

Historic Downtown Economic Meeting

Thursday, May 2, 2019, 5:30 PM

Council Present: R. Scott Phillips

Historic Downtown Economic Committee Present: Jennie Hendricks, Michelle Jorgenson, Chris McCormick, Mark Baruffi.

Staff Present: Danny Stewart, Brad Abrams

Call to Order: Chris McCormick

Pledge of Allegiance: Michelle Jorgenson

Approval of Minutes: No Quorum

Public Agenda: None

Business Agenda:

Item 1: Downtown Cleanup Review

Chris McCormick: What worked and what didn't, and how can improve in the future?

Scott Phillips: The biggest thing is that we need to push the City to get some money in their budget for annual maintenance. We should continue to have volunteers come out and help, but we've got to have someone do maintenance of the curbs, etc.

Chris McCormick: All the curbs over town. I was talking to Mindy Benson, and she said she could get 300 people out there with enough notice.

Scott Phillips: It's also making sure that we have the support, rakes and shovels, etc.

Chris McCormick: When talking with Paul Bittmenn that was part of the discussion, but there wasn't one shovel brought out there. We just need to figure out how we get the tools and the people out there. I would like to have somebody draft a generic thank you letter.

Scott Phillips: I think we got to thank public works, even though they weren't here directly, they did help provide it.

Jennie Hendricks: We probably should have a core group of people who meet before the cleanup and already have groups, leaders, and tasks assigned, especially if we're going to have 300 volunteers.

Chris McCormick: It would also be nice to have a couple of police cars to guide traffic as we paint.

Scott Phillips: Chris, I'll work on drafting a letter and get it to you

Chris McCormick: I appreciate that. I think another noticeable thing missing was that there weren't many business owners helping. We need to really encourage businesses to get out and get involved.

Jennie Hendricks: We are in the process of getting the Downtown Business Alliance reactivated. Probably by next year we will have a better conduit to get the message out to the business owners.

Scott Phillips: With some of this stuff in the Fall and at Christmas time, we will want to reach out to the business owners. We are going to try and ramp up Christmas just a little bit next year.

Item 2: Mural Project

Chris McCormick: We don't have a quorum to vote on this, but we could do an email vote on the mural project. I gave Maria a grant for the mural project that will be placed on 100 West. She wants to also put up three benches...

Scott Phillips: Where do the benches go?

Chris McCormick: Just in front, the mural will be on the wall, and the benches will be just below.

Jennie Hendricks: A selfie bench.

Chris McCormick: We have asked the City for \$10,000, and we're asking this committee if they would like to put some of this money towards the benches.

Jennie Hendricks: And we don't know how much the benches are?

Chris McCormick: I don't, I'll get with Maria.

Mark Baruffi: Where's this mural going?

Chris McCormick: On 100 West where there is a big stucco wall. The owner of the building has said they can put a mural on the wall.

Scott Phillips: This is more of a NACo thing, but they are trying to restore more murals around town. There's one on the old movie house, and we're looking to see if we can repaint it. It doesn't matter if the business is still in existence because these are historical and pieces of public art. There's also the redwing on Jolley's Ranchwear, and a big boot...

Mark Baruffi: Who would be responsible if they get tagged? Is there something in place if this happens?

Scott Phillips: There are now certain paints that allow you to clean off the graffiti if they are tagged. They are also talking about putting a public art committee together. They would be responsible for ensuring that the murals stay clean and consistent. Trying to get one of the murals done is the first step.

Chris McCormick: I'll get more information and send out an email vote on the mural benches.

Item 3: City Council Meeting Follow-Up

Scott Phillips: We just got our preliminary budget yesterday, and if the bicycle racks aren't in the budget, I'm going to request that they are put in the budget. This is still in process, and if it comes about it will be available after July 1st. Trash receptacles are the very same thing. I've requested to have 10 of them put into the budget, and the locations haven't been identified yet, but it is something that Don Boudreau is working on. New benches I don't know anything about. Was that in the proposal to the City?

Chris McCormick: There were two things. One was to incentivize people to buy benches. The other thing was to move the benches back. Did you guys discuss this?

Scott Phillips: I've discussed this with Don, but we haven't done it. I think that it's a matter of cutting the bolts off and getting them moved. I guess it's just getting into the City's priority list to get it done.

Chris McCormick: It's going to take some leveling or something.

Scott Phillips: Danny, is Public Works who I need to talk with?

Danny Stewart: Public Works or Parks and Rec.

Scott Phillips: I'll follow through on finding out about moving the benches. As soon as you find out what the cost is for the benches, we can put out information to the business owners and see if people are interested.

Chris McCormick: Then we can decide as a committee what we want to spend. They said we can come up with \$10,000 in other areas, but they didn't want to put it into a budget.

Scott Phillips: I know, I think that's crazy, I told Paul that we've got to empower the committee to make some decisions.

Chris McCormick: Anything else that we missed. What about flower pots? We just need to figure out who can go and look at flower pots to figure out what is best for our downtown.

Scott Phillips: You'd have to go online or go and see a nursery because they are not going to have 30 identical pots.

Jennie Hendricks: What sort of material are we thinking about?

Michelle Jorgenson: There are some companies that cater to cities that we could send our information. Who would be over this?

Scott Phillips: Wade Orme. I'll roll this into my conversation with him about moving the benches, etc.

Jennie Hendricks: We need something that is low maintenance and metal to ensure they last longer.

Scott Phillips: Costs will depend on how many are sold and how many we'll have to water. I don't think it's going to be a substantial cost.

Item 4: RDA Incentive Program

Chris McCormick: Danny, do you want to talk about this?

Danny Stewart: A few of you may be familiar with this program which started in 2010. At the time, the Downtown Committee looked at what other communities were doing and adopted four grant programs using \$250,000 of RDA money that was set aside for the program. It was broken down into four grants:

- 1) Facade and Tenant Improvement Grant
- 2) Sign Improvement Grant
- 3) Downtown Improvement Grant
- 4) Lease Subsidy Program

About two months into the program, the RDA decided that the Lease Subsidy Program would be discontinued because it was not what they intended it to be, and it wasn't attracting new businesses into downtown. The Downtown Improvement Grant provided funding for businesses to get furniture (e.g., tables, benches, bike racks, etc.). Only two businesses took advantage of this program.

Scott Phillips: Are those two businesses still in business?

Danny Stewart: One of them is. The sign improvement grant was intended to incentivize businesses to bring their signs— those that were grandfathered in and not complaint with the downtown sign ordinance—and encourage them to bring them up to date. Sixteen companies took advantage of this grant which granted up to \$2,500 to a business. I think that a little more than half of the businesses that received the sign grant are no longer in the downtown.

Chris McCormick: One of the things we talked about to help this from happening was to make sure that they are in business for a least two years to qualify.

Danny Stewart: There's a lot of different criteria. We don't have to do these same programs. We've talked about the value of blade signs, which would make a lot of sense because a more permanent frame could be put up and the sign would then be replaceable as businesses left the downtown. We would need to get pricing to get some ideas.

The most successful program was the Tenant Improvement Grant. The grant was designed so that the businesses only had to invest 20% if they were going for the full amount of the grant. A total of \$140,000 was allocated to this grant program. This was an 80/20 matching grant (up to \$30,000) that was used for improvements to bring the buildings up to code. Having the cap of \$30,000, allowed businesses to qualify as long as they made the 80/20 split. In almost every case, they met the \$30,000 investment and exceeded it. This was something that primed the pump for businesses to put something into their buildings. This program brought some great projects that improved our Main Street, including Centro, The Depot, the old Poser's Place, and the vacant movie theatre. I think that there is real value in pursuing this tenant improvement program. I've talked with other communities and, across the board, the tenant improvement grant has been the most impactful. I need to visit with Jason and the Mayor about what type of funds may be available. I know that we don't have \$250,000 right now because a lot of the RDA funds are tied up in the servicing of the debt for the Lin's improvements.

I would really like to visit with Provo City about the specifics of their downtown program. It's been extremely successful. If each of you will review these, I'll visit with Jason and see what type of funding we can allocate to this. One of the things that was tracked on this program was the jobs created.

Chris McCormick: It would be good if a few of us want to get together and spend an hour to go through these programs. Then we can get back to Danny about what we want to include.

Danny Stewart: I look back at the promotion involved in these programs and it was fairly minimal. We sent out a letter to the business owners, and I think we had a press release, but that was really the only promotion.

Chris McCormick: At one point we talked about taking a tour up to Provo. Do we want to set something up?

Danny Stewart: I can send out a Doodle Poll and find out who is interested in going. I think we would want to make it an up and back trip. We might be able to make it to Sugarhouse and Provo, but I'm not sure that we would make it up to Ogden. I've spoken with these communities, and they're very willing and happy to do that. I think that Provo has been the most active in the tenant improvement grant and they can share a lot.

Jennie Hendricks: We would be able to go see it and meet with some of the City staff?

Danny Stewart: I talked with the city economic development team. They have one staff member dedicated to just the tenant improvement program.

Chris McCormick: I had a phone call from a business owner that is concerned about where retail is going right now. I think we need to look at how we are going to help the businesses in our downtown. We had talked about looking at the one-off businesses that are doing well. How do we identify these types of businesses and encourage them to take a look at Cedar City? So, this trip could be part of this type of thing.

Danny Stewart: It could be. Two buildings are being looked at on Main Street by investors, and they are looking at retail. I don't think that we're going to find a national retailer tenant. I've been online looking at local and regional boutique type stores that are succeeding in brick and mortar. If we line things up correctly, we might be able to attract retail stores that are doing well in similar communities. I've found some interesting leads and reached out. That might be something that could be part of a visit if we can identify some potential tenants for some of the spaces that we have here.

Mark Baruffi: I think that business mix really comes into play here. When someone says that retail is dying, what kind of retail are we talking about? To support a retail boutique shop, what makes those businesses boom? They are not a restaurant that can rely on foot traffic. We need to look at businesses that support the foot traffic for the retail-boutique type shops. If we can get these grants going, maybe we can look at taking one them just to incentivize a business that will generate a lot of foot traffic. We got to look at giving them the core business mix that's going to support all the other ancillary specialty shops.

Danny Stewart: All add one thing, I know that we've talked a little about the opportunity zones. It's gaining traction, and some investors are looking, and if we can show that we have an active downtown committee that is looking at solutions, this is one more thing that is going to help attract them to these properties. These investors are from all over the place. I am working very closely with Patrick Mullen at the state-level. I will be serving on a panel for him up at the Governor's Economic Summit. In my interaction with Patrick, he is already lining up some fund managers that are looking at some different types of projects.

Item 4: Roger Brooks Broadcast

Chris McCormick: The Chamber held a meeting with a broadcast/presentation from Roger Brooks. He had a lot of good ideas. Apparently, nobody has implemented a plaza in the state of Utah after hearing his presentation. He has seen the success of the plaza and is wondering why nobody has picked up on this idea. He had a whole bunch of other ideas, and I've got 3 or 4 pages of notes that I took on things to do downtown. He also talked about games and activities and showed examples of businesses having places to play games. The rule in retail is that activity brings more activity. I will send this list out to everyone.

One of the ideas that I had during the cleanup was to close off Hoover Avenue during the evenings and put out tables and chairs, maybe a ping pong table, etc. Just a thought. I think it would be good to brainstorm ideas that will not be very expensive but will be helpful for our downtown. Something for the college kids and community to do. One idea is to put out an old piano and to put out pens and paper for people to do artwork. Things to create activity, so people see people doing stuff.

Chris McCormick: Anything else we need to address?

Jennie Hendricks: What about the status of the Better City project?

Chris McCormick: What do we know about this?

Danny Stewart: It's still be looked at and shown to investors as a potential option on the property. The owners are showing it as an option. I talked with Steve's partner, Dr. Colbert, yesterday, and he said that they are showing it as an option. He said that he's spoken with folks at the University and they may be still interested in moving that direction. As they talk with investors, they don't want to restrain them to that plan, if the investor has a different idea. They have a vision and want to make sure that the property holds the character of the community. Better City is one of a dozen options that they're looking at.

Chris McCormick: So, what does the University say?

Danny Stewart: I haven't had a discussion with the University for some time, so I can't really say. Chris, Brad and some folks from the community went over to the University and toured the maker space that has popped up in the industrial building. It's pretty spectacular and quiet, but that will be changing. I think the timing of the Entrepreneurial Center has made them a little hesitant to do something new. I believe they are evaluating what they do have and what directions they can go. Last I talked with Dean Pearson it was still something that they were interested in and considering.

Jennie Hendricks: My understanding of the Better City project was that Chris went out and raised a bunch of money that got us to that particular benchmark where we had drawn some preliminary proposals, and that the next step was to take the proposal and shop it. Did I misunderstand the goal? Because it seems that a whole bunch of people spent money to get us there, and that hasn't benefited us at all.

Danny Stewart: Well, it's being shopped, but the owners aren't convinced that that's the only solution for the property. The vision— the overall vision of the space as a connector—is still in place. But, as far as following the one plan, with how many feet of the boutique hotel, etc., the owners aren't a 100% bought into that.

Jennie Hendricks: That's disappointing because that's sort of what the understanding was when we started going down this road. I've also been told that some of the developers and investors, that have been investing into the St. George

projects, have looked at it, but have been hesitant because they don't see the end game of the City's plan. Is that something that we can work on and something that we need to put some focus on?

Danny Stewart: Yes, it could be. I think if those investors are interested and that's their obstacle. It may be worth visiting with them personally with some assurances that the Better City plan was built on past plans (Hyatt Palma, etc.). If we need to communicate that better, maybe we need to reach out and find out who the investors were.

Chris McCormick: Yeah, we've got a list of the investors. I've got that list. To your point, I think that's where Vision 2050 is trying to pull everybody together so that we know where we need to go, and so that those big investors will feel comfortable that we're a community invested in smart growth—that we won't build a sixty-million-dollar project next to a dive motel.

Danny Stewart: Also, if we could put out there that the City has zoning— very specific to this area—that will not allow those kinds of things to happen. It points to types of businesses and the looks of the buildings already in the ordinances. It might need to be revised, but I think we may need to communicate that it exists a little better.

Chris McCormick: The whole idea of Vision2050 is to bring all these groups together. There are so many groups out there doing their own thing and crossing paths. If we're working together, then that will solve those issues with those investors, especially when they see a whole community working together.

Danny Stewart: I haven't pulled up the zone for downtown commercial for some time, but it's online, and we can get it and go through and see which things are going the direction we want them to and which items might need to be relooked at. One of those things was one of the first things this group took on which was the downtown retail ordinance.

Mark Baruffi: That got tabled, right?

Danny Stewart: It was tabled two years ago. I think it's fair for this group to look at that zone and how the ordinance is written. Now the City has a planner, and he would be a good person to look at it. My interactions with Don Boudreau have been good, and he totally gets it and comes from communities that have had to reinvent or maintain their identity.

Chris McCormick: I think it would be healthy to get with him and a group of us and start putting things together.

Mark Baruffi: I agree with all that you've been saying, but in my head, all that has been going around is the definition of insanity. How many years have we been doing the same thing and the results haven't been changing. Maybe he's the person then.

Chris McCormick: That's really the hope behind Vision 2050 that we can pull these people together and work together. We're not trying to go against anyone; we're trying to work with the City, County, non-profits, University, businesses, etc. We are trying to really involve everybody and see where we want to go in the next 30 years. Part of the plan is to have a monthly meeting where we are continually coordinating towards things. Where we don't just spend money on studies that sit on a shelf— it's a mechanism to help keep the conservations going to get us to our end game.

Mark Barruffi: But at some point, we got to get results. We are going to lose these committees; they are going to just fall apart because nothing ever happens. We can meet and meet and meet, but at the end of the day, we have to figure out why these things we are proposing aren't going anywhere.

Chris McCormick: I think everyone is on the same page; we all want to see progress.

Danny Stewart: I don't think that we just want to be the curb painting-scarecrow hanging-committee. As staff, Brad and I can meet with Don and ask him to pick apart the downtown ordinance, and maybe have him come to our next meeting. I will move forward with that if you'd like.

Chris McCormick: I think that that would be very beneficial. Does anybody have anything else?

Adjourn