

**MINUTES – CITY OF OWOSSO
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
MEETING OF JUNE 7, 2006**

Chairman Wright called the meeting to order at 7:47 a.m.

Roll Call.

Members Present: Chm. Craig Wright, John Hankerd, John Oliver, Dave Lazar, Barb Bucsi, and Bill Gilbert

Members Absent: Mayor Roberston (excused), and two vacant positions

Others Present: Dir. Hathaway, Marla Price, George Ramos, Roger Snyder, Constine and Shepard

Approval of Minutes. The minutes of the meeting of May 3, 2006 were approved.

Bucsi/Hankerd m/s/p

Communications: Marla Price, Focus Owosso’s Downtown Coordinator, was introduced to the members.

Citizen/Member Comments: None

Financial Status.

A. Operational Budget.

| | | |
|---------------|----|-----------------|
| Checking..... | \$ | 1,913.36 |
| Savings..... | \$ | <u>2,475.44</u> |
| Total..... | \$ | 4,388.80 |

B. Development Plan Budget.

| | | |
|------------------------------|----|------------|
| Funds Expended | \$ | 150,156.00 |
| Projected Project Costs..... | \$ | 0.00 |
| Fund Reserve..... | \$ | 1,631.00 |

Items of Business.

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

1) Organizational Expenses:

| | | |
|---|----|---------------|
| (1) Collard Masonry and Cement (hotel sidewalk).... | \$ | 973.80 |
| (2) Mid-Michigan Turf (Footbridge garden)..... | \$ | <u>925.00</u> |
| Total:..... | \$ | 1,898.80 |

2) Tax Increment Development Plan Expenses—no expenses; however, The budget was amended to reflect the current costs of the underground storage tank and increases at the Farmer’s Market lot. The projected fund equity is reduced to \$1,631.00

Oliver/Hankerd m/s/p

B. 2006-07 Contracts for Services. Members reviewed and approved three contracts for services beginning July 1, 2006 and ending June 30, 2007:

Focus Owosso. Marla Price distributed an adopted budget for Focus Owosso’s fiscal year beginning on July 1, 2006. The budget shows the \$20,000 DDA allotment and an overall budget of \$61,200. There is some fund equity to carry over from this year but it has yet to be determined. The activity plan was explained with one new major event for

the fall. Hathaway requested that the DDA contract for services add one stipulation and that is the requirement that Focus Owosso maintain the position of a professional downtown coordinator for at least a half-time commitment.

Saginaw Valley Rehabilitation Center. The service provider will continue to travel the downtown picking up curb litter and cleaning trash containers on a four visit/week basis for a fee of \$3,210.

Shiawassee Regional Chamber of Commerce/Small Business Resource Center. This contract will be amended to reflect two changes: 1) The contract will also include retail retention with every retail store in the downtown (merchandise across the counter) being visited during the year for feedback on conditions that might improve the retail climate downtown, and; 2) expansion of the list of target businesses to include creative industries from the DDA's work on entertainment districts. The contract price remains the same at \$3,000.

Hankerd/Bucsi m/s/p

C. Hotel Owosso Site Redevelopment. At Monday's City Council meeting, there were not enough votes to approve the purchase agreement for Dixie Development LLC to acquire the site and develop a two-story building. Two situations arose at the meeting that had not been known—a person interested in the property asked for the right to buy it and develop it, and a councilman stated that because Dixie Development members were wealthy they should use their own money and not receive the inducements for the new building. Two no votes prevented the deal (a super-majority of the Council is required for land sales), and the Mayor placed the item on the next Council agenda when a full Council will be seated and the vote for the sale will be repeated.

D. Entertainment Districts. This was the last discussion in a series of work sessions for the DDA on the notion of Owosso having and marketing an entertainment district. Marketing the Entertainment District was the focus of this discussion and it opened with a question about the overall image of the downtown as an entertainment district. Members agreed that our performance here was average because it hasn't begun yet. The entities are here and are able to work to create a better image. It may be difficult to portray the image because it would be easier if there were already images of street life and informal gatherings on the sidewalks and public places.

Restaurant image was then questioned and there is still a low score with respect to forwarding a dining-out reputation for the downtown. The market support for growth has always been questioned and it is likely that it will not happen until other growth patterns emerge in residential growth, street life, and aggressive marketing of entertainment options.

Cultural outlet image remains a challenge and it is a mystery because the venues are here. It was mentioned that a recent event was scheduled without any regional marketing effort. The Arts Center was recognized for good promotional work but there is no coordination element to it with other outlets for entertainment. Packaging is in infancy and has shown good results.

Weather is not going to get any better and the effort to combat the weather has been missing. One proposal is to keep the street lights on longer.

Resident population is above average in policy support but below average in outcome. The knowledge worker and empty nester population housing initiatives are too few. The government programs for elderly and affordable housing are becoming the mainstay of residential development in most downtowns statewide. There is very little work being done on marketing downtown as a residential community.

Creative industries finished the discussion on marketing and the organizational base for recruitment and retention is there; it is not up to deliberate action to add these business types to our business mix.

Finally the "Directions and Strategies for an Entertainment District" goes to a future Focus Owosso agenda for their work and report back to the DDA.

E. Tree Grates. The new trees in the 200 block of West Main Street have tree grates for root ball protection; however, the concrete ledges that supported the grates have worn away since their 1986 installation. The Board approved new concrete ledge installation at an estimated \$375 per tree island. It was asked that tinting the concrete around the tree islands be used to accent the islands. Hathaway will consult with the City Engineer on the cost and fit.

Oliver/Bucsi m/s/p

F. Underground Storage Tank. The Ball Street tank has leaked and will require soil removal. The projected cost increase is \$15,000 to \$20,000 and will be assessed to the landowner. The DDA is asked to advance the costs with an expected reimbursement unless a court decides against the city. Members authorized an extra \$15,000 from the TIF budget for this purpose.

G. Security Camera. Hathaway reported that the schools will permit mounting a security camera on their wall to film the activity about the east end of the footbridge. The intent is to reduce vandalism and to apprehend those who damage public property. This is not a safety issue. Members supported implementing the program after July 1st.

Member and Citizen Comments. Roger Snyder asked that Focus Owosso consider adding a River Days to its promotional calendar. In response he was told that the DDA will be asked at its July meeting to form a river walk committee to deal with design and activity advances for the section of trail between Curwood Castle Park and the 1225 Museum.

Elections are in July for the Chairperson, Vice-Chair and Secretary/Treasurer.

Philip B. Hathaway, Secretary-Treasurer