



**Czech Village New Bohemia SSMID Meeting Minutes**  
**April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020 | 9:00 – 10:00 a.m. | Zoom Meeting**

**Present:** Craig Byers, Lijun Chadima, Stephanie Jelinek, Pam Lewis, Ana McClain, Chad Pelley, James Piersall, Bob Schaffer

**Guests:** Ben Dillon - Geonetric, Kimberly Loeffler – Corner Store Apothecary & More, Abby Huff & Monica Vernon – Main Street, Janelle McClain – public art committee member, Kelsey Worcester – HBK Engineering/beautification committee member, Jennifer Pratt – City of Cedar Rapids

**Economic Alliance Staff:** Jordan Atwater, Ellen Bardsley, Jessica Komisar, Doug Neumann, Jesse Thoeming

**Welcome and Call to Order**

Piersall welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

**Approval of Consent Agenda**

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

The reference to the Art Walk in the February minutes mentions 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Street but it should say 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Chadima moved approval of the amended February minutes with Lewis seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.

Although there was no financial report to review, Neumann said there has been less spending than we normally would be at this point and said everything is in routine order right now. He added the potential of a decline in property tax values could affect our revenues, but property tax revenues are a lagging factor in an economic recession and impacts aren't seen nearly as quickly as with income and sales tax revenues. It'll be next year's budget that we'll have to watch for potential impacts.

**New Commission Member Nominations**

Dillon has submitted his application to the City to become a SSMID commissioner. He is one of the owners of the Geonetric building and is involved in the community. Neumann said the application is still open and although the Mayor makes the appointments, the City does rely heavily on the SSMID to make recommendations and advocate for people to apply. Neumann will check with the City clerk's office to see who else may have applied. Some thought Mary Kay McGrath may have had some interest.

**Streetscape & Beautification Update**

Lewis and members of the beautification committee have met and had initial conversations with Lisa Slattery at Blooms. Blooms had proposed to plant more perennials, in addition to the planned annuals from Noelridge Greenhouse, in the Czech Village planters as those will last for on average 3 years and would give us something in the planters through the Winter months. Blooms also suggested to replace some of the top soil in the Czech Village planters with the trees as that hasn't been changed since 2008 and she believes that is a reason why some Czech Village plants are not thriving. As for NewBo planters, those would remain with annuals and current soil and if the perennials in Czech Village thrive and go over well, they can be something to consider for the NewBo planters in the future. Blooms provided three options for the committee and commission to consider:

1. Replace the top 4-6" of top soil in Czech Village planters, plant perennials along with annuals in Czech Village and all annuals in NewBo. This option would cost about \$4,600.
2. Replace the top 4-6" of top soil in Czech Village planters, do not plant perennials but only annuals in Czech Village and NewBo. This option would cost about \$3,400.
3. No replacement of top soil and use only annuals in Czech Village and NewBo. This option would cost about \$1,400.

Worcester and Lewis recommended replacing the top soil to ensure that the plants thrive this year and to use perennials in Czech Village to make the planters more attractive. McClain said with all of the COVID-19 impacts happening right now, it would be nice to have vibrant planters ready for foot traffic this Spring/Summer. Others echoed this opinion.

Neumann reminded the commission that increasing beautification was a priority for 2020 and said the SSMID could easily afford option number 1 costing \$4,600. Chadima asked if this would include planters on the 16<sup>th</sup> Ave bridge. Lewis said at this point pedestrian traffic isn't allowed on the bridge and we will wait until the bridge is open for any beautification efforts. Vernon said she likes the idea of different plants on 16<sup>th</sup> Ave compared to 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and said if there's room on the beautification committee, Main Street would like to have someone on it.

Loeffler asked if there are plans to extend beautification efforts further down 16<sup>th</sup> Ave towards U.S. Bank. Vernon suggested more trash cans and benches in that area as well. Lewis said there aren't plans for that at this point. Some asked whether the City would be involved in such decisions. Neumann suggested the City really looks to the SSMID for leadership and direction on issues like this, and while we'll have to confirm appropriate locations with the City, this can be a SSMID priority that we should look at if there's budget available later this year. Lewis said the beautification committee can add this to a future agenda to discuss.

Pelley moved for approval of Bloom's top tier option of replacing top soil in Czech Village planters, plant perennials and annuals in Czech Village and all annuals in NewBo costing approximately \$4,600 with McClain seconding. The motion was unanimously approved. Lewis and the committee will reach out to Blooms to move forward.

### **Public Art Update**

Piersall presented an aerial view map of the area that the City would like to see the Art Walk as part of the district vision plan. This is the park area south of Bottleworks/across from Iowa Running Company on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. Piersall said that area is currently owned by the Southside Development Group and we would need to discuss this area with them and potentially the Bottleworks association.

Piersall said he and the rest of the public art committee discussed the three different public art organizations that could help drive this project: Murals & More, Grant Wood Art Colony and Voices Dubuque. The committee unanimously voted to recommend that the commission move forward with using Murals & More for this initiative. Pelley motioned for approval of moving forward with Murals & More with Chadima seconding. The motion was unanimously approved. Piersall reviewed pictures of potential locations with the reminder that none of these locations have been decided on and that we would need to discuss with property owners and other stakeholders.

Lewis said there is a report from a Main Street group that came through our district and made recommendations and one of those recommendations was to consider the backs of Czech Village buildings for artwork as that is where customers are parking and is their first impression of the district. Huff said she has that report and would be happy to share. Vernon said Main Street works closely with historians and they have reports of what people in these neighborhoods are looking for.

Piersall said he would like to get something done yet this year which means moving to get Murals & More under contract and beginning work. He asked the commission for authority for the public art committee to negotiate a contract with Murals & More. They generally receive a small percentage of the overall project cost as their only fee, so we won't know a cost/price until the project is better defined, but we can get a contract in place. Lewis motioned for approval with Pelley seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.

Lewis asked if we would receive pushback from businesses or property owners when they see us using our funds for public art instead of any COVID-19 business support relief. Piersall said the committee did have this conversation and decided that public art would add to the vibrancy of the district which would draw people once businesses are open again. Pelley agreed that we should move forward with public art as it is one of our top three priorities.

### **Joint District Bike Loop Project**

Neumann said he and other SSMID directors had a positive meeting with the City and MPO this week. They see this project as very doable as most of the loop is using existing infrastructure and bike lanes and we were encouraged by City Hall to start the process. The map shown to commissioners is not final as there will need to be tweaks for the 16<sup>th</sup> Ave bridge closure and other construction conflicts. The loop would be designated by road markings and signage to direct people to various cross-district amenities. Neumann said we do not have the exact cost, but the City is helping generate that number and the costs will be primarily in paint markings and signage and the cost should fit into the budget capability of this SSMID under the project line item.

Neumann said the City asked when we see this being done and Neumann said the group asked for June 1<sup>st</sup>. While that may be aggressive, the City will be working hard to help us make that happen. Neumann said there is no commission action needed at this point.

### **Other Business**

Chadima said she knows we have a limited budget to help small business fight the COVID-19 impacts but asked if we can start the conversation of how we might be able to assist. Piersall said we can certainly talk about that but does have concerns on how we would make it fair and equitable. Chadima said she will brainstorm ideas in the meantime before our next meeting. Neumann said the Community Foundation has put a vehicle in place for business assistance similar to the grant funding in 2008 and 2016 but it is more challenging this time to raise money as all businesses are experiencing an impact.

Jelinek asked Pratt when VeoRide bikes and scooters will be available again. Pratt said they have been in constant communication with VeoRide and they are unsure at this time when the program will start back up and not adding any danger to the community. Because the service is used more for recreation than commuting or public transit, as it is in some other cities, Pratt said they are trying to judge when that type of demand and interest will return. Any feedback from the commission would be appreciated.

The next scheduled meeting is May 21<sup>st</sup> and it will be a Zoom meeting beginning at 9 a.m. Komisar will schedule that and add the link to the calendar invite.

### **Adjourn**

Chadima moved to adjourn the meeting with Byers seconding. The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 a.m.