

**MINUTES – CITY OF OWOSSO  
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
MEETING OF DECEMBER 7, 2005**

Chairman Wright called the meeting to order at 7:45 a.m.

**Roll Call.**

*Members Present:* Mayor Robertson, Chm. Wright, Hankerd, Oliver, Bucsi, and Popovitch

*Members Absent:* Irish, Gilbert and Howe

*Others Present:* Dir. Hathaway, Ramos, Constine, Borgstrom and Eister

Chairman Wright welcomed Mayor Linda Robertson and Cindy Popovitch to DDA service.

**Approval of Minutes.** The minutes of the meeting of November 2, 2005 were approved.  
Oliver/Popovitch m/s/p

**Communications:** Hathaway stated that the Community Assistance Team for the State of Michigan has been relocated to the Michigan State Housing Development Authority. This is a move with a potentially harmful impact on the downtown because so much progress has been and is possible through a Community Assistance Team. The principal change is in the funding from the Community Development Block Grant program. The DDA has two projects ongoing and one pending.

**Citizen/Member Comments:** Mayor Robertson explained that the ad hoc committee for downtown improvement was not a Chamber committee.

**Financial Status.**

A. Operational Budget.

Checking.....	\$..... 1,121.22
Savings.....	<u>\$..... 14,188.24</u>
Total.....	\$..... 15,309.46

B. Development Plan Budget.

Funds Expended.....	\$..... 3,559.00
Projected Project Costs.....	\$ ..... 76,206.00
Fund Reserve.....	\$..... 5,016.04

C. Budget Comments:

1) The unexpended balance of the 2-mill revenue source is \$7,996.46 and is available for projects this year. The possible uses include payment of any overtime to City workers for installation of holiday decorations, sidewalk signs, wayfinding signs, a new tree at Taco Bell, legal services, Armory committee costs, and support work for building sales.

2) The three-year capital improvements plan has been adjusted to include the engineering costs for the loop trail. This project is likely to be funded in 2006 and the DDA's commitment to the project is early in the construction phase.

Items of Business.

**A. Payment of Bills.** The following expenses were authorized for payment:

A. Organizational Expenses:

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(1) Agnew Signs (Table top sign for Conference)	\$30.00
(2) State of Michigan Conference Registration	<u>\$520.00</u>

Total:.....	\$550.00
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B. Tax Increment Development Plan Expenses—

(1) City of Owosso – Hotel Demolition Payment #1..	\$15,000.00
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Bucsi/Oliver m/s/p

**B. Focus Owosso Report.** The December 13 meeting of Focus Owosso will establish a 6-month budget and program plan. Beginning July 1, 2006, Focus Owosso will be on the same fiscal calendar as the DDA.

**C. Former Hotel Site.** Project signs are completed. Gary Hurand, a partner for the developers, explained the status of the project to a DDA field trip to Flint on November 18<sup>th</sup>. He is looking for more equity partners who are patient investors. Additionally the first floor and some or all of the second floor will be pre-leased prior to construction. The housing demand in Owosso may be less than that in Flint because the neighborhoods about the downtown are so much stronger.

**D. Entertainment Districts.** The two papers on Entertainment Districts were reviewed. The first was a summary of trends and possibilities in entertainment. Hathaway listed the 10 most important features including the role entertainment plays in quality of life and retention of the 24 to 40 year age group. It was demonstrated how entertainment and exercise options are bona fide economic development strategies.

The second paper focused on Owosso's downtown leisure outlets. An inventory showed the variety and location of entertainment ventures—for-profit, non-profit and public. Residential life and the need for more apartments was emphasized. The physical layout characteristics of a good entertainment district were described. Owosso's outlets are elongated from the Owosso Cinemas to Curwood Castle—too extensive to be operational as a single entertainment district.

Members are to complete the survey form prior to the January meeting of the Board and return it to Phil Hathaway. Also at the January meeting the Board will discuss the approach to establishing and marketing an entertainment district for the downtown.

**E. Sandwich Board Signs.** Members reviewed the sandwich board letter and with one minor revision approved it for mailing. Also a model sandwich board sign was approved for construction at a price not to exceed \$140.

Popovitch/Robertson m/s/p

**F. Welcome Sign Easement.** A welcome sign easement between the DDA and Washington Business Center was approved.

Oliver/Hankerd m/s/p

**G. Business Retention.** George Ramos reported that his primary duties are in retention and that at least one retail business is ready to close. He estimates that downtown retail sales are down an average of 11% from last year and urged everyone to make a special effort to shop downtown for this holiday period.

**I. Ad Hoc Group on Downtown Improvement.** A group of seven individuals operating independently from the Chamber and DDA has formed to evaluate the downtown and what it might do to improve conditions. The meeting at Carpenter's Corner was held on November 17<sup>th</sup> and Joe Borgstrom, a team member, explained some of the findings. A full report will be made at a forthcoming meeting of the DDA where marketing and riverfront development will emerge as the primary points of emphasis.

**J. Burlington Building and Carpenter's Corner Building.** The City Council authorized the Burlington floor plan project and it is underway. The realtor for the Carpenter's Corner Building was supplied a set of incentives for a new development.

**K. The Owosso Armory.** The Neighborhood Planning Team will meet in mid-December to review the Armory structure and the State's conditions of sale. In addition the Cool Cities potential for 2006 will surface with the Team leading the way again this year.

**L. Downtown Flint Field-Trip.** Those who attended remarked on the features of the Flint downtown trip. The outstanding lessons learned were:

- There is substantial private investment revolving around an investor team that has purchased 9 buildings in three connected city blocks.
- The Farmer's Market is year-round with large attendance figures even in the winter.
- Flint still has parallel parking and meters on its main north-south street and too many one-way streets. The brick pavers create highway noise.
- The role of charitable foundations is significant in the Flint projects and the investor team leader explained that they cannot make a go of it on their own.
- There is an active façade improvement program—again foundation aided.
- Prospects are good for a new owner of both the new hotel and the old hotel (Durant).
- Flint's adjoining neighborhoods, with the exception of a new subdivision north of the downtown, are not very supportive.
- The City is beneficial to evaluate and compare because it is not far ahead of Owosso on the redevelopment pathway.
- The Capitol theater in the heart of downtown and a new roadway connection to the cultural centers east of town are the foundation projects for the entertainment district.

**M. Annual Report.** Members advised to generate a bullet-point annual newsletter and avoid the expense of a polished publication.

**Citizen/Member Comments.** None

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 9:20 a.m.

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Philip B. Hathaway, Secretary-Treasurer