

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF HIGHLAND
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Record of the December 21, 2011 Meeting
APPROVED**

Members Present: Triscia Pilchowski, Dale Feigley, John Hirzel, Roscoe Smith, John Dowson, Beth Lewis, Matt Barnes, Mike Maher

Members Absent: Gail Perrin, Doug Bourgeois

Staff Present: Melissa Dashevich, Director
Karen Beardsley, Recording Secretary

Visitors Present: Rick Hamill, HDDA Design Committee
Claudia Copenhaver

Mr. Roscoe Smith called the meeting to order at 6:15 PM.

Approve Regular Board Meeting Minutes of November 16, 2011

MS. PILCHOWSKI MOVED to approve the Regular Board Meeting Minutes of NOVEMBER 16, 2011 as presented. SUPPORTED BY MR. DOWSON and the motion carried with a unanimous yes vote (8 yes votes)

Director's Report

Ms. Dashevich reviewed her Director's report and a copy is attached to these minutes.

Treasurer's Report

MS. PILCHOWSKI MOVED to approve the Treasurer's Report included in the meeting packet as presented. SUPPORTED BY MR. FIGLEY and the motion carried with a unanimous yes vote (8 yes votes)

OLD BUSINESS

Sidewalks

Mr. Hirzel asked Ms. Pilchowski her opinion of the status of the Highland Township Board's position. Ms. Pilchowski stated that the board was waiting for the DDA to come back with more in-depth information on the actual projects.

It was discussed that perhaps a special meeting could be held before the next board meeting, with all board members having their questions prepared and submitted ahead of time so that the DDA is prepared to answer all questions.

Ms. Pilchowski stated that the last meeting was to talk about the budget, which was approved, but now the township board would like to hear about the project itself and financing. Although they have had the opportunity to hear about this project in the past, some have not taken those opportunities. As well, now is the time to present what is actually being proposed, one step further than conceptual. Ms.

Pilchowski also suggested that the project show what the costs are projected to be, with perhaps an engineer's perspective of what to anticipate as well.

Mr. Smith also added that by asking board members to submit their questions ahead of time will cause them to focus on which answers they really seeking answers to; it should prove to be cohesive and beneficial to all involved.

Ms. Pilchowski also suggested that maybe some DDA members could make themselves available to sit down with any board members who may need further clarification and details. Mr. Polidori, for instance had specific bonding questions. Also inviting perhaps three board members at a time, such as Mary Pat, Russ Tierney, and Ray Polidori, and even speaking with in-house officials to make them feel comfortable with the project.

Mr. Hirzel also mentioned that he sent it to another consulting group to review, and although he knew the numbers were good, he figured another positive opinion on the plan and the direction would be a plus. Another benefit of that is finding they have a staff member who does in-depth studies into grant writing, etc. He will keep in touch with them, and speak more with this individual in particular in the new year.

Ms. Pilchowski suggested perhaps a meeting with both boards, such as a work session, with the public invited to hear, but the conversation taking place between board members. Focus on the ability to repay, since there are many scary municipal bond stories out there. Compare with the charts from the county, and get the point across that even in the worst scenario, a certain amount will be collected to repay. Mr. Smith felt it was worth noting that documentation included with tonight's packet states that taxable value declines for assessments will taper off in 2014 and an upswing of 2% will occur in 2015.

There was further discussions on types of bonds and wording, and it was decided that Ms. Dashevich and Ms. Pilchowski will work together to come up with some dates for meetings and board members will be encouraged to submit questions ahead of time.

MSOC Evaluation

Ms. Dashevich stated that the MSOC evaluation date has been pushed back to March of 2012. She feels confident that the DDA will receive the accreditation.

NEW BUSINESS

Election of Board Officers for 2012

MR. FIEGLEY MOVED that all current officers be retained for another term. SUPPORTED BY MS. LEWIS and the motion carried with a unanimous yes vote (8 yes votes)

Rick Hamill Presentation

Mr. Hamill took the floor and expressed concern that the DDA board, as a whole, does not share a common vision about what we want to see going forward. He believes the Board shares a common image of Streetscape, but if that is the limitation of what our vision is, he feels we are in trouble. The DDA should not just be doing sidewalks; they need to look beyond.

He shared with the Board some observations he made while on his second annual Thanksgiving trip to Nashville to see their progress. He went on black Friday and said they were packed. He made many contacts down there from their entire committee of people who run their area. He stated they would be more than happy to share information they feel lead to their success. He was very impressed and felt positive about us bringing that same kind of change to the Highland area.

Mr. Hamill shared some things he feels the DDA needs to focus on:

- Build a mental concept that we all can see and can all pass along faithfully. (He put together the Nashville book and strongly believes in it.)
- We need to decide that if we want more businesses here, we have to provide them with more than sidewalks, and move forward with this plan.
- A business plan is important. We, as the DDA, must develop an image that will raise the value of properties in highland; something that will generate revenue. We must work closely with the Township on common goals
- How do we get people to come here? First give them a presentation, an image of what we are going to do. We should not wait for them to come to us. We should find 20 or 30 people who are successful in other communities and pitch our town to them in a presentation. Round them up and ask them to be partners with us in making it happen. Give them the clout of all grand opening marketing with extensive media coverage.

Mr. Hamill read the description of our vision for Highland Station, and said it sounded exactly like what Nashville is. If we ask five key questions: who, what, where, when, and why, and fill in these blanks with our visions, we will have a business plan. Then we will have a model to develop and arm all board members with in any form possible. Perhaps a book with images, or an iPad full of images. People need to be able to see it. Also, business cards would be nice, a way to promote ourselves and the cause. Anytime any member sees even a remote potential for a partner, give them a package of info about us and our vision and gather info from them. We have the ability to become a destination.

Discussions took place of the types of businesses we have here versus what was in Nashville. Also people are not looking for investing opportunities due to the economy. Mr. Hamill also reiterated that this is no small task, but he feels it is necessary to develop this alongside the sidewalk plans, to improve the conditions for existing businesses and promote new business in Highland.

Ms. Dashevich also added that she appreciates Mr. Hamill's efforts to take ideas and make them visual. Even something like maps will be able to be used right away to promote existing business, and grow and become part of marketing for potential investors.

Mr. Hamill presented his movie of Nashville, which he feels proves his point that seeing is believing. The video prompted many questions, such as what types of zoning were there versus here, and if residential was part of the plan. Also there was a conversation about the fact that restaurants are not feasible in this area, due to septic needs. Perhaps temporary eateries, such as food trucks would be an alternative? Additional talk ensued about Michigan's economy.

Ms. Pilchowski pointed out that it will have to be a mix of pursuing our vision with today's reality, while Mr. Smith reminded that these are seed ideas that Mr. Hamill has given us; they have been planted and need to grow into discussions, so think about it over the next month and try to come up with your own set of solutions.

Mr. Smith reminded us that marketing 'shop local' and unique stores should always be pushed. Remember that Highland has more population than Milford, however, our retailers are spread out more, as well. Advertising local buildings and signage is key. Ms. Pilchowski mentioned the kiosk in the veterans park could be used for advertising. Discussions took place over encouraging the School Board to find new uses for empty buildings. They will be investing in Highland as well.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Ms. Dashevich stated that the Organization Committee met earlier tonight; next month will bring discussions of volunteer recruitment and fundraising.

DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT REVIEW

Unfortunately the carpet store will be closing its doors.

COMMUNITY REPORTS

Mr. Smith congratulated Mike and Debbie Maher on receiving the Highland White Lake Business Association Award for 'Business People of the Year'. Mr. Maher brought new calendars for all. Congratulations to another award in our district. Chris Baker of Comeback Inn received the Huron Valley Chamber of Commerce 'Citizen of the Year'.

Ms. Dashevich introduced Louise (Claudia) Copenhaver, a new member of the DDA's Organization Committee. She provided everyone with a copy of a DDA tri-fold brochure that she has been working on.

This brought up discussions of possibly creating a "Highland Business Directory", available in all local business to refer customers to each other's businesses. Mr. Smith also added that a 'QR' code will be added to our 'Shop Local' ad, enabling smart phones to scan it and be directed to our Facebook Page.

At 7:35 p.m., Mr. Smith adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

A. Roscoe Smith

ARS/kb