

# **THE CWE BUSINESS COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT**

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMISSION**

**MAY 16, 2017**

The meeting was called to order at 10:07 a.m. at the Chase Park Plaza.

**PRESENT** were Commissioners Derek Gamlin, Chris Lanter and Trip Straub; Kate Haher, Executive Director of the CWE North Community Improvement District; Elisa Essner, Marketing & Communications Coordinator for the CID; and Margot Montague, Marketing Intern for the CID.

Chris Lanter moved to approve the March 21, 2017, minutes; Derek seconded; the minutes were approved.

### **FINANCIAL REVIEW & ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS**

Trip Straub stated that Pete Rothschild had resigned his seat on the board, effective April 22, and that the board would need to discuss potential replacements for his and other vacant seats.

Trip began by reviewing the April 2017 financials, noting that the NCID had collected \$39,000 in sales tax and that several businesses (including Straub's a number of restaurants) were not included in the state's reporting. He said that despite a "lousy" April collection, the NCID's revenue was still nearly \$30,000 higher YTD than the board had budgeted for (\$564,000 vs. \$535,000). He also noted that most of the NCID's expenses were lower than budgeted, and so the NCID's net income was up \$40,000 YTD.

He then reviewed the proposed 2017/18 budget, which would need to be approved and submitted to the city after the June meeting. He noted that projected revenues were lower in the next fiscal year, due to the loss of several prominent businesses, as well as the uncertainty of sponsorships.

Trip explained that the budget includes a healthy bump in administrative and overhead costs, which Kate Haher attributed to salaries for the various maintenance staff members being accounted for this year in this line item, and a possible need to bring salaries up in accordance with the new minimum wage law.

Trip also noted a healthy bump in the marketing & events budget. Kate said that she had removed line items for some marketing and creative services (which can be pulled from Misc. Marketing if needed), but that associated costs with Window Walk and the CWE Cocktail Party, as well as the creation of BookFest St. Louis and additional programming for the Sidewalk Sale and Make Music Day, were contributing to increased marketing and events costs.

Kate noted that she was recommending reducing Window Walk prizes and using the money instead to fund a change in how the NCID works with designers during Window Walk. She said that she was already in conversations with St. Louis Homes & Lifestyles to bring in additional window designers so

that the NCID can fund more extensive and elaborate window designs throughout the neighborhood to make Window Walk a holiday destination. She also noted that this year's Window Walk will expand to include programming on four Saturdays.

Trip said he felt investing in window designs and holiday lighting/decor could be very valuable for the neighborhood, more so than continuing to fund music and entertainment for a few hours on Saturdays in December, as it would help make the CWE more of a destination for shopping and celebrating throughout the entire holiday season. Derek agreed that he would like to see more holiday light (which Kate noted was allocated for in the special projects & public realm budgets).

Kate explained that the public realm budget has been decreased due to reduced landscaping and maintenance costs with a new contractor. In addition to landscaping and maintenance, the 2017/18 budget includes funding for annual plantings (3 times per year), the replacement of some landscaping on Kingshighway, resetting cobblestones around some tree wells and pulling/replacing trees within the district.

Kate noted that there is also \$213,000 in the NCID's reserve fund that could potentially be used for special projects, such as large-scale holiday decor/lighting, in coming years. She noted that a holiday lighting and decor program might need to be phased in and grown incrementally. She said that she has been meeting with Jim Espy to discuss options that would create the desired wow factor, and would report back. She said that one of the most expensive components of any holiday lighting/decor plan would be growing the district's electrical infrastructure. Kate noted that the TIF could help pay for some of this at Maryland while the CID would cover costs at McPherson. Trip asked who would be responsible for paying the electric bill; Kate said it would be submetered from the building and paid by the CID, but that the meters can be intermittently turned off to control usage.

## **MARKETING & EVENTS**

Kate Maher provided a brief update on planning for the upcoming CWE Cocktail Party (June 10), stating that things were going well and that while the event was currently over its projected budget and under its projected sponsorship fundraising, she was working on a last-minute liquor sponsorship deal with Jack Daniel's.

Kate also updated the board on the status of BookFest St. Louis (Sept. 22 & 23). She said that she planned to meet with Kris Kleindeist of Left Bank Books in the next few days to discuss creative direction so that promotion could begin this summer.

She said that Left Bank Books' team had secured author Sherman Alexie for a keynote address on Friday, Sept. 22, and that she was working on securing a 700-1000 person venue for that event. She said that Left Bank Books' team was headed to a conference in New York City in early June, where they would be having conversations with additional nationally known authors in hopes of bringing them to the festival.

## **PUBLIC REALM**

Kate provided an update on the facade lighting project. She said the next phase would be to do a mock-up at the corner of Euclid & McPherson, which commissioners would be invited out to review.

Kate said that, under the proposed plan, the CID would pay for all fixtures and installation, and property owners would be asked to pay electric costs. Trip said the NCID needs to proceed cautiously when working with privately owned properties, and make sure that the NCID emphasizes the importance of this project to enhance the overall public realm.

Derek expressed concern over allocating funds to only four buildings and suggested that the NCID needs a master lighting plan for the entire district.

Kate suggested that the NCID complete the project it has signed the contract for the lighting consultants to do and then discuss as a board how to allocate dollars for the project and phase it in over several years. The next step is the facade mock up.

Kate highlighted several other special projects under consideration, including:

- Helping to fund the final bust at Writer's Corner in order to facilitate its installation by BookFest on Sept. 23. She noted that this sculpture has a price tag of \$20,000 and that costs would be shared with the CWE Association, which currently has approximately \$10,500 in funding.
- Funding exterior improvements outside the Racquet Club, specially related to the alley and curb cuts at the entrance to their property, for an estimated \$30,000. Derek said that the club doesn't feel like they're benefiting from their NCID membership; Kate said that Jim had followed up with Lyda Krewson to see what was promised to them when the NCID was formed. Trip asked how many members the club has; Kate said she would inquire.
- Funding landscaping improvements near the McPherson parking lot. Greg Launhardt, new owner of the Berger Memorial property, has requested assistance in repaving the sidewalk, planting trees and installing a bike rack in front of the McPherson parking lot. Kate said that there is no cost estimate for this yet, but that it is a neglected stretch of sidewalk needing improvements. Derek said he would like to see a comprehensive streetscape plan that can be followed district wide before the NCID proceeds with any individual projects; Kate said there is \$25,000 allocated in the project list to fund such a plan. Trip questioned whether the investment at the Berger Memorial would be increasing anyone's sales within the NCID, and asked for more information about what the proposed ROI is for the NCID. He said that the NCID should be prioritizing its special project investments into big projects that bring additional revenue to the NCID, and that this project is low on the list. Derek also questioned the value of the investment, asking if the owner has any revenue projections, and whether there would be an opportunity to use part of the lot for valet on non-event nights, in order to better understand the value of this investment for the NCID. Chris noted that perhaps instead of funding the entire project, the NCID can consider a goodwill gesture to the new business (such as maintaining landscaping once he installs it).
- Investing in a parking study (\$10,000). Kate said that the NCID could bring in a consultant to review smart parking and valet options; Derek said that he agreed this was a top priority, and that he would like more information about adding angled parking (similar to what's outside Whole

Foods in the SCID), which he felt could add 2-3 times as many spaces. Kate said that SWT could recommend consultants and that she would reach out.

Kate said that the board would continue to discuss holiday lighting/decor and other special project options at its next meeting.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS**

The board discussed adjusting its upcoming meeting schedule to accommodate commissioners' summer travel plans. The next two meetings of the NCID were rescheduled to June 13 (from June 20) and to July 25 (from July 18).

The board also discussed potential recommendations to fill vacant commissioners seats, including two on the north end of the neighborhood and one on the south end. The board recommended pursuing someone from Citizen Park, Koplal Properties or Mac Properties to fill the seat on the south end.

The board also compiled a list of potential retailers to fill a seat on the north end, including a representative from Duane Reed, Enchanting Embellishments or The Eye Bar. Chris asked for an update on the board's prior recommendation of Chris Sommers or Adam Tilford to fill the seat vacated by Aaron Teitelbaum of Herbie's in 2016. Kate Maher said Chris Sommers' recommendation had been sent to the mayor's office (under its previous administration) and that she wasn't sure what the hold up was, but that she would follow up again.

#### **ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:31 a.m.