



**Czech Village New Bohemia SSMID Meeting Minutes
November 19, 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: Craig Byers, Lijun Chadima, Ben Dillon, Stephanie Jelinek, Ana McClain, Mary Kay Novak McGrath, Chad Pelley, James Piersall, Bob Schaffer

Guests: Abby Huff & Monica Vernon – Main Street, Jennifer Pratt – City of Cedar Rapids, Nicole Wilcox, Amanda Zhorne, Hailey Cooper, Sarah Henderson, Callie Brown, Cara Briggs Farmer – Iowa BIG and Project Partners

Economic Alliance Staff: Jessica Komisar, Anne Laugen, Melissa McCarville, Doug Neumann, Phil Wasta

Welcome and Call to Order

Piersall welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m.

Approval of Consent Agenda

Pelley moved approval of the agenda with Novak McGrath seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.

Chadima moved approval of the October minutes with Dillon seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.

Kolache Bench Funding

Brown, a student with Iowa BIG, said they have been working on this project since last fall. The initial idea students brainstormed was to create benches that look like kolaches to create a place of interest within the traditions of the Czech heritage. Students decided on benches because they could be a placemaking attraction but are also functional. Students developed 2 design options, one flat bench and one tiered, with the help from local artist Briggs Farmer with Marion Synergy Metalworks. The color of the kolache is represented in the center of the bench under net topping to give a hammock feel. While thinking through the design process, students came up with a list of questions or possibilities surrounding maintenance, theft, vandalism and public safety (public safety requirements have been met). The benches would be located in front of the Czech museum and would either be steel or aluminum. The netting would be made from Amsteel which is a highly durable, flexible and braided-like material. The students chose to do these benches because they love their community and want to leave a mark and believe it's a unique addition to the City that would attract many generations to Czech Village.

Commissioners asked a series of questions, mostly focused on maintenance and durability. Briggs Farmer detailed various materials, measurements and construction design plans in response to questions. She also noted some of the operational details they've worked out with the museums, such as how they can be moved for museum events.

Cooper said they would like to request funds for at least 1 bench and that minimum is \$5k. Piersall asked if they have other funding sources. Brown said they have funds from ImOn and New Leader Manufacturing so far but fundraising was interrupted by COVID, and they are just getting back to asks. Piersall said the public art committee will discuss this more, and with more information on what the benches would look like and how they would function from a safety and maintenance perspective and a refined budget and dollar amount, the SSMID may reconsider funding in the future.

2021 Budget Discussion & Levy Rate Approval

Neumann said he built this draft budget with the presumption the levy rate would remain at \$1.25, and the City has projected total annual revenue to be \$47,580. The SSMID already has some committed expenses totaling \$4,908. Those commitments include:

- ConnectCR Pledge - \$2,500
- Mural park insurance - \$408
- Parking lot capital contribution - \$1k
- Mural park maintenance - \$1k (estimated)

Neumann said based on the administrative services proposal the SSMID chooses, they will be spending between \$6k-\$14,762. That leaves the SSMID between \$27,910-\$36,672 to spend on projects and priorities such as developing the mural park, uplighting the mural, expansion of banners, planters, benches and holiday décor, maintenance of current planting and watering plan or a multi-district project. Neumann highlighted a couple of priorities that would be little to no spend for the SSMID including discussions, research and planning into 16th Ave streetscape and 11th Ave artwalk that the City asked the SSMID to lead, elevate the SSMID's public policy advocacy and focus on stakeholder engagement.

Piersall asked when the budget needs to be submitted to the City. Neumann said the budget could be approved next month but the levy rate has more urgency. Piersall asked Commissioners what they think about changing the levy rate. Several Commissioners agreed to not change it and keep it at \$1.25 for reasons such as the SSMID still has money to spend, they don't want to raise it on a SSMID renewal year and would like to see our budget allocated before we ask for more revenue.

Pelley motioned to keep the levy rate at \$1.25 with Chadima seconding. The motion was unanimously approved. Komisar will e-mail Casey Drew and let him know of the SSMID's decision.

Piersall asked what the 2020 budget is for beautification/maintenance. Neumann said it is at \$15k which includes several items such as planting, watering, additional holiday décor, minimal streetscape enhancements. Neumann said the SSMID has underspent that budget in 2020. Piersall noted that the roundabout by St. Wenceslaus church is complete and there is an obligation for the SSMID to maintain those plantings, so that's an additional expense to that \$15k line items for the 2021 budget.

Additional discussion among commissioners focused on the mural pocket park, beautification efforts and extension of streetscape furniture and amenities. The general consensus was to shift more to infrastructure and less on communications than in the 2020 plan, and also to separate operational expenses from capital/investments.

Piersall summarized the budget consensus and asked Neumann to prep a budget for approval next month that incorporates these directions from the SSMID:

- \$15k for streetscape amenities per planning of the beautification committee
- An estimated amount for maintenance operations, separate from the beautification project budget
- The remainder in a project budget for the pocket park, another mural (or other projects)

Jelinek noted the mural park seems to have become a large scope of the SSMID's budget and said there are other projects the SSMID has talked about, such as pedestrian lights and improvements on 3rd Street. We should be looking at all of those options when determining things to pay for. Piersall said we haven't committed to the mural park other than mowing grass and shoveling snow and if we structure out budget in terms of a pot that is for operational expenses, committed obligations and the rest for infrastructure, it will be better designed to have the commission make decisions later about exactly what projects to take on. All of them are still options. Vernon said she believes there are a lot of people who will donate funds or services to projects, similar to what was done for the Mucha mural.

Disbursement Agreement with City

Piersall said the City has been great to work with during this process of the SSMD taking responsibility for our own money and having it in a separate account from the City. Dillon asked if anything would change in this agreement based

on who the SSMID decides to go with for administrative services. Piersall said once the administrative services decision is made, the SSMID would simply notify the City. Wasta said this agreement is the same as the MedQuarter agreement, just with names changed and a blank for the current SSMID balance and signature line. Signing off on this agreement says the SSMID will receive funds in our care and the City wants to make sure the SSMID is in City limitations on how tax dollars are used. Chadima asked if we have to sign this every year. Wasta said it is stated that way but the MedQuarter has been using it as a roll-over agreement.

Schaffer moved to approve the disbursement agreement and allowing Piersall to sign with Chadima seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.

SSMID Admin Services

Neumann said he doesn't view this as a competition between two organizations. Mainstreet and Economic Alliance have different focuses. If SSMID priorities are more aligned to Main Street's, he wants the SSMID to partner with them. But if SSMID priorities are more aligned with the Economic Alliance, he hopes the SSMID would stay partnered with them. Neumann said Vernon outlined a number of successes in her presentation last month and she was spot-on about the work Mainstreet is doing and the value they can provide. Neumann said he is equally as proud of the Economic Alliance and the work they've done in a pandemic/derecho year that was all about pivoting on the fly and providing support to make businesses successful. One key for the SSMID is to realize that all of the great things that Mainstreet and the Economic Alliance already do are benefits they get already, and the SSMID's priorities should be things that are above and beyond those – don't merely fund things the other organizations are already doing. Neumann detailed the "wheelhouse" of the work the Economic Alliance does in streetscape projects, economic development work with developers, business attraction, etc. Neumann said the Economic Alliance doesn't track store fronts and businesses like Main Street, but they do track tax base, job creation and capital investment, which illustrates some of the differences between Economic Alliance and Mainstreet.

The Economic Alliance proposed providing administrative services at the identical annual rate of \$14,762 as it did in 2020 but with a "not to exceed" provision where the SSMID would be charged less in the event of another unprecedented events that would result in cancellations or postponements of meetings or projects.

In response, Vernon reiterated that Mainstreet is physically in the district and the district is their only priority. Vernon said she believes Mainstreet can bring discipline to bidding projects out and getting people to donate services and goods to better leverage the SSMID's dollars.

Chadima recused herself from the voting because Mainstreet is a tenant of hers. She would like to be part of the discussion, but not the vote. Economic Alliance and Mainstreet staff and guests left the meeting, leaving Commissioners time to discuss. Commissioners voted 6-2 for transitioning administrative services to Mainstreet.

Mucha Image License Agreement

Commissioners had a brief discussion about the Mucha mural image and the National Czech and Slovak Museum. There will be a license agreement brought to the next meeting for Commissioners to consider.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 10:34 a.m.