

**Woodland Park Downtown Development Authority Board of Directors
Regular Meeting
Tuesday, January 7, 2020 – 7:30 AM**

**City Hall – Council Chambers
220 W. South Avenue, Woodland Park CO**

MINUTES

- 1. Call to Order and Roll Call** – Merry Jo Larsen, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:30am

In Attendance: Board of Directors – Merry Jo Larsen (Chair), Elijah Murphy (Vice Chair), Al Born (Secretary), Tanner Coy (Treasurer), Ellen Carrick, Jerry Good, Jan Wilson, Nick Pinell, Noel Sawyer, Kory T. Katsimpalis (Assistant to the Board)

Others Present: Darrin Tangeman, Debbie Miller, Sally Riley, Bob Volpe, Suzanne Leclercq, Pat Hill, Jan Anderson, Brooke Smith, Colt Simmons, Stephanie Alfieri

- 2. Pledge of Allegiance** – Elijah Murphy, Vice Chair, led the Pledge of Allegiance.

- 3. Additions, Deletions or Corrections to Agenda** -NONE-

- 4. Approval of Minutes**

a. December 3, 2019

Motion: To approve the Minutes as presented. Wilson/Carrick. Passed 9 – 0

- 5. 2020 Goals**

-Merry Jo Larsen, Chair, introduces the item and encourages Board Discussion. Larsen states that Tava House has decided to move their project to an alternate site in Woodland Park, outside of the DDA Boundary; Larsen wishes them the best of luck regardless of location. Regarding 2020 goals for the DDA, Larsen encourages focus on the Cog car site and its potential for incorporation into the development of Woodland Station. Additionally, Larsen would like to revisit the DDA grant program as a means of helping existing businesses with things like façade improvements and signage upgrades.

-Tanner Coy, Treasurer, provides an organizational goal of staying within budget, as well as coming in under budget and potentially putting some money away to possibly accelerate debt service going in to 2021. An additional goal for 2020 would be for the DDA to participate in and provide support to the placemaking efforts currently being spearheaded by Sally Riley.

-Larsen reiterates the prioritization of remaining diligent to our debt service obligations.

-Al Born provides background context for his 2020 DDA goals, stating that over nearly fifteen years serving on the DDA Board, he has seen numerous proposals come before the Board for discussion and consideration, only to fizzle out in the end. Born therefore proposes a change in scope for the DDA Board, so that the DDA may “prepare a product” of Woodland Station that will result in a sale. This will require the redirection of our involvement in the development process. We must recognize that Woodland Park is a small market area. It would appear from a number of attempts that the scope of development envisioned for Woodland Station may need to be reduced given the realities of the local market.

Born asks that the Board recognize that within the Board, we do not possess the expertise nor the volunteer hours needed to properly define this particular piece of property leading to a marketable piece. Therefore, we must come up with other skill sets. Born therefore proposes that the DDA contract/hire two types of experts: first, a “planner” of sorts, who can properly assess and prepare a development product for Woodland Station; and second, a “marketer” who can successfully market the property and achieve a sale. The “planner” could work through various regulatory bodies and facilities to smooth out hurdles and requirements on behalf of developer/potential buyer. In this scenario, the “planner” would bring the Board their findings and recommendations; this is the position the Board belongs in, not trying to develop the specific elements that a buyer may be concerned about. Likewise, the other expertise needed is that of a professional marketer. That role is needed to adequately market the project and fully engage any leads/potential buyers. While each of the members of the DDA Board possess unique skills and expertise, none of us individually possess the skillset necessary to professionally and successfully develop and market Woodland Station.

-Elijah Murphy questions how the DDA would be able to hire the “planner” and “marketer” roles as described by Born, citing large expense and little available funds within the DDA Budget.

-Al Born responds that perhaps a planner could be paid based on an hourly rate, while a marketer could be paid via commission upon the sale of the property. Born reiterates that he is not advocating for hiring an Executive Director, but instead finding those specific skillsets of planner and marketer.

-Jerry Good states that he feels the DDA is on the cusp of development. The current proposals seem as close as any we’ve seen in previous years. Good would like to stand pat and get through the process without now hiring additional expertise.

-Born states that while he agrees that the current proposal does seem to be moving along, the reality is that we have still not seen an actual application, but instead have merely been engaged in talk.

-Murphy states that by moving forward and utilizing materials and efforts generated by N.E.S., we are currently able to save money. Our goal is ultimately to facilitate the best development possible for Woodland Station and Woodland Park generally. Given the layers of regulations, process, etc. we should not expect this development to occur quickly or cheaply.

-Born offers two thoughts: one, this will require a mindset change amongst the entire DDA Board; and two, we need to see how much this type of expertise would realistically cost.

-Larsen states that Born’s points are well taken, and that some viable requests have been made. Larsen asks that at this point Born’s request be tabled, and that discussion move on to a report of the developers who are currently on board as well the pending N.E.S. reports/plans.

-Noel Sawyer proposes adding this line of discussion to tomorrow’s Work Session agenda.

-Born states this would be a huge change for the Board, but may be necessary given the track record of stalled development over the past 15 years.

-Elijah Murphy offers a strategy of beginning with stating our specific goals, and then working backwards from that point to determine specific costs, elements, benchmarks needed to achieve those stated goals.

-Tanner Coy offers his thoughts, and states that he largely agrees with Born's comments. The role of the DDA Board should not be to execute the development planning and processes required to bring about development. The DDA has already spent close to a million dollars engaging in development planning and process to little return (excluding the creation of the hardware store). Considering the current development proposals and the engagement of N.E.S., Coy believes the DDA is as poised for progress as we've ever been. There is a question of scope – how much money and resources do we want to put into planning a development that is still speculative. May not be the right time to get sidetracked by re-thinking the process.

-Jan Wilson does not completely agree with Born's proposals. Wilson cites the expertise of Sally Riley and N.E.S. who are already on-board, and believes that we need to move on with what we already have in the works and the experts already involved.

-Elijah Murphy states a number-one goal of working with the current developer and trying to see how much we can accomplish.

-Noel Sawyer cites the "Achilles' Heel" of the DDA to be Woodland Station, and its lack of infrastructure. Perhaps we need to look at the City and DDA as part of the infrastructure phase first. Developers are often scared off by the up-front cost of infrastructure needed to develop Woodland Station. The DDA is currently bonded-out, so development presents its own unique challenges. On a whole, over the last 15 years the DDA has been successful, and has brought numerous businesses by offering them a certain level of tax relief.

-Ellen Carrick states her vision that 2020 will be a good year. One of the major goals for the DDA should be trying to organize ourselves and the Woodland Station property as much as possible. While it can be difficult to nail down specific costs, having those figures on-hand will greatly increase our capacity to deal with developers.

-Al Born believes that N.E.S. will provide good information, but will not give detailed specifics such as drainage studies, fire suppression, electrical plans, etc. Therefore, more expertise is needed to fully define the project.

-Nick Pinell agrees with Noel Sawyer's assessment regarding the need for infrastructure, and also cites the slow timeframe imposed by government process and requirements.

6. Cog Railway Train Car

-Merry Jo Larsen reminds the Board of the upcoming Work Session, planned for Wednesday, January 8th at the Country Lodge, beginning at 6pm. The purpose of the Work Session will be to discuss potential future use and maintenance of the Cog Railway train car recently acquired by the DDA and currently situated in Woodland Station. The public is welcomed to the Work Session, and are encouraged to make comments at the beginning of the Work Session with Board discussion to follow.

-Jan Wilson is working with Country Lodge staff to finalize menu and logistics.

7. Development Proposals for Woodland Station

a. Update from Negotiating Committee

-Tanner Coy states that things are moving along well, despite the fact that Tava House group has decided to move locations. The Christian/Williams group remains extremely interested in moving ahead with their proposal, and are looking forward to the N.E.S. report and initial documents.

-Larsen asks if the Board can meet with the Williams/Christian group, and asks if Coy can set up a meeting. Coy indicates that Mr. Williams is ready to engage in that manner, and is working to get concept plans and documents ready for Board/Public consumption

-Elijah Murphy reiterates that while Tava House has moved location, it is still very much a net positive for Woodland Park.

-Coy adds that the challenge we faced with Tava House goes directly back to issues of infrastructure. Their group ultimately chose to move to a site that already has infrastructure and subdivisions in place. Additionally, the location of the Cog train car is a big question mark within current development planning. The Williams/Christian group would like to incorporate the Car into their plans and potentially utilize it for commercial/retail use, and are anxious to hear what comes out of the Work Session.

-Jerry Good asks if this current proposal is "legit"?

-Coy responds that that is a good question. We don't yet have financial statements, but all dealings have been very professional and prompt, and their track record of previous developments contains a fair amount of success. That said, they would like to avoid an additional cost, and would like the DDA to assist with public improvements. They would like to minimize the footprint of private property in order to minimize their ultimate tax assessments and maintenance costs/liabilities. We will know more pretty soon, as plans and documents come forward for review.

8. General Discussion

-Al Born reiterates his opinion that the DDA needs to engage with some outside expertise in order to successfully develop and market the Woodland Station property.

-Noel Sawyer states that any developer who comes in to Woodland Park and expresses interest in Woodland Station ought to be met with the full support and positivity of the DDA. Our goal is to create positive experiences for all we engage with. Perhaps we do need to re-evaluate how we approach Woodland Station, and perhaps we re-prioritize getting infrastructure into Woodland Station first, prior to any proposed development(s).

-Elijah Murphy refers to developers' need to demonstrate Return on Investment for any project. If the State implements a \$15/hr minimum wage, we may never see additional development. How do we increase the number of visitors who come to Woodland Park and spend money? He would rather have 10% of Colorado Springs business than 100% of our own. This area is projected to cap at a population of approximately 14,000. Given the relatively small scale that this area does and will represent, we must capture more of those "travel-through" dollars.

-Merry Jo Larsen cites a good Christmas retail season, if not quite a blockbuster. Larsen also recounts meeting a lot of out-of-town visitors during the holiday season.
-Jan Wilson also cites a good Christmas season, and relays multiple comments from visitors who like the placement of the Cog car and the holiday lights hung on the car.

-Jerry Good states his belief that infrastructure is part of the developers' burden; we can only pre-plan so much, but ultimately the cost of doing business includes the placement of infrastructure.

-Tanner Coy states that the Christmas retail season was good, despite being relatively short due to a later-than-normal Thanksgiving. 2020 looks to be another strong year. As far as "growing the pie", we need to be conscious of the steady growth of Colorado Springs, especially if Space Force is determined to be headquartered there.

-Also, a reminder that "Moose is Loose" is coming up, and should be fantastic.

-Merry Jo Larsen states that Main Street gave an additional donation of \$844 to the DDA towards the cost of the Horse and Carriage sculpture currently placed in Woodland Station.

-Elijah Murphy stated that the addition of holiday lights on the cog train car resulted in a noticeable increase in visitor activity in and around Woodland Station. Murphy also proposed at some point pursuing the creation/installation of a "concrete couch" element. Murphy suggested that this type of project may be completed with the help of Woodland Park High School students.

9. Audience Participation on Items Not on the Agenda

-Suzanne Leclercq provides a reminder that election season has just begun; petitions are now available in City Hall for those individuals who are interested in running for City Council.

-Sally Riley reports that the Placemaking Partners group is moving ahead, with a goal of rolling out the red carpet to all visitors who come to Woodland Park. The primary goals of the placemaking efforts are to improve walkability, signage/streetscapes, and façade improvements. The overarching goal within these efforts is to create a "critical mass" of interesting elements within Woodland Park's downtown core. The placemaking group is planning on a community roll-out of their efforts thus far.

-The City's Comprehensive Plan is due for an update in 2020, and will be completed with partial funding support from DOLA.

-Debbie Miller provides information that is pertinent to local employers, including the State's recent decision to increase the minimum wage to \$12/hr. Additionally, beginning July 1st, there may be some State-mandated changes to overtime regulations that employers will need to be aware of. FMLA is also continuing to move forward within the State legislature.

-The Chamber has recently received a grant through the Pikes Peak Workforce Center, which can be used to support employee training and skills acquisition. There is a total of \$111,000 available for employers within Teller County.

-Colt Simmons reports that Teller County continues to operate in a financially conservative manner. The "marketplace" of Colorado is very healthy. Due to our proximity to Colorado Springs, Woodland Park is a microcosm of Front Range growth and vitality. Simmons explains that the potential creation of Space Force HQ, which is being considered for Colorado Springs,

could be extraordinarily impactful for Woodland Park. The creation of Space Force HQ has the potential to create thousands of more jobs in the area; additionally, an entire brigade may be returned to Fort Carson in the near future. For relative comparison in size, the Space Force would be approximately the same size as the Air Force Academy. What are the potential opportunities to grow the Advanced Tech economic sector here in Woodland Park if Space Force does locate in Colorado Springs? How can we grow the auxiliary services and business sectors that will be needed? Simmons cites his background in the military and aeronautics industry, and offers to assist with any efforts that may arise if and when the pursuit of these industries are undertaken.

10. Adjourn

MOTION: To Adjourn the Meeting. Sawyer/Wilson Passed 9 – 0

Meeting adjourned at 8:58am.

Recorded by Kory T. Katsimpalis, Assistant to the Board

APPROVED THIS 21st DAY OF APRIL, 2020



Al Born, Secretary