

**Business Improvement District
318 Central Avenue**

**Via ZOOM – Recording available via the City of Great Falls records request
October 8, 2020**

Board Present: Max Grebe, Jason Kunz, Sherrie Arey
Board Present via Zoom: Trista Besich, Neal DuBois, Alison Fried, Karen Reiff
Staff Present: Joan Redeen
Guests: Christian Leinhauser, Scott Reasoner, Ty Rollins, Jolene Schalper

- I. **Call to order & Roll Call:** Max called the meeting to order at 9:01am; roll call of all present, a quorum was established.
- II. **Guests:** Scott Reasoner introduced himself, noting he was representing the ownership group of The Newberry, and wanted to address the BID grants programs.
- III. **BID Board: Conflict of Interest:** No board members had a conflict of interest, at this time. Joan reported that she still needs to connect with Alison, Trista, and Karen in regard to the new signature cards and items required by the City.
- IV. **Approval of minutes from 9-10-20 Board meeting:** Jason motioned to approve the meeting minutes from the 9/10/20 Board meeting, as presented. Trista seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**
- V. **Financials: Monthly Financials:** There were no financials at this time; August & September bank statements are ready, and Trista is due in to do the bank recs. Joan noted that the final version of the audit is in the office for any board members who wish to have a copy; a pdf was emailed to the Board. The final audit was delivered to the City. Joan noted that the Douglas Wilson is again recommending that the audit be published. She shared an email from the City's finance office that was received last year when this question came up. The City has noted that they do not feel it is necessary for the BID to publish their audit since it is included with the City's audit. The Board agreed that the audit does not need to be published. Joan shared the Budget versus Actual with the Board noting income of \$32K and expense of \$78K so far, this fiscal year. She noted that there remains a \$25K receivable from the City for the Wayfinding plan, and an invoice has been submitted to the City.
- VI. **Grant Program Committee:**

The grant schedule for FY 2021 was provided to the board. Current grants approved remaining to be paid out total \$329,214.00.

Joan reported that no further communication has been made with DSB Tower in regard to their façade grant. She informed the Board that the Façade grant program notes that all façade grants must be completed within one year of the date of approval or the grant will be rescinded.

The other grants on the schedule to review are Faster Bassett's interior grant; next month we have Albrecht building's façade grant, and three grants for the Gibson.

Joan noted that the Grant Program Committee has not met yet since September because they have recommended that the BID conduct a survey of property owners and do strategic planning, to see if grant programs are important to our property owners.

Ty reported on the Gibson Inn project, located at 621 Central Ave. He informed the Board that he is very bothered by the state of his building and his top priority is to get the building renovated and open; COVID has caused changes to the lending world so he is exploring alternatives. He is looking at possibly doing a partial remodel with fixing one wing with 25 rooms and the exterior; this would allow them to improve the look, remove the fence, and get the hotel open. He is hoping to have that phase up and running before next summer.

Jolene reported on the Albrecht building project, Kellergeist, located at 111 Central Ave. They have locked in their financing; 6-8 months of construction is set to commence in November. They are working on restoring the façade to the 1920's; the building was built in 1886.

Scott reported that The Newberry is close to closing on their financing for the construction of 420 Central Ave; it will be a large scale event and wedding venue. They believe it is a signature project for downtown; they'd like to figure out a solution for the BID to provide grant funding to them, they are trying to close the gap in their financing. They will be able to have just under 1,000 capacity for concerts; 300 seated for weddings; their conservative goal is to host 75K people annually for events. He noted that an event center, or concert space, is a project that was mentioned 33 times in the Downtown Master Plan. He noted that everything the BID focuses is on is what they are trying to do; he added that the partners feel that due to timing they are missing out on BID grant programs. They would welcome any help the BID can provide.

Max explained the Grant Schedule, that potential payouts of \$329K would be made in order of completion of construction. Max noted that this doesn't help the Newberry; Scott informed the Board that they are scheduled to commence construction in November and be completed in May or June 2021. He added that they might be in a better place to wait so that they can get funding from the BID in the future. Joan clarified that we are the only BID in the state of Montana that has ever provided grant programs, so it is unique in this state. She added that the BID has not budgeted anything for grants for this fiscal year, so the Board is unable to approve grants in this fiscal year. She also noted that the Grant Program Committee has only been recommending return of two grants, the Interior Grant with a lower cap of \$5K and the Business Incentive Grant, possibly with a cap of \$2,500. The Committee is not, at this time, recommending bringing back any other grant programs. She added that the DDP is trying to work with the City to create some programs that would utilize TIF funds and may include a façade grant program if the City Commission will approve such a program. Joan added that the grant programs were suspended in February, pre-COVID, and she had been under the assumption that the programs, in some form, would be back in March, which is why she continued to accept grant applications in the window of that month. She noted that the Newberry is not the only grant applicant that received the letter explaining that the programs, as they had previously existed, no longer exist. Discussion followed on all of the services that the BID provides to our property owners. Jolene noted, as an Economic Developer, that the grant programs are an excellent tool and they have helped to spark development downtown. She encouraged the Committee to be creative with how to utilize these tools effectively; she noted that perhaps the BID should consider putting one large sum into one project per year. She hopes that the Committee looks at some creative ways to make big impacts; larger grants have a lot more effect even if there are fewer of them. She recommended we consider including a requirement that a letter showing that financing is in place be provided in the criteria for grants. She added that the BID budget will increase upon completion of large projects, as property values for those projects will increase. Max noted that in the past five years development has dramatically outpaced the ROI on the assessment that the BID receives. He added that \$329K in grants payable is almost twice our annual budget and the BID has to take a step back and review and be fiscally responsible.

Joan shared some recommendations from Max in regard to the survey of property owners; she inquired with the Board if they thought incentivizing property owners to return their surveys would be helpful. Joan will forward Max's email to the Board for their review and input. Her goal is to craft a survey and have it out within the next month.

The Board asked that an update letter be sent out to Faster Bassett.

Neal noted that he thinks our communications are clear that we expect most of our projects be completed within one year.

Joan informed the Board of the current process in regard to grant extensions.

Discussion followed on DSB Tower's response to the update request for their façade grant; Scott Blumfield noted that due to COVID things slowed considerably and re-routed funding to their elevator and he hopes to be able to restart the exterior project in the next six months, or so. Sherrie motioned to rescind the façade grant for DSB Tower since there was no estimated date of completion provided and our grant criteria requires façade grants be completed within one year of approval. Neal seconded.

Motion passed unanimously.

VII. **Old Business:**

Beautification: ArtsFest: Joan provided copies of the current edition of Montana Press; their October issue just came out this week, featuring ArtsFest. She will also email the pdf version of the article to all. She added that the conversation has already begun for 2021. Sherrie inquired if outside funding will be sought; Joan noted that will be the case so that we can fund a mural outside of the BID. She noted that this year's funding from NWGF's, AARP and the donations from property owners allowed the BID to fund the mural on Miss Linda's and also seal all of the murals.

Holiday Decor: Joan reported that we are coming up on the holiday season. She noted that we spend between \$3-\$5K for installation and removal of the décor; the décor is installed in November and removed in January. She added that last year we purchased new lights and installed them at great cost. She inquired with the Board about new lighting; the Board agreed that this was not an expense they want to incur at this time. Joan recommended that we budget more for holiday décor next year and purchase new lights in FY22.

Graffiti: Joan reported that we have removed quite a bit of graffiti in the past month at multiple locations.

Downtown Great Falls Association: Joan reported that DGFA will be holding Ghost Tours, they are offering 10 different tour times and tickets are on sale now, they often sell out quickly. Safe Trick or Treat is on Saturday 10/31 from 11am to 4pm; normally it is 3-5pm but CCHD is allowing it to occur with it spread out over the entire day to reduce the crowds. Elks Lodge is hosting organizations that wish to set up and hand out candy there, as well. Ladies Night is being held 11/19. Kellie has three board positions that are open for three-year terms, bios are due to Kellie by 10/26.

Downtown Partnership: Calvary Chapel: Joan reported that the CUP was approved by the City Commission, so they are moving forward with their plans for the corner of 5th and Central. She added that the Commission also approved the ordinance change for alcohol sales, so projects like the Newberry will not be impacted by Calvary Chapel's presence.

TIF: Joan reported that she is working with the City Forrester and Planning on figuring out how to submit for TIF funds to tackle tree trimming and replacement downtown. The DDP recommended that funds be pursued for the entire Master Plan boundaries, not just the BID boundaries. She is exploring, with the City, if we can submit one TIF application for \$25K per year for five years for tree work. Her goal is to tackle the BID trees this winter.

Joan informed the Board that she and Kellie are working on writing programs that property owners would be able to access, utilizing TIF funds. These programs include Code Compliance issues like Fire Suppression and ADA Compliance; Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED); and a façade grant program. We do not know if the City Commission will approve all of these, but we are working toward that goal; Joan encouraged the Board to support these programs when they are before the Commission.

Discussion followed on City owned properties and the use of TIF funds on these properties, as they are non-contributing buildings to the TIF. The Board was updated on the Civic Center façade project, the City plans to pursue TIF funding for this project.

Wayfinding: Joan shared the prototype for the Wayfinding sign. The draft plan is expected to be released to the public on 10/16; there will be a brief comment period, and all are encouraged to provide input. The plan is being presented to the City Commission on 10/22. She shared proposed sign locations with the Board. She reported that a meeting was held with the City in regard to administration & implementation of the Plan and ownership of the signs, once installed. The DDP has agreed to take on the task of administration/implementation. She noted that this does not mean that the DDP will be responsible for installation of every sign; DDP will be responsible for installation of all signs that direct individuals to destinations in the Downtown Master Plan Boundaries and the DDP will find partners to fund any other signs. She added that Public Works has been asked to take over ownership of the signs,

once installed. Discussion on this continues with the City but the goal is to have an MOU in place between the City and the DDP as to who has what duties.

Downtown Safety Alliance: Joan reported that the Safety Alliance has not been meeting as they do not have any action items they are working to achieve. She asked that the Board come up with safety related tasks that can be assigned to the BID, DGFA, NWGF, DDP and the Neighborhood Council. She reported on the status of the Race Relations committee with GFPD that she is serving on. She noted that GFPD is moving forward on the potential Traffic Court idea; they met with Sara Sexe and Bill Bronson to figure out the program. Chief Bowen is still working on creating education and training for his officers in regard to diversity.

Great Falls Development Authority: Jolene reported for Christian, who is currently on active duty. She noted that their key focus for the past month has been on Invest Downtown; an event they are hosting via Zoom on Tuesday 10/13 for one hour at 9am. This event is for developers, entrepreneurs and businesses that may expand. The action they have in mind is for them to choose to invest in Downtown Great Falls. They've been pursuing attendees for this event from all over the state and neighboring states. They are also recording the session and will be sending it out; they currently have 24 registered but anticipate that to rise. They will be highlighting that Great Falls is an underserved, low cost of entry market with an opportunity zone in the downtown area. They will be sharing some existing businesses that have been investing in opportunity zone projects; they will highlight new businesses that have opened recently; they'll share about TIF funds that support projects; GAP financing; equity, market reach, brokers and virtual tours of our downtown. They will be sharing successes like the Milwaukee Depot project, the Northern Lofts project, FCR, Tracy's, Kellergeist, and a couple of new announcements will be made. They will be showcasing the visioning, as well. The goal of this event is the ripple effect, creating awareness. She noted that more people have noticed that Great Falls is aggressively marketing. She added that Barbara Wold will be doing virtual presentations and will be conducting one-on-one sessions that Christian is working to line up. They are entitled Grow Your Customer Base and Satisfaction, they will be held every Tuesday and Thursday in October at 2pm; recordings will be sent on these presentations, as well. Joan recommended that Kellie be informed so she can include this in her eblast. Jolene added that they think Christian is doing an excellent job in his role as the Downtown Business Development Officer.

Parking Commission: Joan reported that they are moving forward with pay stations on Central Ave and meters on side streets; she did not know a timeline for installation.

Personnel: Joan had nothing to report at this time.

Urban Art Project: Joan reported that she emailed to the Board a letter from Cortni Harant, the director of the Urban Art Project (UAP). The UAP is asking that the BID commit, for up to two years, to act as the fiscal agent for the UAP. The Square has asked the UAP to find another fiscal agent, as quickly as possible. Joan noted that she has no objections, and that she had previously recommended it. She added that there will not be a separate bank account, it will be run just as the Roberts Playground or Coins for a Cause are done. She noted that she does not feel that it will be a lot of extra work and will be for a limited time frame as the UAP pursues its own 501c3 status. The Board did not express any concerns and will take formal action on this item in November.

Work Plan - FY 2021: Joan acknowledged that the Work Plan, as always, continues to be worked. She added that she thinks it might be a good idea to send the Work Plan to property owners with the survey. The Board agreed this was a good idea.

VIII. **New Business:** No new business, at this time.

IX. **Public Comment:** No public comment, at this time.

X. **Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 10:24am.

Max Grebe, Chair

Joan Redeen, Staff

Date: _____

Date: _____