



**Czech Village New Bohemia SSMID Meeting Minutes
October 15, 2020 | 8:30-10:00 a.m. | Zoom Meeting**

The Czech Village New Bohemia SSMID Commission met virtually in regular session. Those present are listed below. The meeting was held as an electronic regular Commission meeting because a meeting in person was impossible or impractical due to concerns for the health and safety of Commissioners, staff and the public presented by COVID-19.

Present: Lijun Chadima, Ben Dillon, Stephanie Jelinek, Ana McClain, Mary Kay Novak McGrath, Chad Pelley, James Piersall, Bob Schaffer

Absent: Craig Byers

Guests: Abby Huff & Monica Vernon – Main Street, Jennifer Pratt – City of Cedar Rapids

Economic Alliance Staff: Jessica Komisar, Melissa McCarville, Doug Neumann, Phil Wasta, Audrey Wheeler

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 Dillon seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.

Chadima moved approval of the September minutes with Novak McGrath seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.

The financials provided to Commissioners include all invoices that have been sent to Piersall. Neumann explained the reason we were behind on sending those invoices is because we expected a transition of funds back in March or April and wanted to keep that transition clean and Pratt directed the Economic Alliance to not hold those funds anymore. Chadima asked when SSMID tax dollars will be reflected as income. Neumann said the bulk of those taxes are paid in March and September so we should see another bump in October and believes the SSMID will come in around \$45k in revenue – which is on target with the budget. Chadima moved approval of the financials with McClain seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.

Mucha Mural Wrap-Up and Items at Czech Museum

Vernon provided a breakdown of costs summary for the Mucha Meets Iowa mural project.

- Estimated total cost - \$40,381
- Made \$7,500 in private fundraising, still waiting on \$500 from Graham Construction
- CVNB SSMID contributed \$7k from public art budget item and an additional \$10k from reserves
- \$5,600 of in-kind from DA Bunch painters and labor workers

Piersall showed his framed picture of the mural signed by artist Ali Hval. Piersall said he has arranged for each Commissioner to receive one as well. Stakeholders will receive a signed un-framed copy along with a letter from Piersall. McClain said this project was well-executed and she is proud that the SSMID did this.

Piersall said the Czech Museum will be selling items such as post cards and magnets with the mural image on it. The Museum will share the revenue on those items with the SSMID. Piersall said he will keep the SSMID updated on how that goes.

2021 Budget and Strategic Plan

Neumann said at this time last year Commissioners came up with a list of strategic planning priorities to narrow down their focus. Neumann provided that list with a few new items for Commissioner's review. Neumann said some of the priorities are thought starters, some are ideas that nobody supports and that it's not a recommendation list but it's our best opportunity to be very focused on the SSMID's goals if the Commission can narrow the list down to 2 or 3 items for 2021. Neumann said there are items on the list such as advocacy on the plan and public sector issues that are non-monetary where the Commission can have a strong, unified voice with very little or no dollars. Neumann said this month is to just review and during next month's meeting we can go into more detail on a handful of them and narrow it down and pencil it into the 2021 budget. There will be some non-discretionary items for the 2021 budget such as the continued ConnectCR pledge, maintenance costs around the mural such as lawn mowing, snow removal and a City required insurance policy of \$408 annually.

Wasta said we will need to begin snow removal in front of the park this season and need to have a plan. Commissioners said the Czech Village Association does snow removal for shops that are members of the Association but that it's not always consistent. Piersall said it could be a good time to have a discussion with the Association about that and how it's being done. Vernon said she can assist setting up that meeting as they are in the middle of several conversations with the Association. Wasta suggested we could look into partnering with the Czech Museum and if snow removal in front of our park could be added onto their removal scope to ensure it's being done and being done well.

Piersall said when he looks at the overall list of potential 2021 priorities, the ones that jump out to him include maintenance, pocket park, public art, streetscape aesthetics and included stakeholder communication. Chadima asked about the City's plans on the art park included in the district plan. Piersall said that's something that we should be ready for when the City is ready. Neumann added that project was a 3-5 year plan but we have done a lot of property research related to that project and will make more progress in 2021 but doesn't believe there's any pressure from the City that it needs to be a budgeted item in 2021. Chadima said she heard that utility lines would be moved from one side of 10th Street to the other for the Loftus project and wants to make sure those aren't blocking existing buildings. Vernon said she heard that as well and have been in communications with Mary Meisterling at Alliant Energy who was going to talk to other departments and is also going to look into 3rd Street light plans.

Dillon asked when the SSMID is up for renewal. Vernon and Huff said in 2022. Piersall said that makes a good point and as 2021 priorities are concerned, we should be considering our renewal a priority as well and have boots on the ground and solicit support from property owners. Piersall asked what the percentage is for property owner approval. Neumann said in Chapter 386 in the Iowa Code, it's not a high barrier and Neumann believes it's around 25% but SSMID renewals have typically had 75% or greater approval. Dillon said because of that, stakeholder engagement may move up further on our priority list for 2021 and include an annual report or some other in-hands communication channel. Vernon said the first time the CVNB SSMID was soliciting approval, they hadn't done anything yet but this time around, you can communicate what you've accomplished and what you have planned to do. Neumann said the renewals of our SSMIDs have always been successful because Downtown and MedQuarter have focused on enhancing the value of the district. Typically, SSMIDs renewal occur every 5 or 10 years but the SSMID has the opportunity to set that with City Council. Chadima said the CVNB SSMID decided a 5-year renewal at the time of creation because they were brand new. Piersall said he'd like to discuss considering going for a 10-year renewal next time.

Neumann asked Commissioners to review the 2021 priority list and contact him with additional questions or suggestions and next month we can have some in more detail and in form of an action plan for consideration.

Mural Park Planning

Piersall said Huff has done some work on design and cost estimates but the first part of this potential project is to have a conversation with the City regarding the 10-year contract/arrangement that we have in place for that lot. Piersall said it would be a disappointment if we installed a park and in 10 years it went away and that area could be a real focus for Czech Village and the Museum. Pratt said we can have that discussion and being fresh off the district action plan, the

City is looking to have this sort of input. Piersall said if this project will cost approximately \$50k, we will need to get creative in funding such as naming rights. Dillon asked what the legal structure is if the SSMID can own property. Wasta said the SSMID can't own it. For the MedQuarter, the SSMID started a separate 501c6 entity that is funded by voluntary contributions from the hospitals, which are non-tax revenues and can be used in different ways, and that entity is what owns their pocket parks. Neumann said the Downtown SSMID did something similar with the 1st Street and 3rd Ave lot. After the flood, there was talk about a pawn shop opening on that corner and the Downtown SSMID purchased that lot and sold it to the City for parking.

Piersall said we will need time to discuss with the City. With regard to lighting for the new mural, Vernon said she has talked to electrical contractors who have said they could get us a good deal on it and she has started conversations with some on naming rights and concrete companies.

NewBo Mural

Vernon said when you look at the NewBo neighborhood, it has a lot of heritage and culture and is more eclectic than Czech Village as it has turned into more of the arts and entertainment side of the district but we want to still remember the roots of how it all began. Several generations ago, immigrants came into the area and were involved in the steel, iron, grain processing and meat packing industries and Vernon said she was thinking about 1930's artwork picturing strong men and women showing the story of that district. Vernon said we could release a RFP, give artists inspiration and let them come to us with their concepts. The public art committee and full Commission could choose a winner or even multiple winners to include multiple, smaller murals throughout NewBo.

Regarding funding, Vernon thinks the same union workers that helped with the Mucha mural could be involved again. Piersall said he agrees and if we go with an industrial/grain milling concept, surrounding companies such as Cargill or Ingredion might want to contribute.

Beautification Committee Commission Chair

Piersall said Novak McGrath was the chair of the beautification committee but has indicated that she needs to take a step back. We need a Commission member to be the chairperson but they can bring in others from the community to help with the work. Piersall asked if any other Commissioner would be willing to step into that role, nobody volunteered. McClain said before raising our hands, we would need to know the commitment. Piersall said it would be maybe 1 meeting per month in addition to our Commission meetings but can talk to McClain in more detail.

Mainstreet Proposal for CVNB SSMID Administration

Piersall said we received a proposal from Main Street to become the administrator of the SSMID. Piersall said the intention today is to hear from Vernon and to not make a decision. The Economic Alliance saw this for the first time earlier this week so they will need an opportunity to respond at our next meeting and then decide how the SSMID wants to proceed from there. Commissioners were provided with a copy of the proposal in detail.

Vernon said it is Main Street's aim, hope and desire to provide the SSMID staffing and administrative support for \$6k per year and believes a stronger relationship between the SSMID and Main Street would be beneficial for the district. Vernon said when she reviewed the 2021 potential priority list, she noticed that Main Street is actively doing a lot of those things. Main Street would offer the SSMID administration of monthly meetings including agendas and minutes, management of financials, assistance with sub-committees, communication of SSMID progress in their weekly e-blast and monthly stakeholder communications, organize events, public art and beautification efforts, help SSMID investments go beyond spending but leveraging and staff members with time and understanding to drive progress for the SSMID. Vernon said Main Street would charge \$6k per year, \$1,500 per quarter. Vernon said this is 13% of the approximately \$46k in SSMID revenue and currently the SSMID is paying \$21k or 45% of their revenue in admin and communications services.

Vernon said she believes that by working together, SSMID revenue could be leveraged and the priorities of the SSMID could be more focused.

Adjourn

Novak McGrath moved to adjourn the meeting with Schaffer seconding. The meeting was adjourned at 10:05 a.m.