

**CRANFORD DISTRICT MANAGEMENT CORPORATION
BOARD MEETING
MINUTES – FEBRUARY 17, 2017**

Present:

Barry O'Donovan/Chairman
Patrick Giblin/Deputy Mayor
Tom Connolly/business owner
Paul LaCorte/property owner
Jean Maisonneuve/resident
Steve Needle/property owner
Clara Nunziato/business owner
Maureen Tinen/property owner
Kathleen Miller Prunty/Director
Michelle Stavrou/social media coordinator
Ellen O'Donnell/admin. asst.

Absent:

Vicki Spurr/resident
Joe Colangelo/resident
Anthony Durante/resident
Terence Wall/Township Administrator

Ms. Prunty called the meeting to order at 8:30am. Announcement made that the meeting was posted as required by law.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- ❖ **MOTION** by Mr. LaCorte to approve January 20, 2017, seconded by Mr. O'Donovan, all approved.

TOWNSHIP COMMISSIONER REMARKS

- See Deputy Mayor Giblin's remarks throughout.

CHAIRMAN REMARKS

2016 Tax Appeals in the SID; impact on revenue

- Mr. O'Donovan reported on several tax appeal rulings in 2016 that resulted in a reduction in revenue for the SID.
- The most significant appeal was for the Cranford Crossing properties which received a 50% reduction in property value, from roughly \$10 million to roughly \$5million.
- The DMC office received a single communication in June 2016 via email from the tax assessor's assistant; email provided notification of the judgment only. (handout)
- Notification of the impact of the judgment on SID revenue was received January 23, 2017 from the tax assessor through a memo via interoffice mail.
- Mr. O'Donovan reported that the Twp. Administrator, CFO and 4 current Twp. Committee members that held office in 2016 were not aware of the impact of the judgment on the SID until they were notified by Ms. Prunty and himself on January 24, 2017.
- Ms. Prunty identified 4 additional properties in the SID that were awarded a reduction in assessed value, totaling over \$350k: 1820 North Union, Verizon building on Alden St., 118 South Ave. E and 205 North Ave. W.
- The DMC Board unanimously voiced concern with regard to:
 - the above judgments and the impact on revenue and the DMC budget
 - communication/escalation/notification of SID tax appeals
 - other potential tax appeals outside of the SID including properties on Commerce Drive and how they impact the township
- Mr. O'Donovan followed up with attorneys involved in the Cranford Crossing tax appeal and is awaiting further information.
- DMC budget has been revised to reflect change in SID revenue due to the tax appeals.

Rodent update

- Mr. O'Donovan spoke to the township's new health officer; they will follow up; Monika Jencik to report back.

Lot 7

- Mr. O'Donovan and Mr. LaCorte met with Officer Tim O'Brien, Monika Jencik, Health officer Mike Fitzpatrick, rep from Grand Sanitation and the Owner of Garlic Rose, Marc Corello, at the dumpsters at lot 7 to observe the current situation.
- Current status:
 - No lock on the dumpsters, area is messy
 - Grand picks up of two 8 yd. dumpsters 2x per week for 10 businesses, 16 apartments
 - Existing lease agreement with the Township and Grand Sanitation calls for pick up 3x per week, 4x per week from April-October
 - Lease calls for ongoing power washing/cleaning of the dumpster area
 - Lease is not being enforced
- The DMC Board is in agreement that the solutions to clean up the area and lease enforcement are the responsibility of the Health Department and Township Administrator.
- **Next steps:**
 - DMC maintenance committee will follow up monthly through site inspection, correspondence with Health Department for updates only.

BOARD COMMITTEES

Finance – M. Tinen, P. LaCorte

- Ms. Tinen presented the DMC 2017 budget to the Township Committee on 2/13/2017.
- The budget has been revised from the previously approved budget to reflect the reduction in SID revenue of \$17k (see Cranford Crossing tax appeal)
- Several 2017 budgeted projects will now be using reserve funds to cover the loss in assumed revenue; the budget decreased by 4%.
- Ms. Tinen noted that the Township Committee raised questions regarding \$5k for fringe benefits related to a full time maintenance employee and any impact on the Township; Ms. Tinen clarified for the Township Committee; Ms. Prunty and Deputy Mayor Giblin confirmed the \$5k is per the direction of the Finance department.

Mr. Giblin arrived at 8:45am

Strategic Planning – A. Durante, J. Colangelo, T. Connolly, J. Maisonneuve, S. Needle, M. Tinen

- Mr. Connolly reported that the committee continues to meet weekly to discuss/review the overall vision for the Downtown and finalize long and short term goals and objectives.
- The committee has introduced the plan to Deputy Mayor Giblin; they will be presenting the vision to the remaining Township Committee members individually beginning with Ms. Dooley in the next few weeks.
- After meeting with all commissioners the next step is to present to the public and downtown businesses.
- 1 year goals have been identified and started, beginning with Post Office Plaza.
- Deputy Mayor Giblin confirmed that he has requested that the DMC Strategic Planning Committee have a voice within the Planning Board.
- The Strategic Planning Committee plans to have the goals and objectives finalized and in writing for distribution at the next DMC Board meeting.

Mr. Connolly left at 9:05am

Marketing, Events & Communication – C. Nunziato, V. Spurr, J. Maisonneuve

- Ms. Nunziato distributed the 2017 calendar of events and reported on a meeting with business owners that took place on February 15, 2017.

- Despite a decrease in the budget there are more events scheduled in 2017.
- Ms. Nunziato highlighted concern with Scarecrow Stroll date:
 - It is scheduled earlier than past 9 years and would finish prior to Halloween.
 - There is a conflict with the Chamber of Commerce's October Street Fair date and it was explained that it is not ideal for both events to occur simultaneously.
 - Next step is to meet with the Chamber to see if there is a solution that would allow both events to occur while permitting the Scarecrow Stroll to coincide with Halloween.
- Mr. O'Donovan encouraged the Board members to attend the next business owner meeting in March, advised the Board members to encourage business owners to attend, promote strong participation.
- Ms. Nunziato informed the Board that all downtown business owners are notified and reminded of every business owner meeting via email and are often hand delivered hard copies of invitations and schedules but participation is still relatively low.
- Deputy Mayor Giblin suggested the DMC reach out to local group, Cranford Community Connection, to see if there is opportunity to combine efforts.

Design Standards & Maintenance – T.Connolly, P. LaCorte

- The LED light recommendation was submitted to the Township Committee and presented by Mr. LaCorte at the February 13 meeting.
- Mr. O'Donovan acknowledged that the DMC Board was not completely prepared nor adequately prepared Mr. LaCorte to present the Victorian Light recommendation to the Township Committee meeting on February 13, 2017.
- Mr. LaCorte has since been corresponding with Mr. Wall to ensure cost analysis is done to support the light conversion recommendation and all supporting information that the Township Committee needs to make a decision is gathered.
- Ms. Prunty confirmed that Mr. Wardell has already included painting the poles into the cost of installing replacement light heads.
- There was unanimous agreement that a 3rd party contractor and not the DPW should install replacement lights.
- Ms. Tinen reiterated the point that the DMC Board does not make the final decision on the lights, it is the Township Committee's role; the DMC Board submitted a recommendation based on the preferred aesthetics.
- Ms. Tinen voiced her disappointment in the role of the Township Administrator with regard to not providing necessary information that had been requested to support the DMC Board's choice of light ahead of the presentation to the Township Committee, i.e., cost analysis.
- Mr. O'Donovan and Ms. Prunty reported that they have since met with the Township Administrator to address Ms. Tinen's concerns.
- Board members discussed examples of lights in Washington D.C., the Victorian lights on North Avenue at the train station, various sample lights that have been installed for review, all with emphasis that consistency in the Downtown is of the utmost importance.
- Mr. LaCorte will follow up with Mr. Wall to ensure the necessary information, particularly regarding cost, is provided to the DMC Board.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Maintenance Personnel

- The Township Committee unofficially voted to hire a full time DMC maintenance employee who will also work with DPW in the winter months; salary contribution from the DPW will be 20%; the Township Committee is expected to pass a resolution for the hire at their next meeting on February 28, 2017.

Capital request update

- **Pavers**
 - Maser Consulting did a visual inspection of the downtown the week of February 6, 2017; a list of the areas in need of improvement was sent to Mr. Wall; Ms. Prunty anticipates \$100k capital budget request for paver repair.
- **Alden Street paving**

- A \$450k capital request has been submitted for a new traffic signal and paving on Alden between North Union and Miln; breakdown of traffic signal and street paving cost was unknown.

RFP for Redesign of Post Office Plaza: Bid opening March 21, 2017

- Ms. Prunty thanked Mr. Connolly for creating RFP for Post Office Plaza.
- It will be published in the newspaper February 23 with bids due by March 21, 2017.
- Ms. Prunty and Ms. Tinen confirmed that there was \$36.9k leftover in reserve to be used for this project

March 24 -PSE&G Presentation of substation project: Christina Kerr, PSE&G

- On agenda for March DMC Board meeting.

Report: Available Space update

- Detail can be found in monthly report
- Ms. Prunty highlighted Downtown Cranford's low vacancy rate of 1st floor retail space:
 - 4% vacancy when calculated by square footage
 - 3% vacancy when calculated by available storefronts

Communications, Marketing & Social Media: Michelle Stavrou

- The presentation, which included current results of the recent Downtown Cranford survey, was emailed to Board after the meeting.
- The Board discussed different ways to reach the community, increase number of newsletter subscribers:
 - post/share on pages of various Cranford Facebook groups
 - business owners to share the newsletter
 - share through the school email distribution
 - continue to post & share on the Downtown Cranford Facebook page, website, blog
- Mr. Maisonneuve introduced the idea of having a Downtown app to compliment the current marketing and social media efforts; DMC office to follow up.
- The Board also discussed the need for a more efficient township website and the idea of a township app.

Mr. LaCorte left at 10am

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS/AGENDA ITEMS

None

ADJOURN

- ❖ **MOTION** to adjourn by Ms. Nunziato, seconded by Mr. Maisonneuve, all in favor. Meeting adjourned at 10:05am.

Respectively submitted,

Ellen O'Donnell
Administrative Assistant