

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Board of Directors
Minutes of October 7, 2009**

Present: Liz Becher Peggy Brooker, Cathy Carson, Jesse Helm, Toni Lussier Dick Munroe Drew Perkins, Randy Pryde, Kate Sarosy, Brettnee Tromble, Charles Walsh and Tina Wulf

Unexcused: Bob Ide

I. **Call to Order** – Peggy Brooker called the Oct. meeting to order at 11:35 a.m.

II. **Presentation - Jim Davis, Evanston City Clerk – on Wyoming Main Street**

Jim began his work with downtown revitalization as Evanston's Urban Renewal Director in 1987. He learned about Wyoming Main Street through a 3-day workshop in Miami Beach, Florida which he attended. He acquired a notebook of Main Street principles which became Jim's "bible" for **Organization, Design, Promotion & Economic Restructuring**.

Jim has used these 4 principles for nearly 27 years, but Evanston only recently joined Main Street. Jim said Main Street affords community stability for downtown revitalization by having in place a system of support and structure such that, during times of staff and board transitions, the revitalization process stands firm.

The Wyoming Legislature and Gov. Dave Freudenthal supported a \$100,000 increase this year for Main Street. Evanston received \$20,000 for technical and architectural support. Wyoming didn't always support Main Street, however. There were a few cities involved in a 1980s pilot program but the State stopped funding it prematurely Jim said. Main Street is not a quick fix program he said. It requires a slow and steady course of action. Recently, the state supported another pilot project and now there are 6 communities (Evanston, Green River, Rawlins, Laramie, Sheridan and Dubois). Plus, the accessibility for networking with peers is helpful in meeting the challenges of the job. Main Street affords communities much needed job and technical assistance. The greatest benefit is probably stability. Jim said, if Tina leaves and the DDA doesn't have an exit or replacement strategy, it becomes an arduous and time consuming task for Board members to fill in, replace and train a new director. Main Street can help with that.

The application process isn't easy, Jim said, and it can't be the work of one person or director. It must be the work of the board with buy-in from the City and community. Jim said, Casper, is likely being offered the Grandfather Application, probably because Casper was one of the original Wyoming Main Streets. He said if accepted, there's a lot of reporting and paperwork which is critical for gauging progress for communities and for the state. Jim said Main Street executives look for communities with thought into their application and boundaries. Given the DDA already has boundaries in place; we would select a smaller "blighted" area within the district to work on.

As a Main Street, Jim said it can be difficult to work on all four areas of the program at the same time, and work plans are recommended for each area. These require thought and time. They track tasks, deadlines, budgets, grants and volunteer time, for example. Also, board and committee members are encouraged to attend trainings. There's in-state and out-of-state travel for trainings, meetings and the National Main Street Conference each spring. There are monthly reports which track rental and vacancy rates, and total retail

and/or commercial square footage, to name a few. These validate state funding for the program.

Questions from the Board:

Q: Evanston didn't join Main Street right away? What prompted you to join?

Jim: I wanted Evanston to be a Main Street from day one, but it had to be a Board decision. They had to launch it, and it took us a while to get to that point.

Q: What was the tipping point?

Jim: Main Street staff encouraged us to apply. It was a matter of timing and the application couldn't come from me or Jane. It needed to be *their* decision and *their* application. While on the advisory board for Main Street, Sheridan wanted to join, but it was obvious their application was written by their manager. At that time, they didn't have the support of the community, and they were turned down!

Q: What Board made the decision when Evanston joined? Was it a DDA?

Jim: It was Urban Renewal. We didn't want to create a separate board, so right now it's the Urban Renewal/Main Street Board. That's the way Rock Springs and Green River approach it, too. Laramie has a DDA but it struggles. They have a great downtown with great critical mass, but they've depended on the DDA to raise the money for their project manager, who has no benefits; so there's always turn-over.

Benefits are important because the position is that of a cheerleader. I know Tina has to be a cheerleader. She gets everybody fired up, and that's a challenge in itself. If you don't have health insurance, you have turn-over. That's the way it is.

Q: It basically took the board about 21 years; was there a lot of turnover on the board?

Jim: No, because, according to Urban Renewal statutes, board members have a five year term, which I think needs to change. I don't think our board realized what Main Street was all about at the time. We had training and attended national conferences, but it still wasn't enough; it wasn't really structured as such. Jane and I did our own thing.

Q: How many people are on that board?

Jim: Five.

Q: Do you have four committees? How many people in each committee?

Jim: Right now, probably six or seven.

Q: From where do you draw your volunteers?

Jim: We have a lot of great volunteers mainly from the work we do. Every year for 27 years we've held a Renewal Ball, which is our main fund raiser. It attracts 80 volunteers on a six month basis. Over the years, people have worked on the ball; some became City Council members, even Mayor! That's how the process worked. Now under the Organization Committee we're focused on volunteer development and recruitment. We need to work on getting new people and retired people to the table.

Q: As you expanded your volunteer base through the work you've done, has that created more excitement or momentum for downtown renewal efforts?

Jim: Yes. The fire that devastated the Strand Theatre was the catalyst for bringing the community together. The day after the fire, we called the National Trust, the parent organization for the National Main Street. We asked for and received immediate help. An architectural engineer was paid for and brought to Evanston through a grant. From there, the community rallied around.

Q: How did your Board identify your area and develop consensus?

Jim: With Urban Renewal Statutes we have to define a district and declare it blight, which isn't fun but it's one way to attract CDBG money. Our district was in place, but when we joined Main Street, we shortened it. We've got to revisit our initial plan and meld it with Main Street. We still have a lot of work to do, but that's the way it's been - many years practicing these principles and being focused on downtown.

Q: With Main Street do you focus on one block at a time or an entire area?

Jim: I first came to Casper in 1961 and then came back in 1987. Downtown Casper had come a long way! What you've done is what we've done. We've planted trees along with other tangibles. We've had promotions for years. For 20 years we've had a Christmas Teddy Bear Parade. Kids come downtown and walk the streets with their bears. They used to go to the Strand to see a movie. The idea was kids went to the theater and parents shopped. We still do it today. We have Trick or Treat downtown and we have 3000 kids coming downtown; there's no Trick or Treat at night anymore!

To answer your question we've worked on promotion and a little on design. We don't have design standards yet but we have a grant to write them and are working on it. Mostly, we're lucky. We have great business owners who believe in fixing up their facades, but truthfully, you can do beautification work until you're blue in the face. You're not going to have cash registers ringing unless you have the proper mixed use of all the businesses, and Main Street helps with that.

Q: The DDA is a component arm of the City of Casper. How do you infuse capital into the downtown? Has Main Street changed that? Has it given Evanston an avenue to do things differently, expand what it can do and how?

Jim: Yes, I think so. We had the support of the City from the onset because our very first project involved a public property, the Depot. There have been many other projects over the years. Today, we're working on the hotel we bought. We have a theater and we're heavily involved with the development of the Round House. Most of what we've done is for the public good and for the private sector. For example, when we first started work on the Depot and that improvement developed, then the private sector started to do their thing. A private developer bought the Down's Opera House, the oldest building in the community. The owner has spent \$300,000-\$400,000 on the outside masonry structure. He's cleaning it, taking the old paint off. He has living quarters upstairs and street level office space. It's a beautiful addition to downtown.

Q: Has Main Street valued an opportunity to expand or engage in public-private partnerships that you wouldn't have had otherwise?

Jim: Let me talk about the hotel. We actually took city money to buy that – a huge controversy. The first thing that happened to us, which is unfortunate, is that we entered into an agreement with a developer from Salt Lake. He never once put money on the table; he strung out the board for 3-4 years. Finally we got rid of him and basically started over again. We've been able to attract some CDGB money. Our mayor is supportive, and we're able to use some consensus money. The next step is to market the hotel and get it to a joint private-public partnership - attract a developer.

Q: Are you going to sell or lease to the developer?

Jim: We want to be real careful. We have a committee working on what they want the building to be and it needs to be a consensus.

Q: The plan is to return it to the public?

Jim: Yes. I hope I'm around when that day comes so I can say I told you so!

Q: I want to come back to the boundary question. We have separate boundaries with our URA and DDA. Can they overlap in a Main Street definition with no statutory variance?

Jim: I'm not aware of any statutory issues. They can overlap. They just don't want it to be too big. Main Street doesn't want you to take on an overwhelming district because then you never get much done. You need to be focused. I think what you're doing with the Yellowstone District and the work down there is tremendous. It's going to be a great addition to downtown. I don't see it as competing whatsoever. I think you've come a long way and have lots in place. I think you would be a great Main Street.

Q: Did you guys have an economic development group in Evanston?

Jim: Yes and no.

Q: How is the interplay? Are there any other economic development programs around? Is there any interplay with them and Main Street that you're aware of?

Jim: One of Main Street's four points is Economic Restructuring. It's the hardest thing to work on. We need to get into recruitment and helping the Moms and Pops survive in tough times and bring training to them. It's not been very successful. We need to start our own 501 (c) (3). I think Evanston will eventually get there.

Q: My name is Pat Sweeny. What you're describing sounds like more of a pain than it's worth with the amount of recording. The application process doesn't bother me, but the four committees do. We have a difficult time getting merchants to show up for our Downtown Merchants & Professionals Association and those people are direct recipients!

Jim: I hear you. That exists today. We've lost people who have retired and closed their business or experienced deaths. You're going to have highs and lows as you go through this process. Main Street does bring stability. It's not going to bring a lot of money, but I'm so grateful we have the program and that our state supports it. It's well funded right now and these are tough times.

Go see what Rawlins is doing. They've come a long way and a lot of that can be contributed to Main Street. We can't bring business to our downtowns if our businesses are all boarded up. There's no sense of place. The answer to your question, Pat, if we can keep this thing going and make it work, then I think some bigger dollars will come our way. Finally we have a state Architecture Program. It's coming together, and we need to hold together to do this work.

Q: I've lived here for three years and I'm a downtown property owner. I appreciate your passion, but this looks soft to me; it's more qualitative than quantitative. I can't quantify it; I can't quantify the time. If there are only 20 percent business owners that are engaged, that gives me one picture. What's behind it for me is a passionate person, such as you, who really drives Main Street in Rawlins, in Sheridan, in Evanston and so forth. I want to believe in the program quantitatively, but I'm not convinced. No one has been able to prove the value of the program quantitatively.

Jim: The Malls are successful because they dictate policy. If there is no DDA or Main Street in a community, what happens to the downtown? Who advocates for the downtown property owners and business owners? To protect your interest you have to have some form of organization. . . . We're a fully fledged department for the City. You have to have partnerships.

Q: I've performed in public and private partnerships; some have been the worst experiences of my life because it consumed a lot of my time because they were looking for market driven ideas; I'd actually go and do the work. I'm already jammed

doing other things. What would stop 6, 8 or 10 highly motivated property owners from collaborating to figure out a strategy for downtown Casper, Wyoming? We help shape an agenda and partnership between the City and downtown. What does Main Street do in addition to, or above and beyond, what six members can do?

Jim: Stability – it brings stability.

Q: Have you ever thought of pulling together all six communities for a summit and compiling all of their quantitative data?

Jim: We're required by the State Legislature to produce an annual report. It might be given to the Joint Minerals or Corporations Committee, so that's there. That's why the Main Street Board is after the communities to report on their progress.

Q: When is that report produced?

Jim: I think it was due in March or April. The Main Street Managers is what they're called; they go by different names in different communities. They meet on a quarterly basis. It creates competition. They don't want their community to fall behind. That's a good thing, in my opinion. "Rising tides raise all ships." Main Street helps you have focus.

What happened in a lot of communities is the downtowns were dying. So WYDOT came in with a street improvement program: curb and gutters, asphalt, trees, and they think that's going to revitalize our communities and our downtowns. It's not really going to do it because if you don't have activities, promotions, and a strategy to bring people downtown, the cash register is not going to ring.

Communities' revenue does not come from property tax; that's only 1%. It comes from sales tax. So, if the Main Street is doing a good job and the DDA is doing a good job, the community is collecting sales tax, so the City benefits. The City should be involved. It should be directly involved.

Q: Have you been able to pass your capital facilities tax?

Jim: We did one. Of course, the way it's structured now, the whole county has to go in.

Q: You're as much of a guru on this as anybody. Do you think this is the right thing to do in Casper at this time?

Jim: Yes, I think it would be a good thing, but the application process is not automatic. Eight or nine of us vote on this.

Q: Do you still have your Urban Renewal?

Jim: Yes, it's Urban Renewal/Main Street; it's one and the same. Rock Springs had an Urban Renewal and now they have Main Street. They have a combined board, too. We're all going through a period of transition as we're melding these agencies together.

Q: I can't see us doing both since we have such a great DDA. It's just more government.

Jim: That's why I've been honest with you. There is a change. There is more paperwork and reporting, but there again, think about what happens when Tina walks away.

Q: Do you see the Main Street operating under the DDA?

Chairman Perkins said 1.) We have not had that conversation with the City yet, and 2.) We're not that far along yet. Based on my investigation of it while in Philadelphia at the National Main Street Conference, I don't think having a mixed board is the way to go. They have a lot of aligned functions, but they don't have the exact same functions. The DDA is statutory with strict requirements of what we can and cannot do with our revenue. Main Street has to be separate. There'll be some overlap and coordination.

It would allow DDA to partner and associate with the Old Yellowstone District and work out how we marry these two entities to create the entrances and transitions between the districts. I haven't found the right template yet. That's my experience. I haven't made up my mind whether or not we should apply now. That's why we have Jim

here. We wanted to hear from him and have the discussion for the rest of the board and acquire more information. We haven't made up our mind yet, correct?

A: No.

Drew said the City seems interested. I've had a few conversations with Tom and Council. They think it would be particularly helpful with the OYD.

Q: Would there be funding available?

A: As I understand it, some funds funnel through the National Historic Trust.

Jim: I spoke about the technical assistance grant, but that is state money.

A: The other place is the Legislature. This last session it was about \$100,000. The Legislature has pushed money down to the counties and cities. Maybe down the line it could be the recipient of consent money and Business Ready Community Grants. It's not too much of a stretch to see some of that money designated for downtowns. When they put the money down, the Legislature will look for existing frameworks to apply it and make it usable. I think Main Street has real traction.

Council Liaison Sarosy said the City is already doing quite a bit towards OYD redevelopment and reconstruction. We've just approved a \$375,000 contract for engineering and design work along Collins, and we're intending to invest in that project. Drew said, in the end, we need some kind of 501(c)(3) organization. Main Street is one way to do that. Obviously we can develop our own 501(c)(3). Otherwise we will not access the grant incentive programs that I think we need in order to make it work. Liz said we have the 501(c)(3) through the Joint Powers Board that is the recipient of the City/County money. Drew said until we get the Joint Powers Board, CAEDA, OYD, DDA, the City, and County all in one room and on the same page, I don't know how we get it done or how it'll work. Right now everyone is off doing their own thing.

For example, Pat said, the lampposts at the new courthouse don't match the ones on Center or Second Streets. *Why?* He said he doesn't know how the DDA could take on Main Street as **it's** funded via property tax. A cooperative effort is needed. He thinks the City would be a better spot to house Main Street through Community Development. Pat said there are a lot of board vacancies for the City and County. He said Main Street would mean another volunteer board with vacancies to fill.

Councilwoman Sarosy said Council hasn't had the discussion yet, and we need more information to get it laid out. Who knows what the right answer is she said. Tina said it varies from community to community. For example:

- Laramie – a free standing 501 (c)(3)
- Rawlins – City government, DDA and 501 (c)(3) arm
- Rock Springs – City Government, Urban Renewal, 501 (c)(3)
- Green River – City Government
- Evanston – City Government, Urban Renewal, 501 (c)(3)
- Dubois – part-time consultant only

Q: Do you know how much more time is required for reporting?

Jim: To be honest with you, it's not that bad. Jane probably spends about a couple of hours every week on it. It just has to be done and it's pretty simple reporting; it's not labor intensive.

Chairman Perkins thanked Jim for his time and insights.

Drew asked Pat if he had any Public Comments. He said no and thank you. Jesse said you're welcome to come any time, Pat. Peggy concurred.

III. **City Report**

IV. Kate Sarosy – The big news for the City is the KC Apartment eviction notice. Friday is the deadline. At the last meeting, Council voted for a \$25,000 allocation for Community Action Partnerships to distribute as they see fit; they've already placed five families. Sales tax is down, however we have sufficient reserves. There's no recommendation to cut back on capital projects because bids are coming in so low. Liz Becher – To speak to Pat's concern about lampposts, the streetscape design for Old Yellowstone mirrors downtown. Liz said besides assisting OYD, she helps with City-wide redevelopment, including downtown. She receives calls seeking assistance with older buildings and code upgrade needs. She has \$120,000 CDGB grant money a year to assist with sprinkler systems, handicap ramps, ADA signage, and utility upgrades. Many of the requests come from downtown and some from OYD such as the Wyo Central FCU retaining wall. Others involve the Mossholders and The Science Zone, Village Inn, tipping fees for Brian Scott's loft, and the old Coliseum Motors 12/24 building - they're not all in the Old Yellowstone District.

Liz asked if DDA has any money to do some of the code upgrades that are going to continue to be a need and be sought after as we work to keep our downtown vital. I can allocate up to \$10,000 for a particular project but that doesn't go very far, especially when trying to get old buildings up to code.

Peggy said our funds need to go for public improvements. Public funds may not be used for private improvements. Tina said it is even a stretch for us to allocate funds for improvements that are within the "public right of way" but we still assist with alley lighting, graffiti abatement, and pigeon control.

Liz said their money is federally tied and is defined for poor and indigent. They allocate it based on the census track of downtown and OYD. Funds must benefit the public, i.e., handicap ramps. Drew said we've talked with Bill Luben and Linda Witko. As far as we've been able to go is to do a 50-50 with security cameras and alley lights, for example. Ultimately, if we create a 501 (c)(3), we can fund more meaningful projects for the property owners but the money will definitely have to come from somewhere else and not from the mill levy. If Bill comes up with ways we can do otherwise, let's talk. We would like to consider more assistance with façade improvements and energy efficient improvements for upper levels especially.

Liz said she is sending Bill an opinion request for both the URA and DDA statutes. Drew said Liz and the City are working hard for the core. That is not the concern; the concern is that they continue to help us. Liz said the 12/24 Club would like to see DDA boundaries extended to include that area by the old Coliseum. The Rapid City development team would also like to see DDA boundaries extended to include their apartment project on "C" & Kimball Streets. They're seeking another Casper project and are involved with the Rapid City DDA. Drew said we'll consider it.

V. **Approval of Oct. 7, 2009 Minutes**

Motion, Second, Passed (MSP) (Cathy Carson, Jesse Helm)

VII. **Financial Report**

Treasurer Tromble said the high percentages in the "% of budget" column are high because of the timing of the expenses such as the large D&O insurance premium just paid. She said she would have information on options for the CDs which mature at

the end of the calendar year. Overall spending is at 24% which is about right for the first quarter of the fiscal year.

Chairman noted we have the wrong spreadsheet – it is last fiscal year's and not this year to date. He referred everyone to the green monthly summary sheet instead.

VIII. Approval of September Financial Report

Motion, Second, Passed (MSP) (Kate Sarosy, Peggy Brooker)

IX. Director's Report : Attached

XI. New Business

- Reminder NC Townsend Justice Center Dedication Oct. 10th, 10am-2pm.
- Proud to Host the Best ad attached FYI.
- CMB Sponsorship – tabled to next meeting.
- Form Holiday PR Task Force-*work on holiday (media) spend, schedule, message:*
Toni asked about the New Year's Task Force. Tina said it has disbanded. They didn't think it timely with the economy to take on another project of that magnitude.
- Assist DMPA in promoting Holiday Window Decorating Contest—public votes & names entered to win DDA sponsored \$200 gift certificate
Peggy said the executive board recommends the Board donate \$200 towards the Downtown Christmas Window Display Contest. Members of the public voting for the best window display would have their names entered into a drawing for the \$200 and the business gets the recognition for winning the best window.

Motion, Second, Passed (MSP) (Peggy Brooker, Cathy Carson)

IX. Old Business

Joy of Life – Peggy is responsible for \$2300 in Joy of Life Raffle ticket and brick sales! Thanks to Peggy WIDC purchased all of our unsold raffle tickets. We decided therefore to add their name to the donor list since their contribution exceeded \$2000.

20% Chance of Flurries landscaping is done. Trees, shrubs, mulch are all in. Large rocks will go in later as Don Stoner finds them and then poem plaque will go on.

Lighting is the last item and that can be done whenever and if really needed. We'll check on the evening light that is all around it now and see if anything more is needed.

Mill Levy Election – Tina offered absentee ballots to board members to take just in case one of the property owners they contact requested one. Kate noted three Council members voted against the Mill Levy Election request of the DDA. She is not sure why but she has calls in to them.

X. Adjourn - Chairman Perkins thanked everyone for their attendance and time and said we stand adjourned. 1:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Tina Wulf, Executive Director

** A compact disc recording of this meeting has been placed in the DDA Minutes. The CD can be played using both DR-02 Software, Real Play and Windows Media Player.