

**MINUTES – CITY OF OWOSSO  
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
MEETING OF OCTOBER 4, 2006**

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

**Roll Call.**

*Members Present:* Chm. John Oliver, John Hankerd, Craig Wright, Dave Lazar, Barb Bucsi, Mayor Robertson, Rich Collins, April Treen and Bill Gilbert

*Members Absent:* None

*Others Present:* Dir. P. Hathaway, Renita Mikolajczyk, G. Ramos, L. Shepard, and B. Constine

Chairman Oliver welcomed April Treen to the Board. She replaces the term of Jamie Irish.

**Approval of Minutes.** The minutes of the meeting of September 6, 2006 were approved with the correction that John Oliver should have been named as Chairman.

Wright/Bucsi m/s/p

**Communications:** The City Council adopted the 2006 Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The plan has two major projects for the downtown in the next five years and that is the upgrade of Jerome Street for trail purposes and the renovations of Curwood Castle Park.

The contents of a Fall Newsletter were discussed with the main purpose being the introduction of Dave Gapinski as the Holiday Events Coordinator for Focus Owosso.

**Citizen/Member Comments:** None.

**Financial Status.**

A. Operational Budget.

Checking.....	\$	4,865.94
Savings.....	\$	<u>25,256.41</u>
Total.....	\$	30,122.35

B. Development Plan Budget.

Funds Expended .....	\$	90,473.12
Remaining Activities Budgeted.....	\$	83,269.88
Projected Fund Balance .....	\$	68.00

**Items of Business.**

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

1) Organizational Expenses:

(1) Lennox Electric (duplex outlets on Exchange).....	\$	650.00
(2) Mich. Downtown Assn Reg'n Fee.....	\$	85.00
(3) Chamber-Retail Recruitment Contract.....	\$	1,500.00
(2) Fred Peterson – Sidewalk Sign Construction .....	\$	<u>120.00</u>
Total: .....	\$	2,355.00

Gilbert/Robertson m/s/p

2) Tax Increment Development Plan Expenses

(1) Capitol Consultants Trail Engineering .....	\$	1,809.40
---	----	----------

Gilbert/Robertson m/s/p

**B. Old Hotel Site Status.** Hathaway distributed a site plan offered to the City Council for the relocation of Fifth Third Bank. The elevation plan is in production and could not be viewed at this time. The City Council advised staff to relate concerns they had for the outstanding refund balance that would be owed to the State of Michigan (\$157,000) and encouraged an expanded occupancy concept for the site to gain employees—the way to reduce the obligation to the State. Additionally the site was deemed to be underused by the structure's footprint. The \$100,000 was appreciated and continued discussion with the bank was encouraged.

DDA members discussed the proposal and observed that the parking plan did not take into account the surrounding alley, the available city lot in the southwest corner of the block, and the Gilbert's lot to the west where some site design improvements were shown to be possible with the prior development proposal. Members concurred that this was a suburban land use model and that it broke the continuity of buildings characteristic to the downtown and pedestrian friendly. The left turn lane on M-21 was deemed too short a distance; it would clash with the north bound left turn lane at Washington Street. The diagonal parking was considered very important on S. Washington because this block is part of the entertainment district. Any need to create vision clearance with parking removal would be a detriment to established businesses. There was little support for the drive-through in this historic corner of the downtown and perhaps too small a staging area for only four vehicles on "payday" rush hours. Hathaway stated that the drive-through would probably be considered a principle use feature and requires a variance application with the City's Zoning Board of Appeals (Taco Bell, Wendy's, Tim Horton's and Chemical Bank branch bank are all zoned for their drive-through facilities with their locations on the CBD fringe). Bill Gilbert encouraged that if the site were to go to a town square concept that more parking could be added without the loss of significant greenspace and help the entertainment district evolving in that area. Others preferred to retain the \$247,000 for its dedicated use for business development loans that have been the key to retail development in small and large buildings.

The Fifth Third purchase offer extends to the end of November, and the Council has asked staff to use that time to relay concerns to the bank so that they have the opportunity to respond with design solutions, financial offset and/or employee additions through multiple tenant options.

**C. Entertainment District Designation and Enhancements.** With the opening of the Hot Spot at Capitol Bowl, Ex. Dir. Hathaway asked the membership to discuss the timing and extent of marketing downtown Owosso as an entertainment district. Given the nature of the widely dispersed venues it was decided not to map a district at this time but to adhere to the earlier action to establish a design group to lay out the connecting walkway between the footbridge and the 1225 Museum. The new liquor license provisions for downtowns were reviewed and the potential for more dining/club establishments in the downtown was evaluated or adding liquor licenses to existing restaurants. In the future a banner program featuring the entertainment nature of the downtown will be considered. Focus Owosso has been asked to upgrade its marketing to build-on the perception of Owosso's well-earned reputation as a leisure time center in the County and region. Focus Owosso will increase special events in the downtown that will draw people who will take advantage of the entertainment outlets.

#### **D. Reports.**

**1) Retail Recruitment/Retention.** George Ramos had no updates since the last meeting. Hathaway reported that the Strawberry Patch vacancy has been added to the potential retail outlets in the downtown. The east vacant space in the Dollar Daze Building has been renovated and is available for lease or purchase on the ground floor. Jeff Bowen is returning to the Owosso area to open an electronics repair shop at what used to be Ray's Printing on W. Main Street. The second story of the Martial Arts Center is now a completely remodeled dance

studio called The Dance Place. It expands the use of the downtown in the evenings with parents doing errands while their children are in dance class.

**2) Loop Trail Status.** The City Council conducted the hearing on the boundary amendment and there was no public comment. The resolution to amend the boundary is scheduled for November 20, 2006. The engineering for the trail is 80% complete and that allows a grade inspection by MDOT and the signing of a grant contract with MDOT. The DNR/MDEQ continues to grub and clear the trail on the south side of the river. They are now working near the Washington Street Bridge. The next two weeks will see contaminated soil removal. The City approved the bid on the earth materials that the DDA will buy for the trail and the low bid is within budget; the actual purchase of material awaits MDOT approval of the engineering specifications.

**3) Armory Development.** There is no word from the State on the grant application for acquisition of the site. This is another grant that requires new employment and the recent experience at the old hotel corner may argue against the grant if there is no acceptable buyer identified prior to the commitment to use the state funds. The sale date for the Department of Military Affairs remains uncertain despite the November/December move-in date at the new Armory in Corunna. Letters to interested persons, about 13 from prior marketing efforts, will be mailed again and the ad hoc committee should meet in October or November to discuss the relative merits of the acquisition plan. There is no response to date on our effort to gain an easement for the trail behind the building.

**4. Welcome Sign.** The sign face will cost \$300 and Agnew Graphics will make the sign. There was consent to seek a landscaping plan for the sign front and sides and to present the cost at the next meeting. The sign budget at \$4,000 is low and will likely exceed the \$5,000 cost of the 1985 sign at Taco Bell. The Welcome Sign is budgeted in the operational budget after a city decision to defer payment on the principle for the demolition loan at the old hotel.

**5. Holiday Decorations.** It was decided during the budget discussion above to place all six wreaths on the south side of Exchange Street from Ball Street to Washington Street.

**6. Capitol Bowl Infrastructure Work.** The trees are installed and will be lighted for the holidays. The sidewalks will be completed by October 7<sup>th</sup>. Hathaway showed the landscaping plan along the east and west walls of the building—a first for the west wall in a public sidewalk. A maintenance agreement with the owners will provide for care and appearance for the landscaping.

Two trees behind JC Penney's were removed at the same time because they have been a source of trip and falls. Sidewalks had to be removed about the tree islands because the locust tree roots lifted them. Hathaway asked that the tree budget for East Main, in part, be relocated to these two trees. This pattern of sidewalk upheaval and the effort it takes to remove the locust trees will reduce the expectations for what \$10,000 per year can do in a city block.

**7. Focus Owosso Activity.** Bill Gilbert outlined the fall and holiday events, the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter coordinator's duties, the longer term objectives of the organization and his optimism for the promotional efforts underway. The Art Walk was deemed a great success and demonstrates the power of partnerships to enable organization and implementation of a special event—in this case the contributions from the Shiawassee Arts Council.

**Citizen/Member Comments.** None.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:10 a.m.

---

Director

Philip B. Hathaway, Secretary-Treasurer and Executive