

Minutes  
Cascade Charter Township  
Downtown Development Authority Board of Directors  
Tuesday October 19, 2021  
5:30 P.M.  
2870 Jacksmith Ave SE

**ARTICLE 1.** Chairwoman Pupilava called the meeting to order at 5:30 P.M.  
Members Present: Kleyla, Vogel, Stephan, Pupilava, Growney, Lesperance  
Members Absent: Makkar, Siegle, DeWitt  
Others Present: DDA Director Korhorn and Township Manager Swayze

**ARTICLE 2. Approve the current Agenda**

**Motion was made by Member Stephan to approve the current Agenda. Supported by Supervisor Lesperance. Motion carried 6 to 0.**

**ARTICLE 3. Approve the minutes of the regularly scheduled and informational September 21, 2021 meetings**

**Motion was made by Supervisor Lesperance to approve minutes from both September 21, 2021 meetings as written. Supported by Member Growney. Motion carried 6 to 0.**

**ARTICLE 4. Acknowledge visitors and those wishing to speak to non-agenda items.**

There were not any visitors that wished to speak to non-agenda items.

**ARTICLE 5. Budget Discussion**

Township Manager Swayze shared the current draft of the 2022 DDA budget. He included handouts for Members including the basic budget and debt service schedule. Tuffy and the open space loan are the only two on the debt schedule. Looking at the DDA Fund Revenues, there was a spike in 2019 which can be attributed to the way income was calculated for the Tuffy loan. There was also a spike in 2020 which is attributed to the Pathway Project loan and how it had to be split as part of it was in the DDA and part of it was outside the DDA. There was a sharp decrease in 2021 which is attributed to a combination of the pandemic and how that artificially deflated the taxable value of area hotels, causing them to appear to be worth less than in previous years. This has caused some area hotels to contest their taxable value and request refunds. Where this becomes a larger problem is when taxable value has a sharp decrease and then can only increase by the amount of inflation or 5% per year, even if the hotel value bounces back up to previous levels. He shared that the numbers in the budget are what the taxable values are as of now but it is possible that hotels may contest their taxable value again this coming year.

Manager Swayze shared that the owner of the Tuffy location that DDA holds the loan for wants to transfer his lease to a new owner due to poor health and what is most likely an estate plan. The township has the authority to approve or deny the transfer.

Supervisor Lesperance asked when Manager Swayze found out about the owner's intent to transfer the lease and Manager Swayze said that he had learned of it two days before the meeting.

Manager Swayze discussed the opportunity to pay of the DDA's current loans. He said that the Tuffy loan cannot be paid off early until 2024, so that was not currently an option. He also explained that there is a law that states the DDA can't collect library revenue unless there is debt on the DDA books. He also explained that keeping money in the bank is not as profitable as it once was because interest rates are currently quite low.

The next line item was the 28<sup>th</sup> St Bus (861-100). The DDA was originally covering 100% of the cost but as of September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021, the system moved to a revenue service model. The revenue service model is good through 2022 and then the board can look at any changes they may want to make to the bus service contract. The way the 2022 budget is set up, the revenue on the 2022 budget assumes the revenue model will continue at the same rates for the rest of 2022 as the current contract.

DDA Administrative line item 802-300 includes half of the pay for the DDA director and the average cost of one buildings and grounds employee.

Engineering line item 851-000 contains \$75,000 set aside for the DDA to start looking for a project they want to sponsor or consultant they could use to target future funding priorities and decisions. The money in the account is set to be double the yearly revenue, so the DDA is encouraged to find projects they want to begin spending the money on.

Line item 931-000, maintenance and repair, includes \$35,000 allocated for stamped concrete sealing that must take place every couple years.

Line 950-000 includes \$50,000 for property tax refunds as that worked out to be a larger expenditure than expected in the last couple years due to the hotels and taxable value contention. There are currently a large number of cases on the docket disputing taxable value.

Line item 967-000 includes special projects allocations for DDA lighting/decorations (\$15,000), special events (\$15,000), pr services (\$5,000) marketing/branding materials (\$15,000), tactical urbanism (\$20,000), and flower/landscaping projects (\$20,000).

The capital outlay line (970-000) is for the \$80,000 village lighting contract that was approved back in 2020 but has yet to be completed due to the pandemic and companies running behind.

If the DDA fund balance increases as predicted, there will be an addition of around \$350,000 to revenue which is one of the reasons why the DDA needs to start allocating some of their funds to specific projects.

Member Stephan asked what the \$2,500 donation related to the Metro cruise was for. Manager Swayze explained that that was an external donation to the DDA for use on the Metro cruise and the section showing the expenditure for the Metro Cruise was in a separate expenditures section; he would reword those lines so that would make more sense in the final report.

Member Vogel asked what expenditures Manager Swayze saw as 'risks'. Manager Swayze said that the main 'risk' is how the taxable value cases go with the hotels in district. A second 'risk' would be a general downturn in the economy and a third would be the taxing authorities coming forward and requesting more direct budget control for DDA's, which tends to occur every few budget cycles.

Chair Puplava confirmed that, if the counties were going to begin raising support for tax changes, citizens would be able to see that coming a little while out and Manager Swayze agreed with her.

Member Stephan asked if the DDA reports to the county on these requests or does the county report to the DDA? Director Korhorn explained that the DDA creates annual reports with all of the numbers for budgeting and expenditures for the year, as required by the state, and sends reports to the state and taxing authorities. Manager Swayze said that the informational meeting that they held in September was for the taxable districts to come talk to the DDA and get information.

Chair Puplava said that Manager Swayze had done well with his budget writeup and explanation and asked what the next step for the DDA was? Manager Swayze said that the budget plan is a living document, up until it is approved by the board, and can be updated as the year goes on. Members should think about any changes they believe the budget should have and any projects they want to work on this budget cycle so that the budget can be amended to include them.

**ARTICLE 6. Consider Holiday Lights at Tassell & Museum Garden Park**

Director Korhorn shared the Tassell Park and Museum Gardens Park holiday lighting proposal with the board. AAA Lawn Care is who the township has used in the past to decorate these two parks with holiday lights. They have sent an invoice for \$4,556 for this season's putting up, taking down, and light maintenance.

Member Stephan asked when the holiday lights season takes place? Director Korhorn said that it usually occurs after Thanksgiving. The lights generally stay up until around late January but the end date can be somewhat flexible.

Supervisor Lesperance asked how many years AAA Lawn Care has done the lighting? Director Korhorn said approximately the last four or five years and that the township grounds staff generally put-up holiday lights on the streetlights in the district, but they

simply don't have enough time to also set up and maintain lighting for these two parks as well.

Supervisor Lesperance and Chair Puplava concurred that they should bid out the project in 2022 and look for anything they thing should be added or changed for the following season.

Chair Puplava shared that Bronner's has a Christmas sale in January and February and that would be a good time for the DDA to purchase any decorations they would want to add or replace for the 2022 holiday season.

Member Stephan said that he liked that there is someone currently set to do the lighting for this year but everyone should take pictures and look for opportunities that could be taken next year when the project is bid out.

**Motion was made by Chair Puplava to move forward with AAA installing and maintaining lights for the 2021 holiday season and bid out the project for 2022. Supported by Supervisor Lesperance. Motion carried 6 to 0.**

#### **ARTICLE 7. Review Complete Streets Project List**

Director Korhorn went through the list of incomplete projects, starting with ones that are in district. These projects included: improvements to the Thornapple River Dr sidewalk, completing the gateway raised median sections on 28<sup>th</sup> St just West of Old 28<sup>th</sup> St, expanding the sidewalk on the North side of 28<sup>th</sup> St, adding non-motorized connections to the commercial center on the East side of the Cascade/28<sup>th</sup> St intersection, and installing a multi-lane roundabout at the 28<sup>th</sup> St and Cascade Rd intersection. According to Chair Puplava and Director Korhorn, the roundabout was discussed by the DDA in past years and put on hold due to concerns from residents and business owners. Chair Puplava added that people were afraid to drive through them and didn't understand how pedestrians could cross without a stoplight. Businesses near the proposed roundabout were also against building it as they didn't believe they would have as much visual attention from people driving by if they didn't have to pause at the light. General project recommendations included potential conversion of Old 28<sup>th</sup> St into a two-lane road with bike lanes or on-street parking to slow traffic speeds and/or reduce cut-through traffic, adding additional vertical measures such as banner poles on each side of Cascade Rd, widening existing 5-6 ft sidewalks along Cascade Rd wherever feasible to allow for more room for pedestrians or bikes, and adding bike racks/bike parking facilities throughout the village area.

Outside of the district projects included adding gateway raised median sections to signify when cars are entering and leaving the village district as well as creating a walkway or path over the Thornapple River.

Chair Puplava asked how to get the type of projects from the 'Complete Streets' list added to the survey so residents can share what projects they prioritize? Member Kleyla said that the first survey is very short and involves what type of projects residents prioritize very broadly. She said that the second survey would dive deeper and be more

detailed about what projects they want to take place within the categories they expressed interest in in the first survey.

Chair Puplava suggested adding some of the items on the 'Complete Streets' list to the survey to see if the items listed on it are still what the residents want. Member Stephan said that the 'Complete Streets' list is ten years old and it may be time to look at the list to see what still applies and what doesn't and use it as more of a reference document than an active plan moving forward. Member Kleyla said that she believes parts of the plan are still useful and apply. Member Vogel suggested the board look ahead to issues that they may see coming down the road and employ tactical urbanism to test new solutions for the future. Chair Puplava stated that she likes the idea of testing concepts they may want to do on a larger scale in the future as there isn't much they can do with the plan until the survey moves forward.

Member Vogel said that there are a number of businesses downtown that actively engage with the DDA and it would be good to ask them what they see as contributing to their success as a business and what metrics they use to measure success. He believes that some tactical urbanism attempts will succeed and some will fail but that is the point of testing ideas.

Supervisor Lesperance shared about a 'Green up Cascade' initiative and how that helps slow down the flow of traffic. Member Growney suggested adding a roundabout outside of DDA jurisdiction as a way to slow people down before they get to the village. Member Vogel suggested highlighting the current reasons for slowing down traffic in the area. He said to use the current situations and messaging to bring about change. There aren't a lot of new subdivisions being built currently and the homes that once belonged to the elderly are turning over to younger families. Chair Puplava liked this idea because it can help explain the safety reason and have today's citizens understand why a change is being made.

Director Korhorn suggested that the board keep in mind that what's good for the village area isn't necessarily what is good for the entire Cascade district as there are four very distinct areas in Cascade Township. Member Vogel confirmed that different areas of Cascade have different needs. Member Kleyla shared that, when the 'Complete Streets' plan was created, a lot of work and research was put into it and there are still important nuggets in it that have been deeply researched but not yet come to fruition.

Supervisor Lesperance shared that McKenna, a community planning, design and building services firm, is looking at data and concerns from other boards in the area and they may be an asset to get on board for some consulting and master plan work.

Member Vogel asked if we were optimizing traffic flow in all corridors?

Chair Pupilava said they would add a line item to the agenda for the next meeting and asked members to send their ideas for projects and tactical urbanism to Director Korhorn and they will discuss them then.

Member Vogel suggested taking the top four intersections in the district and seeing how many accidents are happening (increasing or decreasing) as that may shine a light on problems they may not have realized existed.

Supervisor Lesperance said that there are some things the board doesn't have control over, such as this situation with the road commission, so maybe it would be better to shift focus to something other than the roads/intersections.

Chair Pupilava said that looking for trends and seeing what the best plan may be could be achieved with tactical urbanist.

Member Vogel suggested Cascade and 28<sup>th</sup> St and Cascade and Thornapple River Drive were two of the intersections he thinks are important to include.

Member Growney said that they should look into where there are empty spots in the center of the roads where they could put circular plant pots or something similar.

Member Vogel suggested doing each step of the investigative process, like just starting at one intersection, and then find out what works and what doesn't before researching all of the intersections and making change on a large scale.

Chair Pupilava and Member Vogel requested a timeline for when McKenna would have the information they needed available? Member Kleyla said that she wanted a milestone timeline because getting through the first survey has been painful. She said they'd know more on a timeline once they got through the first survey and she would share with them that she was seeking a timeline.

Member Stephan said that they're going to need to look ahead to where the money will be allocated so that they can set their preliminary budget. Member Kleyla said that they should have information from the survey in the first quarter of 2022 and they can try to use those results as an indicator as to what residents are most concerned about.

Member Vogel shared that he comes from a project development background with milestones and finding out the risks are and the resources needed to achieve goals. They need to increase visibility of the project and see where things are going. Currently the survey feels like a black box and no one can see what is happening. Member Kleyla believes that the reason she is on both boards is for communication between them and that she's been giving them all of the information as it comes out. She said that she hopes the survey will have been sent out by the next DDA meeting.

Supervisor Lesperance asked if the survey would be coming out before the holiday or if they were waiting until after the holidays? Member Kleyla said she doesn't know but will look into it.

Member Vogel wanted a timeline and update at every meeting as to where they were with their strategic plan. Member Kleyla said that she will be on the other side of that as well, telling the committee that the DDA has money they are waiting to spend until they hear the plans from the survey.

**ARTICLE 8. Any Other Business**

**a. Bus Committee**

Chair Pupilava said that they will have a meeting at the beginning of the year about the bus committee. Director Korhorn said that Chair Pupilava, Member Stephan, Member Vogel, and Supervisor Lesperance had agreed to be part of this committee. Chair Pupilava wants to invite members of other boards to the bus committee meeting as well.

**b. Strategic Plan Update**

Discussed during the review of the 'Complete Streets Project List' portion of the meeting.

**c. Next Meeting: November 16, 2021.** Supervisor Lesperance asked if they generally have a December meeting. Director Korhorn said that they have one scheduled but quite often end up cancelling it.

**ARTICLE 9. Adjournment**

**Motion to adjourn was made by Supervisor Lesperance. Supported by Member Vogel. Motion carried 6 to 0. The meeting was adjourned at 6:47 P.M.**

Respectfully submitted,

Rene Growney, Secretary