

**MEETING MINUTES
ST THOMAS DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT BOARD
WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 1, 2023 8:00AM ROOM 304 CITY HALL AND VIA ZOOM**

Attendance:

Chair - Earl Taylor	Y	Mayor Preston	Y
Vice Chair - Grayden Laing	Y	Russell Schnurr	Y *
Secretary - Jolie Inthavong	N	Sarah Van Pelt	Y
Treasurer - Tina Swaenepoel	Y	Dana Vanzanten	Y
Beautification Chair-Vanessa Buckland	Y	Advisors:	
Promotions Chair - Dave Thomson	Y	Elle Crevits	N
Reza Alavie	N	Sean Dyke	Y
Renee Carpenter	N	Adrienne Griffin	N
Jennifer Childs	N	Paul Jenkins	Y
Suzanne Faris	Y	Sarah Lynch	N
Ian Gillespie	Y	Sarah Noble	Y
Duane Orth	Y *	Megan Pickersgill	Y *
Annette Sbarra	N	Tara McCaulley	N
	* = joined via Zoom	Time = Departed the meeting	

- 1. Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 8:06am meeting Quorum.

Mission: To cultivate a community of all Downtown property and business owners and residents, while advocating, beautifying and actively promoting our businesses and authentic heritage in Downtown St Thomas.

Vision: To engage, inspire and welcome our community and visitors to experience Downtown St Thomas as a unique destination.

- 2. Declaration of Conflict:**

No Declarations were presented

- 3. Confirmation of Agenda**

Motion by Grayden, Seconded by Tina, "To confirm the November 1, 2023 Agenda as distributed." Carried

- 4. Confirmation of Minutes**

Motion by Ian, Seconded by Grayden, "To confirm the October 4, 2023 Minutes as amended as follows:

Earl reported that, thanks to Annette's data collection, \$1,550 DDB Dollars were recorded as being redeemed in September.

A total of \$37,010 DDB\$ have been redeemed YTD and of this \$30 were redeemed from the 2021 DDB\$ promotion and \$1,335 were redeemed from the 2022 DDB\$ promotion.

Earl made 4 DDB Dollar merchant pickups in September."

Carried

Note: Meeting Minutes can be found at www.downtownstthomas.ca/monthly-minutes

5. Deputations

None

6. Chair Report - Earl

Downtown Dollars Tracking - Earl

Earl reported that, thanks to Annette's data collection, \$2,520 DDB Dollars were recorded as being redeemed in October.

A total of \$39,910 DDB\$ have been redeemed YTD and of this \$65 were redeemed from the 2021 DDB\$ promotion and \$1,695 were redeemed from the 2022 DDB\$ promotion.

Earl made 12 DDB Dollar merchant pickups in October.

2023 Downtown Dollar Promotion

Earl reported that a number of members have asked that the DDB once again develop a 2023 discounted Downtown Dollar program. Based on an email issued to all board members asking for approval of such a plan, Earl presented the plan to proceed.

Motion by Tina, Seconded by Suzanne, "To issue \$100,000 Downtown Dollars at a 15% discount in \$25.00 units with a purchase limit of \$1,000 per person" Carried

Note: New Downtown Dollars will be designed, printed, security embossed, promoted and the website updated with a proposed launch date of November 20th, 2023.

Business Updates - new / relocated / lost

New businesses include The Clay Oven at 648 Talbot, Jan Cat at 584 Talbot and Opa's Pretzels at 573 Talbot.

Social Media

Earl reported that our X account @stthomasddb has 576 Followers (was 576 in October).

Our DDB Facebook page www.FB/downtownstthomas has increased by 143 Followers in October to 3950 (was 3808 Followers in September).

Through the month of October, our DDB Facebook Reach has increased by 58% to 94,479

Our Instagram/stthomasDDB page has 1350 Followers (was 1338 in October).

Downtown Issues

Earl reported that issues related to crime, homelessness, drug addiction and mental health continue to affect the success of our downtown business and property owners. A committee of merchants is working to find solutions.

Concerns have been raised, now that the street has reopened, about the darkness and unsafe conditions due the lack of street lights.

Downtown Coach

Earl provided an overview of the potential sale of our DDB Quebec Coach by the ECRM. Earl proposed that we add an extra \$20,000 to the 2024 budget in order to

purchase it and keep it as part of our inventory for use at events like Nostalgia Nights and Oktoberfest. Overall, there was agreement to proceed with this suggestion. Earl will provide an update at the December meeting.

7. Finance Report - Tina

Tina provided a monthly statement update on the financial status of the DDB accounts.

Motion by Tina, Seconded by Sarah Van Pelt, "To accept the financial report and to pay the outstanding bills" Carried

It was noted that our accounts have not been fully setup in the City Accounting system. As well, our HST rebate has not been submitted and our WSIB submissions have not been paid resulting in a penalty being levied.

8. Reports

8.1 Promotions Report - Dave

Social Media Advertising

Dave reported that, due to the cost, an updated submission from Andrew Gunn and Associates has been declined. Grayden provided a new social media proposal.

Motion by Grayden, Seconded by Dave, "To enter into a contract with Nicole Van Pelt to create Facebook, Instagram and X social posts at a rate of \$100 per week for a period of 1 year" Carried

Print Advertising

A 1/4 page add for both the Downtown Pumpkin Prowl and the Downtown Oktoberfest events were published in the October Hometown magazine.

Radio Advertising

Dave reported that the Downtown Pumpkin Prowl ads ended on October 27th. The Tree Lighting and the Light Up Talbot ads began on November 1st running to the 17th. The Promotional Downtown Dollar ads will begin when the program is launched.

Website

Sarah Van Pelt reported that the website is ready for beta testing. Sarah has provided the membership database portion to Earl for data verification.

Downtown VIBE - Reza

Reza reported that the next VIBE will be issued in mid November.

Oktoberfest Update - Earl

Earl reported that the October 14th event received many good comments despite the cool damp weather. A budget summary was presented. Only 1 person submitted a photo booth photo winning a \$50 Downtown Dollar prize.

Many have suggested that we should run this event next year, with a few changes and perhaps a few weeks earlier if possible.

A date of September 21, 2024 was proposed.

A 2024 committee was established consisting of Earl, Grayden, Dave, Sarah VP, Sarah N, Tina and Megan.

Pumpkin Prowl Update - Earl

Earl reported that the event was a huge success with 80 Downtown businesses participating, drawing well over 1000 children. Feedback from downtown merchants have been very positive. 100's of Passports have been collected and the winners of the six \$50 Downtown Dollar prize packs will be selected once all passport have been collected. The pumpkin window decals are also being collected for use next year. Earl mentioned that due to the lack to Street lighting, 5 students provided safety assistance at 3 crosswalks.

Tree Lighting Celebration - Earl

Earl reported that plans are in place for the Friday November 17th event. Santa arrives at 5:45pm on a STFD truck to visit with the children. CLC / Christmas Decor has once again been contracted to install warm white lights on the tree during the week of November 13th. A musician has been hired, cookies and hot chocolate ordered, and the John Wise school choir will be on hand to sing carols and Santa confirmed.

Light Up Talbot - Suzanne

Suzanne provided an update on plans for the Friday November 17th 5pm - 9pm event. 4 businesses, including Railway City Tourism, DDB, Wendy's and Graphenstone are sponsoring the 4 warming Stations, MYFM is providing a \$900 advertising package, DDB is providing a window cleaning package and Van Pelts is providing a 16 x 20 Canvas Print to the best window decorating winners. Yurek Pharmacy and Mitchell Soup are sponsoring the Horse and Wagon rides and Downer Karn are providing the propane fuel.

Next committee meeting is Wednesday November 1st at 7:30pm at The Roadhouse.

Black Friday - November 24th - Jolie

No report

Downtown Santa - Dave

Dave reported that the event will be extended by an extra hour and run from 11 - 2:30pm and as such a funding extension was proposed.

Motion by Grayden, Seconded by Ian "To increase the Downtown Santa budget from \$750 to \$1,500" Carried

8.2 Beautification Report - Vanessa

Downtown Business Street Signs

Vanessa reported that the Ruby Blues sign will be moved from 578 to 571 Talbot, a new sign will be ordered for The Clay Oven at 648 Talbot, Jan Cat at 584 Talbot and Opa's Pretzels at 573 Talbot.

Ian reported that the Pampered Pouch has opened at 349 Talbot Street.

Banners

Vanessa reported that she and Earl worked with the contractor to remove the summer banners on Sunday October 22nd and place them back in storage.

LED Snowflakes - Earl

Earl reported that he had booked the contractor to install the Snowflake brackets on the lamp poles in the new construction zone on Sunday October 29th in preparation for the installation of the Snowflakes by Entegrus. However, with the lamp poles just being installed this week, there is a possibility that we will not have a full slate of Snowflakes this season, if not completely installed by the week of November 13th.

Downtown Construction

Earl reported that a number of downtown businesses are upset with the dust that was created during the construction and caused damage too the building facades.

8.3 Reports

Parks Dept Update - Adrienne

Adrienne provided a report that the fall Mums were removed during the week of October 30th and the winter decorations will be installed next week.

8.4 Council Update - Mayor Preston

Mayor Preston reported opening of the Westlake Evans Park was officially opened this past week.

To view City Council Agenda and Minutes visit <https://www.stthomas.ca/cms/one.aspx?portalId=12189805&pageId=12517512>

8.5 Municipal Heritage Committee Update - Russell

Russel reported that 488 Talbot Street is undergoing work to correct a property standards order involving complete reconstruction of the back wall and selective reconstruction of the front facade. All facade architectural details will be retained and reconstructed.

A heritage alteration permit was issued for a new mural at 548 Talbot Street being located on the side wall of the building in the alley across from City Hall.

Visit <https://www.stthomas.ca/cms/one.aspx?portalId=12189805&pageId=13290088> for more information.

8.6 CIP Program - Russell

No updates

Visit <https://www.stthomas.ca/search/default.aspx?q=Cip&type=-1,12189805-12410,12189721-117,12189721-127&sortBy=Relevance&pg=0> for more information.

8.7 Railway City Tourism Report - Megan

Megan reported that the Downtown Hunt has concluded with 400 participants and 500 submissions, new art installations on the side wall of the old Capitol Theatre, the Holiday Wish List is being published online at Railway City Tourism, the Horton After Dark event is scheduled for November 25th, there were 40 participants in the Oktoberfest Goosechase event and a new event Whistle-stop Bicycle Event is scheduled for May 25th, 2024

8.8 Economic Development Report - Sean

Sean reported that he is presenting a report to the London - St Thomas Association of Realtors on November 8th including stats that 2023 was the best year for construction ever, 264 homes were built in 2023 and a 165,000 sq ft addition is being built at the ADD facility on Burwell Road.

8.9 SBEC - Sarah / Elle

Sarah reported that the Horton Market ends on Saturday November 4th but there will be a special Christmas Market on November 18th from 11am-5pm

8.10 Chamber of Commerce Report - Paul

Paul reported that the next Business After 5 and B2B event is Wednesday November 22nd at St Thomas Ford.

Paul provided information on the formation of a new Young Entrepreneur Initiative group has formed. To assist them with considering Downtown St Thomas when launching their business, the DDB would provide a funding sponsorship.

Motion by Sarah Van Pelt, Seconded by Grayden "To provide a \$1,000.00 sponsorship to the St Thomas and District Chamber of Commerce to support Young Entrepreneurs Initiative" Carried

9. Coming Events

- Tree Lighting Celebration and Light Up Talbot - Friday November 17th 5-9pm
- Optimist Santa Claus Parade - Saturday November 18th 6pm
- Horton Christmas Market - Saturday November 18th 11-5pm
- Black Friday - Friday November 24th
- Christmas After Dark - Saturday November 25th at Horton Market \$25
- Downtown Santa - Saturday December 2nd 11-2pm
- Business After 5 - Wednesday November 22nd at St Thomas Ford
- 2023 Annual General Meeting - Wednesday January 24, 2024 at STEPAC

10. Adjournment

Motion by Suzanne, Seconded by Ian "To adjourn the meeting at 9:59am" Carried

Next Meeting: Wednesday December 6, 2023 at 8:00AM at The Ranch 44737 Edgeware Line (Talbot Line to Yarmouth Centre Road, North to Edgeware Line then turn West)