

City of Winsted
Downtown Vibrancy Commission
Winsted City Hall – Lewis Room
Tuesday, November 10, 2015
3:30 p.m.

Downtown Vibrancy Commission Members Present: Ms. Nancy Fasching
Mr. Chip Guggemos
Mr. Robert Hamilton
Ms. Tami Rosenthal
Mr. Joe Swanson

Staff Present: Mr. Dan Tienter, City Administrator
Mayor Steve Stotko, City Council Liaison
Ms. Amanda Zeidler, Utility Billing & Payroll Clerk

1) Call the Meeting to Order

Ms. Nancy Fasching, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 3:35 p.m.

2) Approval of Minutes – August 11, 2015

Mr. Chip Guggemos made a motion to approve the minutes of the Downtown Vibrancy Commission Meeting on August 11, 2015. Mr. Joe Swanson seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0.

Ms. Tami Rosenthal joined the meeting at 3:40 p.m.

3) Staff Report

Mr. Dan Tienter, City Administrator, stated that City Staff are in the process of developing the 2016 budget, which will be adopted at the December 15, 2015, City Council Meeting.

Mr. Tienter stated that the Kingsley Street Improvement Project is moving into the final design phase. Mr. Tienter added that the project scope currently includes a trail, built to regional trail standards, which will extend from the South part of Kingsley Street South, to McLeod Avenue East. Construction is set to begin in early Spring, 2016. The Downtown Vibrancy Commission discussed the project, funding, and schedule.

The members of the Downtown Vibrancy Commission directed the City Administrator to speak with the McLeod County Highway Department, and create a procedure for informing the City of Winsted, area businesses, and residents of upcoming infrastructure improvements to McLeod County roads that are located in the City of Winsted, and also offer opportunities to repair and replace the City's infrastructure at the same time.

4) No Old Business.

5) New Business

a) Introduction of Downtown Vibrancy Commission Member – Robert Hamilton

Mr. Robert Hamilton introduced himself to the Downtown Vibrancy Commission and reviewed his background, experience, and ideas.

b) “Jump-Start Downtown” Business Competition

Ms. Nancy Fasching provided a brief overview of the “Jump-Start Downtown” program that was launched in 2012, in the City of Hutchinson, Minnesota. The program is a competitive, small-business incubation program. Modeled after similar efforts in Duluth, Minnesota and Eau Claire, Wisconsin, the program is a business plan competition designed to reduce the number of vacant storefronts located in the downtown area.

Mr. Hamilton questioned the source(s) of funding for the project. Mr. Tienter stated that there were a variety of funding resources. Mr. Tienter stated that the program provides the winning business plan with approximately \$25,000 in total benefits and prizes, including, but not limited to:

- \$10,000 in start-up capital (structured as a forgivable loan);
- \$2,500 of website and social media development.
- \$2,400 of local media advertising; and
- \$2,000 for signage and awnings.

Mr. Tienter added that the start-up capital is provided by the local economic development authority, and the remaining prizes are donated from area businesses, foundations and other organizations. Mr. Tienter stated that the majority of the funding for a program in Winsted would come from the City. Mr. Guggemos asked if there is State of Minnesota grant money available, since it involves starting a new business, or creating new jobs. The members also discussed minority or veteran-owned businesses. Mr. Tienter stated that traditionally, there is not a lot of State money available for retail development.

Mr. Hamilton stated that it would be nice to have a plan for businesses that will enhance the Downtown. He added that the Downtown Vibrancy Commission can invent a master plan, and then take some field trips to other villages to see what has been created. Mr. Hamilton stated that the Commission can take control of inviting or creating businesses that fit the master plan. He stated that he believes there is a sequencing that needs to be researched and created, and then go "shopping" for the right business to win the award.

Mr. Swanson stated that the Downtown Vibrancy Commission needs to ask why people actually bring businesses to Winsted. Mr. Guggemos stated that something is better than nothing; however, it should not be a seasonal building. His concern is that some buildings have been open for a long time, and need to be filled.

Ms. Rosenthal stated that the Downtown should be created to look the way the Downtown Vibrancy Commission would like it to, and then invite businesses to come.

Mr. Stotko stated that this could be a very good program; however, he does not believe that the City of Winsted is ready for this program yet. He added that this program needs to be brought up down the road, and accomplish other things first.

Mr. Hamilton stated that there should be a task force created within the Commission and visit a few other communities, which will offer tools to create a vision. He added that at that point, the Downtown Vibrancy Commission can invite in the City Council, local teachers, and people in the community, to see what they like. Mr. Hamilton suggested using the local bank to assess the business plans.

Mr. Stotko stated that down the road, if there is a solid plan in place, the City Council will be on board.

The Commission discussed having multiple meetings or work sessions to discuss and gather data. Mr. Tienter stated that provided that there is not a quorum present, research can be done, and Commission members can meet in pairs and would not be subject to the open meeting law.

The members of the Downtown Vibrancy Commission agreed that any kind of program will not proceed until 2017, at the earliest, to conduct planning and forums. Mr. Tienter stated that he would be happy to draft a memo for the next meeting, outlining a general process based on the information provided, giving the Commission the opportunity to tweak and discuss. He added that in early 2016, the Commission could begin with the early background and research work. Mr. Tienter cautioned against taking several "field trips", because there are a lot of economic development professionals that are available, and may be more advantageous to the Commission.

Mr. Guggemos made a motion to table the creation of a "Jump-Start Program", pending further definition and findings. Ms. Rosenthal seconded the motion. Motion carried 5-0.

6) No Announcements.

7) Adjournment

Mr. Guggemos made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Hamilton seconded the motion. Motion carried 5-0. The meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m. on Tuesday, November 10, 2015.

Dan Tienter

Dan Tienter,
City Administrator
City of Winsted

ATTEST:

Amanda J. Zeidler

Amanda J. Zeidler,
Utility Billing & Payroll Clerk
City of Winsted