



**Czech Village New Bohemia SSMID Meeting Minutes  
January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020 | 8:30 – 10:00 a.m. | Czech Museum and Library**

**Present:** Craig Byers, Lijun Chadima, Jessalyn Holdcraft, Stephanie Jelinek, Ana McClain, Chad Pelley, James Piersall

**Absent:** Pam Lewis, Bob Schaffer

**Guests:** Abby Huff & Monica Vernon – Czech Village NewBo Main Street, Doug Wilson, Dale Todd, Jennifer Pratt – City of Cedar Rapids, Maura Pilcher – Grant Wood Art Colony, Beth Orth – Geonetric

**Economic Alliance Staff:** Ron Corbett, Jessica Komisar, Melissa McCarville

**Welcome and Call to Order**

Piersall welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m.

**Approval of Consent Agenda**

Chadima moved approval of the agenda with Holdcraft seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.

Holdcraft moved approval of the December minutes with Chadima seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.

Chadima moved approval of the November financials with Holdcraft seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.

**District Aesthetic Improvements from the City**

Wilson, Paving for Progress manager, presented details for the 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue extension/roundabout aesthetic improvements. The goals of this project is to beautify the view of St. Wenceslaus Church, complement the character of the area and to celebrate Czech heritage. Project considerations include maintain pedestrian and vehicle safety, low-maintenance plants, limit plant height to preserve visibility and draw inspiration from Czech culture (iron fencing, basalt columns, perennials with red flowers, walls with texture and interest). At this point, the City is responsible for the installation, watering of the plants and maintenance (of plants, structure and lights that shine up on the basalt columns). Wilson said the project should be complete around the Fall of 2020.

Piersall said he is concerned about the basalt columns, located in the middle of the roundabout, will block the view of the church's Czech Heritage Park and sculptures and would like to see them taken out. Piersall said St. Wenceslaus Church had an initial idea of installing a statue of St. Wenceslaus in the roundabout. Wilson said a statue would draw people to the middle of the roundabout to take pictures and wouldn't be safe for pedestrians. Todd asked if there is an irrigation system in the roundabout for the plants, Wilson said there is not.

Wilson said they will take all public concerns into consideration and that the plan shown at this meeting, is not set in stone and is primarily looking for feedback at this time.

Another project that will have improvements is the new 16<sup>th</sup> Ave median to allow trucks to easily turn out of Geonetric with roll-over curbs.

Holdcraft asked if there is any updated on making the 12<sup>th</sup> Ave and 2<sup>nd</sup> St intersection a 4-way stop instead of a 2-way stop now that the traffic light has been removed for safety issues. Wilson said there was not enough traffic to have a signal and the City's traffic department is aware of safety concerns and is looking at ways to make it better.

### **District Mural Collaboration Opportunity**

Pilcher, director of the Grant Wood Art Colony through the University of Iowa, presented about their program. They have been working towards a goal of getting students to provide a public art relationship with various local communities. Pilcher showed numerous examples of murals that her students have done – from art directly on brick to art on panels that were then installed on top of brick or other historical surfaces that didn't want to be damaged. One large mural example that Pilcher showed had an all-in cost of approximately \$7k – \$4,500 of an artist fee and the rest was materials. Pilcher said there are some cost sharing opportunities if the mural incorporates a partnership with Grant Wood and the most they have contributed to a mural was \$2,500. Holdcraft asked if there is a maintenance plan included in the cost. Pilcher said it is all laid out in the community's individual contracts but they expect the mural to be maintained for 5 years based on the quality of materials the artists use and if anything happens to the mural within the 5 years to contact the artist and they will fix it. Pilcher said they do expect the community to do the prep work such as scraping/cleaning the surface or re-pointing. Pilcher said in addition to murals, they have also done sculptures and will send Komisar examples of those.

Piersall said public art is one of our top three 2020 action plan items and would like to see something happen within the next year. Pilcher said the next steps would be having the artist come in for a meeting to get an idea on the type of art the community is looking for and how the various entities in the district can collaborate. Piersall said the commission will discuss this in more detail and will get back to Pilcher about potentially coming back to a future meeting.

### **2020 City of Cedar Rapids Long Term Plan**

Piersall and Holdcraft are part of the Cedar Rapids Long Term Planning Commission. Every 5 years this Commission is appointed to serve for 90 days and issue a report for long term plans of Cedar Rapids. The first meeting is January 21<sup>st</sup> and Piersall and Holdcraft wanted the SSMID's feedback on answers to the following questions:

What are issues the SSMID has been struggling to address and why?

- Lack of income and funds
- No full-time executive director to carry out commission ideas and goals
- Commissioners come from different background and have differing priorities which can lead to a lack of clear direction. Piersall said we have made strides in this area of concern with our new 2020 Strategic Plan.

What issues the SSMID has attempted to undertake, but have not been able to get to the root cause of the issue and fully address?

- City street plans that we find out about too late in the game, would like to communicate more with the City regarding their plans that might not be on our radar
- Because this SSMID hasn't been around as long as the other two, establishing a stronger relationship with the City
- Not having the same commercial mass in our district as the other two which would help with income and funds
- Affordable housing

Todd encouraged the group to think big and that kind of thinking may shift the center of gravity from Downtown to CVNB because of our destinations anchors we have in place.

### **Public Art with Iowa BIG**

Corbett shared information on a project that Iowa BIG students are working on that might result in a request for public art locations in the district. The status of the project is still in its planning phase and nothing is certain as of right now. The concept is an "art on parade" similar to Overalls All Over or Herky on Parade that have been done in Cedar Rapids and Iowa City. Their initial concept involved Cedar Rapids tie to cereal manufacturing and wanted to include cereal characters but have ran into difficulties getting trademark approvals to use those characters. As a second plan, they have this idea of a large cereal bowl with spoons that would be climbable, have a slide and railings. Huff said she has also been working with the Iowa BIG group on this project as well. No action needed from the SSMID at this point.

## **Process for Funding Requests**

Due to previous funding requests of the SSMID, Holdcraft drafted a request document which outlines our 2020 action plans and regulations/requirements of funding requests such as:

- All requests must be made in writing and should include as much specific information as possible and submitted to commission chairperson or staff.
- Requests received before September 1<sup>st</sup> will be included in annual budget considerations for the following calendar year and will have the best chance of receiving commission support.
- Chair presents request to commission and a majority of the commission agrees to consider off-cycle request
- At a following meeting, the requester presents to the commission for any questions or feedback
- Commission decision will likely take place at the next meeting.

Chadima moved to approve the funding request with Byers seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.

## **2019 Communications Plan Overview**

McCarville shared an update on the 2019 communications plan and outcomes. A Facebook page was created in March of 2019 with 1-2 posts per week. This page currently has 137 likes which McCarville said was good with no dollars allocated to boost posts or reaching out for more likes. The post with the largest reach was about spring planting in April with 440 people reached. McCarville said public art does well on social media so she anticipates with that being one of the SSMIDs action plans for 2020, it will grow the Facebook page presence.

Stakeholder communication via Constant Contact eblast began in April of 2019 and includes one eblast per month. Content for eblasts were mainly curated from commission meetings focused on decision that impact SSMID stakeholders. Other Economic Alliance channels that include CVNB SSMID news are e-mail Downtown News, eConnection, Economic Alliance Monthly Report and the Economic Alliance website. As of January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020 the eblast is sent to 134 recipients, has an average open rate of 53.5%, average click through rate of 18.5%, average bounce rate of 5.6% and only saw 1 unsubscribe.

The CVNB SSMID webpage is hosted on the Economic Alliance site. (<https://www.cedarrapids.org/our-community/core-districts/czech-village-new-bohemia>) The webpage has received 254 pageviews with visitors spending an average of 1 minute and 36 seconds on the page. Content includes meeting agendas and minutes, 2018 Annual Report summary and download link and added CVNB District news.

Collateral piece for the district includes the 2018 Annual Report. McCarville said she will meet with the sub-committee from last year to start discussions of the 2019 Annual Report.

## **Other Business**

Byers moved to approve storing district holiday décor in a Cherry Building storage unit for \$100 per month only if one of the other free spots, basement of Parlor City or Lion Bridge, does not work with Pelley seconding. The motion was unanimously approved. Komisar will work with Evan McGuire with the Economic Alliance to look at Parlor City's space as he will need to build a structure to hold the garland.

## **Adjourn**

Chadima moved to adjourn the meeting with Holdcraft seconding. The meeting was adjourned at 10:01oioo a.m.