

City of Ionia Downtown Development Authority

September 16, 2020 Meeting Minutes

CALL TO ORDER: The Ionia Downtown Development Authority meeting was called to order at 8:01AM by Chairperson Mike Kirgis.

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS: Roll call revealed the following DDA Board of Directors present: Dave Cook, Margot Cook, Tim Hemenway, Mike Kirgis, John Krueger, Chris Sorrell and Director Linda Curtis. Guests included City Finance Director Chris Hyzer, Theatre Manager Gary Ferguson, Karen Bota / Greenville Daily News and Elisabeth Haight / Farmers' Market vendor.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Farm Market vendor Elisabeth Haight presented a proposal for revitalizing the Ionia Market. Proposal is attached. Elisabeth's plan would include:

- Installation of electrical capabilities, public restrooms, water availability.
- Social media (FB, Twitter, Snap Chat).
- Increase fees from current \$4 to \$8 / \$10 next season.
- Purchase and install clear curtain screens for sides of building to increase seasonal use.
- Increase special activities (special events, music, children's activities, etc.).
- With addition of electrical service and full time Market Manager on site, Snap, EBT and Double UP Bucks services could be added.
- Have Market become a separate entity and become a 501(3)C non-profit allowing for a wide variety of grant opportunities.
- WIFI service.
- Expanded marketing and promotion

Member Cook noted that public restrooms at the Market would not be feasible. Currently, several business owners allow vendors to use their facility and the Trail Head Park 's public restrooms are also open. The cost of restroom installation plus water and sewer would not fit the budget of the program. Another concern was access to funding for the upgrades, continued electrical and water usage. If the Market became a separate entity rather than a DDA program, there would be a possibility that the Pavilion would be rented / leased to the new entity seasonally. It was also noted that the Market was originally a Chamber program. The question on whether the program should continue to be under the supervision of the DDA, return as a Chamber program or become a separate entity will be studied. Member Hemenway noted that we should look into options for programming, separation or continued oversight by the DDA and other areas of concern. If the proposal has merit, the DDA should consider options. He would be interested in assisting in planning sessions. Elisabeth and DDA Director will meet to discuss proposal and create a committee to review options if needed. With the Market closing at the end of September, no new recommendations could be implemented at this time.

CONSENT AGENDA: Motion to approve the Consent Agenda with the addition of “member attendance” added to discussion items by Member Dave Cook; seconded by Member Krueger.
MOTION CARRIED.

Minutes from the DDA meeting of July 15, 2020 AND August 19, 2020.

DDA accounts payable for June 26, 2020 – July 25, 2020 in the amount of \$21,686.70.

DDA accounts payable for July 26, 2020 – August 25, 2020 in the amount of \$10,714.57.

Theatre accounts payable for June 26, 2020 – July 25th in the amount of \$3,186.91.

Theatre accounts payable for July 26, 2020 – August 25, 2020 in the amount of \$4,536.27.

Motion to approve by Member Hemenway; seconded by Member Margot Cook.

MOTION CARRIED.

THEATRE REPORT: Theatre Manager Gary Ferguson reported that storage rooms and basement were being cleaned / sorted during the downtime. Repairs from the lightning strike continue to be made. No word on State Order allowing the opening of Theatres within Region 5.

BOARD DECISIONS AND ACTION ITEMS: No Action items at this time.

DISCUSSION ITEMS: 1. Autumn Celebration: DDA Director and Chamber Director have met on numerous occasions to discuss options for the upcoming event. Independent Bank released a statement relating to the Chili Dawg Challenge which comprises a large portion of the event.

“For the health and safety of our Ionia residents and businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic, Independent Bank has decided to cancel this year’s Chili Dawg Challenge event which has been a part of the Annual Autumn Celebration,” said Jenny Dinehart, Vice President, Regional Manager at Independent Bank. “Although, we are disappointed that we will not be able to enjoy the seasonal festivities together this year, we are looking forward to an even bigger and better celebration next year! We have also made some exciting changes to the way the funds collected from the Chili Dawg Challenge will be donated going forward. In addition to providing funds to Big Brothers Big Sisters, Independent Bank will also donate Chili Dawg funds to multiple organizations in both Ionia and Montcalm counties. We look forward to seeing you all in 2021!”

Autumn Celebration was discussed at the previous Chamber of Commerce Board meeting with members concluding that the event committee would make the final determination. With that in mind, the DDA Board will also support the decision by the event’s committee. It was noted that downtown business owners would like to keep the event scheduled if at all possible. DDA Director will speak with the Health Department, Public Safety Director, and committee members before any final decisions are made. With Ionia schools opening next week, the area could experience a spike in COVID cases. Ionia County is currently under the order of the State for a maximum of 100 people at an outdoor gathering. DDA Director added that if the event were to be approved, a number of systems would need to be added including port-a-johns, handwashing stations, social distancing enforcement, and mask / glove mandate for those distributing candy. The added cost of the port-a-johns and handwashing stations is not included in the budget. Funds would need to be collected to cover those costs.

2. Ionia Farmers' Market: See attached and information obtained during Public Comments.

3. Christmas on the Bricks: DDA requested permission to meet with area representatives from banks and credit unions in an effort secure funding for the event. The top sponsor level for the activity is \$500 with at least four top sponsors would need to be secured prior to moving forward with Christmas on the Bricks. No announcements would be made if funding at those levels was not secured. DDA Board agreed to the recommendation.

4. DDA Board meeting attendance: Member Krueger requested discussion regarding Board member attendance. It was noted that when a quorum is not met, action items are tabled for an additional month. An earlier decision to host meetings on the third Wednesday at 8:00AM of each month seemed to fit into member's schedules. This time frame continues to work for members. It is important that Board meetings are held as scheduled with a minimum of a quorum in attendance. If a member has difficulties attending meetings or their employment status has changed, it was requested that they reach out to the DDA Director to discuss options. Members are appointed by the Mayor as openings occur.

OTHER:

Calendar of Events include:

Ionia Farmers' Market: Two remaining dates of September 19th and 26th.

Ionia County Historical Society Yard Sale and Daylily Sale on Saturday, September 19th

Purple Cruise on Saturday, September 26th

Purple Closing Ceremony on Monday, September 28th at Wrecker's Sports

GENERAL ADJOURNMENT: Board discussions and comments continued until 9:01AM.

Motion to adjourn by Member Dave Cook, seconded by Member Sorrell.

MOTION CARRIED.