

Manchester Downtown Development

September 18, 2019

Approved Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Members present: Ray Berg, Susan Fielder, Leslie Kiesel, Sue LaRocque, and Pat Vaillencourt were in attendance. Denise Collins, Aaron LaRock and Julie Marvin-Manders were unable to attend.

Public Participation: Mary Jo Crossno, Manchester Area Garden Inspiration Club; Steve Girbach, Manchester Underground Music and Art; Kathy LaHaie, Sassy Peacock; Linda Stevens, Village Hair Forum; and Jennifer Wojtowicz, Proper Property Services were in attendance.

Crossno asked several questions regarding the trimming/replacing dead trees in the Central Business area, the use of weed control in the garden near the post office, and the possibility of adding a water source for the flower garden east of Over the Edge Sports Bar. Vaillencourt took notes for further Village response to Crossno's concerns.

Stevens, LaHaie and Wojtowicz were invited to participate in the Chamber of Commerce agenda item discussion.

Approval of August 21, 2019 minutes.

Berg moved and LaRocque seconded a motion to approve minutes as amended. All in favor.

Approval of Agenda

Agenda items were reviewed. The CTAP Grant, the KaBOOM Grant, and *Make It Manchester* FaceBook updates were tabled for future discussion. The DDA Beautification Award was added to the agenda. Kiesel moved and LaRocque supported the motion to approve the agenda as amended. All in favor.

AGENDA

Chamber of Commerce

Wojtowicz, representing the Chamber, distributed a multipage document introducing a planned commercial “Open House” on Friday, October 25th from 9:30 am to 2:30 pm. Organizers are still developing a budget, but asked if the Village and the DDA could financially support the event. Speaking for the DDA, Vaillencourt stated our total yearly budget is so minimal, our financial support would be limited, but many DDA members voiced enthusiasm and asked how they could personally be involved.

Some aspects of the “Open House” Project would include

- collective advertising for available commercial space
- inviting Village, Chamber, and DDA members to welcome visitors and answer questions
- have vacant buildings opened and staffed by realtors and/or building owners
- have printed property information available.

Wojtowicz is confident that at least ten commercial investors would be present.

Chamber representatives asked about Village funding for drone-marketing. Vaillencourt recommended the CameraKidd drone video by Rodney Kidd, which is currently available and professionally describes many positive aspects of our community.

In addition to the planned commercial “Open House” information, the Chamber also distributed responses to a recent survey. Empty store fronts and buildings in need of basic maintenance were frequently mentioned. Additional survey results are available through the Chamber of Commerce. Vaillencourt mentioned the MEDC grant that we would have applied for five years ago. Even though the grant would have assisted building owners, they did not support the grant.

Next steps: Vaillencourt will present a proposal at the next Village Council Meeting and request financial support for the Commercial “Open House”. Chamber members will also approach the Township representatives for their financial support.

Cityhood Update

Vaillencourt reported that Wallace recently met with Lansing officials to begin the survey process, mandated by State, to begin the city-hood process. Village Council approved circulating a petition, which requires approval of 5% of village population. Vaillencourt is confident that we will reach the target of 150 signatures. Village Council will then begin working with the State Boundary Commission, a process that may take up to 6 months.

Beautification Award

Jeff Fahey has been contacted regarding the September Beautification Award presentation. Fielder is waiting to add his comments to a Manchester Mirror article. DDA members nominated the Sassy Peacock, River Raisin Antiques, LaRock Dental, Steelegrafix, and Manchester Eye Care to receive DDA Beautification Awards through the end of 2019. The building improvements sponsored by these businesses have improved services to their patrons and improved the ambiance to our community. Fielder complimented Frank's Pizza, a previous Beautification Award recipient, for continuing their building improvements.

Vacant Building Ordinance

Vaillencourt reported on Village Council's research concerning vacant building ordinances in several other Michigan communities. Legal issues such as determining civil versus misdemeanor infractions are being reviewed. The Michigan Municipal League's standards regarding safety will be referenced when the Council requires inspections covering a specific criteria list. The costs of safety inspections will be the responsibility of vacant building owners. Council is considering a graduated fine for building owners who remain out of compliance.

3RD Thursday Update – Park & Trail Dedication

The official ribbon cutting ceremony is scheduled for tomorrow evening at 6 pm. Two bouncy houses for children, a DJ, and a canoe sprint race will provide festive activities for attendees. The Village is paying for the DJ and half the bouncy house costs. Other 3rd Thursday downtown activities include several vendors on Clinton Street, an international food crawl, live music, wagon rides, and rock painting.

Grocery Store Update

DDA members recognized Berg for the informational articles in the Ann Arbor News - M Live and the Manchester Mirror. He is still in contact with 4 of the 8 original grocery stores being recruited. Kroger's has expressed interest and is still considering a Manchester location. But the process will take time. Kroger's may fund a "depot" style market, where preordered food products will be delivered to a specific Manchester location.

Vaillencourt reported the Village Council is progressing on the State of Michigan's "Ready Redevelopment Program", which among other advantages, will allow the future Acorn Grocery Store to continue applying for grants. She also reported, the Village Council has approved a request to continue the Farmers' Market (to be located in the Acorn Building) through the winter. The Winter Farmers' Market will open November 1st.

Vaillencourt reported the Healthy Smiles Building has been purchased by Canadian investors, who are researching feasible businesses that our community can support. Berg recommended the Gibbs Study which has been invaluable to the Grocery Store recruitment process. Vaillencourt also reported that a new vendor will operate a similar business, when Kellie's Restaurant closes. A new business will open in the "Dandelion" space on Oct 1st, and the Laundry mat has been sold.

Next Meeting: October 16, 2019

Adjournment 10:00 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Fielder, secretary