

Minutes  
Cascade Charter Township  
Downtown Development Authority Board of Directors  
Tuesday November 16, 2021  
5:30 P.M.  
2870 Jacksmith Ave SE

**ARTICLE 1.** Chairwoman Puplava called the meeting to order at 5:30 P.M.  
Members Present: Vogel, Kleyla, Dewitt, Stephan, Puplava, Lesperance, Makkar  
Members Absent: Growney, Siegle  
Others Present: DDA Director Korhorn and others on the sign-in sheet

**ARTICLE 2. Approve the current Agenda**  
**Motion was made by Supervisor Lesperance to approve the current Agenda.**  
**Supported by Member Makkar. Motion carried 7 to 0.**

**ARTICLE 3. Approve the minutes from the October 19, 2021 meeting**  
**Motion was made by Member Kleyla to approve the minutes from the October 19, 2021 meeting as written. Supported by Supervisor Lesperance. Motion carried 7 to 0.**

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

Craig Meurlin attended the meeting and spoke about some of the things he noticed from the previous meeting's budget discussion. He said that what was listed as a 'spike in fund revenue in relation to how income was calculated due to the Tuffy Loan' didn't make sense as income is not calculated differently for a loan versus not a loan. He believed that the current change in ownership of Tuffy was an opportunity to begin discussions with the prior owner about moving the business to a different site so it's current site could be freed up for other businesses and the DDA to better develop the area. He thought DDA members should know how to spend the money they were accumulating and, if they didn't, the money should go back to the public. He didn't think the DDA should be looking for ways to spend money or paying for a consultant to find beneficial projects.

Speaking on the Complete Street Project and turnabout at 28<sup>th</sup> and Cascade, he said that the roundabout is one of the worst things they could do and the residents and business owners don't want it. He believed that the DDA should throw out the idea and not research it any further. He also expressed his dislike for raised median sections as he believes they are dangerous; he doesn't believe traffic is going too fast there. The 'Welcome to Cascade' sign at the 36<sup>th</sup> street entrance/exit that he believes cost approximately \$250,000 was another item he didn't see as a good use of DDA funds.

Meurlin also expressed his disagreement with tactical urbanism, saying that he didn't know what it is but he doesn't think money should be spent on it. He thinks the money should instead be spent on what the residents want.

**ARTICLE 5. Discuss Flower Pot/Landscape Bed RFP**

Director Korhorn presented the current RFP for the existing flowerpots and planting as well as the redesign of the landscaping in the bed at 6820 Cascade Road. The DDA thought that starting small would be best for this year and then could be expanded at a later time if the board wanted to move forward with that.

A draft RFP was in the meeting packet and more details would go into it once the time was closer and some of the decisions were more fleshed out. Director Korhorn said that she was looking for some feedback on the RFP, such as the length of the contract, etc.

Chair Pupilava asked if on page three, where they were talking about criteria for plants, should it be listed that they are supposed to be viable for three or four seasons. Director Korhorn said she would add that in. Chair Pupilava also asked about watering as she was unsure if the building and grounds employees would be taking care of that or if it were something that should be listed in the RFP. Director Korhorn said that the existing pots have irrigations that goes directly to them and she was unsure if the bed at 6820 had its own irrigation, but she would look into it. Chair Pupilava also suggested that they request applicants include information on cost and execution of any additional watering or changes to irrigation that would be needed if their plan were accepted. Member Kleyla suggested making a map to show any applicants and building and grounds where the pots were to be located. Chair Pupilava asked about the section that mentions plants are to be there 'spring, summer, and fall' and Director Korhorn said it should be changed to say 'summer, fall, and winter' as spring is generally too tricky to keep these types of plants alive.

Supervisor Lesperance suggested something should be included about adding 'creativity' as one of the criteria for evaluation. The committee liked that idea. Member Vogel asked if this RFP was just targeting the current pots or if they were tying the tactical urbanism initiative into this project as well. Chair Pupilava said that they were only including current pots and the one bed in this RFP for 2022 and would look into doing more if they wanted to in 2023. She also suggested specifying a preference for Michigan native plants for the pots in the RFP but the committee thought that would be too limiting.

Chair Pupilava said that she thought it would be best to leave timing and turnaround to Director Korhorn and the committee would review the RFP after changes were made. Director Korhorn said that sounded good but should the section on page four that says, 'planters to be planted no later than the weekend of' be left up to the landscaping company? Member Kleyla said that should be dependent on weather because they don't want frost to take out the plantings and Chair Pupilava suggested giving them a target date of 'by Memorial Day' and put it on the companies creating the proposals as they know the growing schedule.

Supervisor Lesperance said that she thinks she knows who does Ada's planters and would check in with them for some information on how they run the program.

## **ARTICLE 6. Discuss DDA Projects & Tactical Urbanism Ideas**

Director Korhorn shared that tactical urbanism is a low-cost way to test projects in an area before spending a lot of money on permanent infrastructure. Chair Pupilava requested members submit ideas for tactical urbanism and Member Kleyla sent in some ideas for the committee to discuss.

Member Kleyla's first idea was de-paving and adding food trucks, pop up cafes, and retail in the Thornapple Center parking lot on Cascade Road or in the D&W parking lot. The Thornapple Center is currently an 'aesthetic disaster' with pot holes, outdated buildings, and general disrepair of the area. Member Kleyla thought it would be a great area to turn into an outdoor venue with spots for food and entertainment. Director Korhorn said she was already checking with the lawyer to see if they can use tax dollars on private property. Chair Pupilava thought it was a great idea but we first need to see if it were something that could be done legally. Some members liked the idea of having a farmers' market there but Director Korhorn said they had explored that idea a few years ago and the local farmers said that there were already too many farmers markets in the area and it was saturated but that was something they could explore again to see if that were still true.

Member Dewitt asked if there was a list of township-owned buildings and property. Director Korhorn said that, in the district, they own the parcel below Tuffy, the Tuffy parcel, township office buildings, and the property next to the Wisner Center. Member Kleyla suggested taking parcels of land that aren't currently being used and creating community gardens that everyone could use. It was suggested that a township properties map should be made, if it doesn't already exist, as that would give the committees a way to see layout of areas they have to work with.

Supervisor Lesperance suggested planting a tree in the knoll at the Museum Garden Park where they put up a fake Christmas tree now but had a real tree there in the past.

Member Kleyla's second idea was adding pop up cafes for expanded outdoor dining. The pandemic has forced some local restaurants to move more of their patrons outside and the DDA could help spruce up those outdoor venues. Chair Pupilava said they needed to be careful with how this is approached as the variances that were passed for outdoor dining during the pandemic in the previous year had to go through the Planning Commission so they didn't run into any zoning issues. Director Korhorn explained that there had been an administrative approval process for restaurants to have outdoor seating/dining structures in their parking lots but that process has expired. Now businesses cannot have these structures in their parking lots but can have them on their sidewalks.

Member Vogel didn't think that enhancing outdoor seating may be the most beneficial project for the immediate future due to the labor shortage and companies potentially being unable to staff their current seating, let alone adding more, but it could work long term to improve business and utilization of space. Chair Pupilava asked if anyone knew why people were against the continuation of this ordinance and Director Korhorn

shared that she mostly heard from people that it didn't make sense to change legislation permanently when most businesses didn't take advantage of the opportunity the first time around. On the flip side, some people didn't see a reason not to extend the ordinance when there were businesses where it was being very successfully utilized and there was no need to penalize them.

Member Makar suggested they consider that businesses pay for their location, in part, based on how many square feet it contains. Businesses need to be mindful of their parking capacity and that of the businesses around them; some already had problems with overflow pre-pandemic. Allowing owners to use some of their parking lot/sidewalk as outdoor dining space could exacerbate this problem. Member Stephan said that he believes this now falls under the Planning Commission, rather than the DDA and suggested individual businesses apply for an extension on this variance. He said, "I understand as tactical urbanism and so forth, but I don't know that it falls under the DDA perspective. I think, during the pandemic, we could definitely be a voice to say, 'hey, how can we help our businesses stay open, grow, more often stay open, and provide for their employees' but, at this point, based on how things have changed, personally, I think it may fall back to the Planning Commission." Member Vogel asked about the outdoor spaces with empty storefronts and if there was a way to incentivize businesses to fill those locations. Supervisor Lesperance suggested they research what they are financially allowed to do with a privately owned space before taking this idea any further.

Member Kleyla's third idea was creating barriers, either by using planters or other objects, to create an area where bicyclists are protected, either in the roadway or along the side of the road. Member Kleyla said that it was something mentioned in the 'Complete Streets' study and Director Korhorn said one idea is to do something on the bridge to allow for bikes, maybe making the outside lane only usable for walking and bike riding. Supervisor Lesperance agreed and said that she believes it's come time to do something about the bridge and she thinks multiple groups will be looking to solve projects related to it in the near future. She also mentioned that this DDA only goes up to the edge of the bridge and doesn't cross it but there is a DDA on the other side of the bridge that may be willing to work on the project as well. The DDA district ends at the bridge by Verberg and Tuffy.

Supervisor Lesperance asked what the status with Tuffy is and Director Korhorn said that there was a letter sent to Mr. Farlin for additional information and the township went through the lease with their lawyer. There is still some information the township needs to consider with the business and their financials before deciding what they're going to do with Tuffy.

Chair Puplava encouraged the committee to look at what they can do to make the streets safer for bicyclers as that is a do-able project. Member Dewitt verified that this would only be downtown and on 28<sup>th</sup> St. Member Vogel said that this was a good time to consider that, as the area and parks grow, the vehicle traffic may need to slow down

to accommodate pedestrian traffic and there should be considerations for this now when implementing strategies or tactical urbanism.

Member Kleyla shared that she had been thinking about the pedestrian crossings as the stamped concrete and signs are good but maybe painting lines or putting flashing lights at the crosswalk. She said she had seen a guide from Vermont that has a lot of information and examples of infrastructure with a purpose that would be good for committee members to go through. Member Dewitt suggested flashing lights when the pedestrians are able to cross and Director Korhorn said that those were brought up a few years ago with the Road Commission in addition to lights that were embedded in the crosswalk or a button that allows the pedestrians to cross and they were not in favor of any of these ideas but these ideas can again be discussed with the Road Commission. Chair Pupilava suggested the commission organize their thoughts, then engage the Road Commission to see where they're coming from and why they were previously not in favor of these safety features. Member Stephan asked if there was a state road commission that oversees the counties and Director Korhorn said that it is MDOT but they don't precede the Road Commission and are often even more restrictive. Member Stephan suggested reaching out to MDOT as they work with all counties and may have ideas of what has and hasn't worked and can pass them along. The members collectively believe that options for what they can fund and what types of projects they can execute should come from the top down rather than the volunteers searching for ideas the Township Board will approve of.

Supervisor Lesperance suggested reaching out to Manager Swayze before reaching out to the Road Commission as he is supposed to be increasing communication and updates between the committees. Chair Pupilava suggested restarting collaboration meetings between the different boards and committees so that each area knows what is going on.

#### **ARTICLE 7. Strategic Plan Update**

Member Kleyla said there would be a preview letter from the Township Manager going out at the end of the week encouraging residents to fill out the survey. The survey will go out the next week. They will then begin tracking who is filling out the surveys and if there are specific areas or demographics that are not being represented, they will reach out to encourage those groups in early January. She said there will be many channels available for respondents and only 11 questions to make sure the township is developing a Strategic Plan that follow's the resident's ideologies. This will help them determined what big things respondents are interested in as well as their desired level of involvement.

There will be five workshops starting in the second half of February and ending some time in April or May depending on what results come out of the workshops. Instead of waiting until the end of the workshops when a big report would generally come out, the surveys will be trackable with real time response reporting. Member Stephan asked if the group that expresses interest in the survey will become the core workshop group with no contact from other residents or if there will be times other residents who

weren't originally interested can jump in. Chair Pupilava said that they should set times to reach out to residents to see if their interest has been sparked or they are passionate about the selected topics post-survey.

Member Stephan mentioned limiting the surveys to one response per computer so that data could not be skewed based on responses from passionate residents that may decide to answer the survey multiple times to influence the resulting projects to fit their agenda. The consultants don't see this as likely to be a problem and don't advise limiting responses in this way.

There was a large amount of discussion on the timeline for survey results and keeping the consultants to a series of milestones. Member Kleyla said that the steering committee is working on getting a timeline from the consultants so they know what to expect both as to when they will get information as well as when they should be completing any work needed on the township side.

**ARTICLE 8. 2022 Meeting Schedule**

Director Korhorn shared that 2022 meetings will continue to be held the third Tuesday of every month and the proposed meeting schedule provided in the packet reflects this. The schedule generally isn't approved by the Township Board until their December meeting, so it is not set in stone yet. Two informational meetings will be held, one earlier in the year and one in the fall, and will be scheduled as needed.

Chair Pupilava encouraged Supervisor Lesperance to set up some joint meetings with other boards and Member Vogel suggested scheduling these around time when there are specific projects or ideology to talk through.

**ARTICLE 9. Any Other Business**

- a. Next Meeting: December 21, 2021  
Most of the initiatives are pushed to post January so this meeting is likely to be cancelled as it is most years.
- b. Tree Lighting: Sunday November 28<sup>th</sup> from 5-6:30pm at the Museum Gardens.  
Santa and Mrs. Clause will be attending and come down on the fire truck.
- c. Businesses Opening/Updates: Opening of Rebel Nutrition, CycleBar (cycling fitness center), Clean Eats, and a craft beer shop in the Cascade Center (two down from Rebel Nutrition). Demolition of the old hotel by Electric Cheetah (which will have Tommy's Carwash taking the space with a small coffee shop), conversations with Chick-fil-a are restarting, and the Crown Plaza is being renovated into a Sheridan Hotel.

**ARTICLE 9. Adjournment**

**Motion to adjourn was made by Member Makkar. Supported by Member Kleyla.  
Motion carried 7 to 0. The meeting was adjourned at 6:58 P.M.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Rene Growney, Secretary