan for Downtown that has been in effect since June 16th. The Plan has provided the businesses the opportunity to reopen safely and with the maximum capacity allowed under the Governor's Executive Orders. Three separate tools were used to implement the Reopening plan. First, the City Council approved a Special Event Application that

closed E. Main Street between Center and Hutton and N. Center Street between Main and Dunlap. This allowed the restaurants to expand their outdoor dining areas onto public property including the sidewalks, parking lanes, streets, and city plazas. Retail establishments were allowed to display merchandise on City sidewalks. The DDA has provided background music on Friday and Saturday nights. The second tool required the downtown restaurants to obtain a Limited Permanent Outdoor Service Area Permit. This permit, issued by the Michigan Liquor Control Commission (MLCC) allows the restaurants to enlarge their approved seating area temporarily through October 31st with all inspections happening at the local level. There was no fee for these permits and the applications were approved within one week. The third tool was the establishment of the Northville Social District. The City approved the establishment of a Social District which allows participating restaurants to sell alcohol, in a special cup, that can be carried out of the restaurant and consumed in a delineated Commons Area. This program has 7 participants and kicked off on August 21st.

The 3 tools that were utilized to assist businesses reopen to their maximum potential, have proven to be very successful. The restaurants and retail both have experienced increased sales. Recently DDA staff was approached by several downtown restaurant owners with concern about what happens next. Both the Special Event Application and the MLCC Limited Permanent Outdoor Service permit area is set to expire on October 31st. Ward said just prior to this meeting received notification from the MLCC saying they extended the temporary permit to November 30th.

A zoom meeting with restaurant owners was held a few weeks ago to discuss what to do when the weather turns cold. Several restaurants are uniquely situated next to a public plaza where they can set up tents or other more substantial structures for the winter. Other restaurants have expressed a desire to keep their outdoor dining areas open longer into the fall, utilizing space heaters. And finally, there are several restaurants who would like to install tents with heaters for the winter that would remain in the street. As the DDA found with the other tools that were implemented, there is no one-size fits all solution. The City may have to look at several solutions to address the different challenges that the restaurants face given their locations.

Ward said the restaurant owners who participated on the zoom meeting have asked that the Special Event Application be extended through March 1, 2021. In addition, after consultation with staff at the MLCC, the restaurants would need to convert their Limited Permanent Outdoor Service Area Permit to a Permanent Outdoor Service Area Permit after November 30th. When the City ends the Special Event, which allows the expanded outdoor dining, and withdraws their permission to be in the street, the restaurants would cancel their permit. The City has never had the streets closed during the winter and is working hard to address the issue of snow removal during this time period. The City reserves the right to reevaluate the road closure each month and to make any adjustments that they deem necessary.

The DDA has sent out a survey to the business owners downtown to see if they would like the streets to remain closed through "late fall or potentially through the winter" or if

they would like the roads to reopen on November 1, 2020. The survey was sent out to the downtown business community and 45 responses have been received to date. Of the 45 responses, to date, ½ of which are service/office businesses only 6 have been negative. DDA staff will present updated information on the survey at the DDA meeting.

The DDA Board of Directors will need to authorize additional funds through the budget amendment process to cover the cost of additional staffing and clean up expenses downtown.

DDA staff recommends the Northville DDA Board of Directors approve the extension of the Reopening Downtown Special Event to March 1, 2021 which would allow the roads to remain closed to vehicular traffic.

Sullivan asked that the DDA reevaluate the street closures each month. Ayers expressed concern about how tents are attached to City streets and if the DDA would have to pay for damages. Boyd questioned how igloos or enclosed structures would be COVID friendly. Riley said the capacity would need to adhere to the State COVID guidelines. Long is concerned about the wind tunnel effect on tents and the cost of heat for just a few added tables. Riley said it is up to the individual restaurants to determine their own return on investment. Boyd questioned how this would affect the DDA budget. Ward said we would need to have more seasonal help for clean up and maintenance. Also, there may be additional costs for snow removal. Ayers suggested a review of the DDA budget before the next meeting given all the additional COVID related expenses. Presley questioned if restaurants commit to buying structures is the DDA/City committed to closing streets in future years. Ward shared the same concern about the expense associated with purchasing expensive structures and not getting a return on investment if the streets reopen at any time. Turnbull feels this has been a huge positive for the community and we need to be flexible and open to keeping the streets closed. Ayers commented that the State could change their COVID protocols at any time so the DDA can't be responsible for changes that are out of our control. Ward said moving forward we will need a larger community dialog post COVID to see if this is something the businesses want to embrace permanently.

Rebecca from Rebecca's thanked everyone for their efforts, she said the Social District has been a huge success for their business. Rebecca feels it will be difficult in the winter for them to continue outside dining. She is concerned about wind, structure costs and servers being outside. Rebecca is neutral on whether they would be embracing outside dining during the winter months. Rebecca will definitely stay out this Fall and is looking into purchasing heaters.

Sullivan is concerned about snow removal especially if there are structures in the street. Who will be paying for snow removal and how will the snow be removed; the City would possibly need to rent a bobcat? Also, the street barricades are currently filled with water so the DPW will need to figure out what the barricades will be filled with during the winter months. McKindles expressed concern about the cost the restaurants would incur for winter outdoor dining and the City's ongoing commitment to keep the streets closed. It would be difficult to decide to reopen the streets once restaurants have made the

investment. Cozart sent an email since he was not able to be part of the meeting and stated he is in favor of keeping the streets closed through the winter.

Mishelle Lussier from Table 5 & Lucy and the Wolf is in favor of keeping the streets closed through the winter. Lussier is looking into purchasing 2 tents that can withstand snow, they cost about \$7500 each. Lussier is willing to make the investment because she could use them for catering events as well.

Motion by Casey, seconded by McKindles to extend the outdoor seating area through the winter with monthly evaluations by the City and DDA. **Motion carried unanimously.**

EXTENSION OF DOWNTOWN MUSIC SERIES

Ward said the DDA is currently providing music in two locations this summer: N. Center Street and E. Main Street. The N. Center Street music is scheduled from 5 – 7 pm and is located near Epiphany Kitchen. E. Main Street music is scheduled from 7 – 9 pm and is located under the canopy of the Marquis Theater. Music is scheduled for both Friday and Saturday nights. Signs have been placed in each area remind people to socially distance, wear a mask and advise them to not bring lawn chairs.

The music has been a tremendous success and DDA staff is recommending that the City Council approve the extension of the original contract with JAG Entertainment dated July 13, 2020 (Attachment A) at a not to exceed amount of \$550 per night, ending no later than October 31, 2020. Tom Holzer Ford and Bill Brown Ford have been approached to underwrite the remaining cost of the concerts.

In addition, the DDA staff has worked out an arrangement with JAG entertainment to supply staff to take care of the garbage removal on Friday and Saturday night at a cost of \$50/night. JAG has agreed to assist on non-concert nights at a cost of \$100/night. DDA staff will, for now continue to provide support on Sunday nights and other nights when necessary. The DDA is asking for additional funds to extend the concert series through October 31st with the hope that additional sponsorships will help offset the budget increase.

Turnbull said he met with Bill Brown Ford and Tom Holzer and they agreed to split the additional \$16,000 to extend the music through October 31st. Turnbull said given the amount of the sponsorship the DDA should not have any additional expense for the extension of the acoustic music series.

Motion by Casey, seconded by Buckhave to approve the extension of the music in downtown through October 31st. **Motion carried unanimously.**

BOARD AND STAFF COMMUNICATION

Buckhave questioned why the car sponsors do not have cars on Center Street as well as Main Street. Ward said we have considered having additional cars and would welcome more vehicles on the streets.

The next DDA Board meeting is scheduled for September 15, 2020.

Motion by Turnbull, seconded by McKindle to adjourn the DDA Board meeting.
Motion carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 am

Respectfully submitted,
Jeri Johnson, Marketing and Communications Director
Northville DDA