

MEETING MINUTES
ST THOMAS DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT BOARD
WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 7, 2024 8:00AM ROOM 304 CITY HALL / ZOOM

Attendance:

Chair - Earl Taylor	Y	Mayor Preston	N
Vice Chair - Grayden Laing	N	Russell Schnurr	Y*
Secretary - Jolie Inthavong	N	Sarah Van Pelt	N
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	N
Renee Carpenter	Y	Adrienne Griffin	Y*
Jennifer Childs	Y*	Paul Jenkins	Y
Suzanne Faris	N	Sarah Lynch	Y
Ian Gillespie	Y	Sarah Noble	N
Duane Orth	Y*	Megan Pickersgill	N
Annette Sbarra	Y	Tara McCaulley	N

* = joined via Zoom

- 1. Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 8:12am 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**

Earl requested the addition of one item to the Chair report titled Announcement.

Motion by Renee, Seconded by Dave, "To confirm the amended February 7, 2024 Agenda as distributed." Carried

- 4. Confirmation of Minutes**

Motion by Tina, Seconded by Ian, "To confirm the December 6, 2023 Minutes as distributed" Carried

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

- 5. Deputations**

None

6. Chair Report - Earl

Announcement

Earl reported that he will be stepping down from the Chair position and retiring from the board effective April 30th, 2024

A short discussion regarding future steps was held.

Motion by Renee, Seconded by Dave, "To allow the board executive to undertake a study to investigate options for the establishment of a new board structure" Carried

2023 Annual General Meeting

Earl reported that the AGM was held on Wednesday January 31st, 2024 at the St Thomas Elgin Public Art Centre with 51 in attendance.

Downtown Dollars Tracking - Earl

Earl reported that, thanks to Annette's data collection, \$8,190.00 DDB Dollars were redeemed in January. A total of \$8,190.00 DDB\$ have been redeemed YTD and of this \$275.00 were redeemed from the 2021 DDB\$ promotion (total redemptions \$88,705.00 of \$93,365 sold), \$1,295.00 from the 2022 DDB\$ promotion (total redemptions \$88,920 of \$100,000 sold) and \$6,250.00 from the 2023 promotion (total redemptions \$6,250 of \$36,000 sold). Earl made 15 DDB Dollar merchant pickups in January.

2023 Downtown Dollar Promotion

Earl reported that the 2023 Downtown Dollar promotional sales began on November 20th and ended on December 20th with total sales of \$36,000.

Business Updates - new / relocated / lost

New businesses include a Mexican restaurant opening late March at 546 Talbot, Opa's Pretzels at 578 Talbot - they will host their Grand Opening on Friday February 23rd at 5:30pm and Zesty Dessert Cafe at 831 Talbot Street.

Social Media

Earl reported that our X account @stthomasddb has 579 Followers (was 575 in December).

Our DDB Facebook page www.FB/downtownstthomas has increased by 65 Followers to 4113 (was 4048 Followers in December). Our audience consists of Men 25.80% and Women 74.20%. Through the month of January, our DDB Facebook Reach was 23,903. Our Instagram/stthomasDDB page has 1401 Followers (was 1379 in December).

Downtown Coach

Earl reported that he has confirmed an agreement with the ECRM to purchase the DDB Coach at a price of \$20,000 payable in 2 annual instalments. A quote to replace the windows is estimated at \$8,700 plus HST. Historically, the DDB Coach was wrapped in April 2014.

7. Finance Report - Tina

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

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

8. Reports

8.1 Promotions Report - Dave

Social Media Advertising

Earl reported that Nicole Van Pelt continues to create relevant weekly Facebook, Instagram and X social posts.

Print Advertising

Earl mentioned that the newly printed Membership Book was distributed at the January 31st AGM and copies will now be distributed to all Downtown businesses to bring awareness of DDB programs.

Dave presented a plan to create an ad for the Home Show.

Motion by Dave, Seconded by Tina, "To trade \$750 Downtown Dollars for a 1/2 page Home Show ad in The Hometown St Thomas magazine" Carried

Radio Advertising

Dave reported that a new Shop Hop ad will be produced next week,

Downtown VIBE - Reza

Reza provided a report that a March issue is being prepared.

A discussion took place about finding a new way to distribute the VIBE. Dave and Grayden will connect with 2 local magazine publishers to discuss distribution options and report back next month.

Website

Annette continues to review the website membership database and providing updates to Sarah Van Pelt. The Draft website will be ready for beta testing soon.

Shop Hop

Dave reported that the annual Shop Hop is scheduled for Saturday March 30th from 11am - 1pm. Annette is talking to merchants to create a Passport for shoppers to use that day from 10am - 5pm for a chance to win Downtown Dollars. Dave will produce a radio ad script, Renee agreed to buy a sufficient supply of Easter eggs, Annette agreed to order a costume and Dave agreed to be our Easter Bunny again. Anyone interested in walking with the bunny is welcome.

Motion by Dave, Seconded by Renee "To place a 1/4 page Shop Hop ad in the Hometown St Thomas magazine at a cost of \$375.00" Carried

Home Show - April 12th - 14th

Dave reported that plans are being developed for the Home Show. Annette has placed an article in the Newsletter offering merchants an opportunity to display their products in the booth in 2 hour intervals. To date 2 businesses have volunteered to attend. A volunteer list to work the booth will be distributed at the next meeting.

- As a Whistle Stop booth, we will give away \$250 Downtown Dollars on each day of the show.

- Setup will happen on Thursday April 11th at 5:30pm and tear down will happen on Sunday when the show ends at approximately 4pm - volunteers required.

8.2 Beautification Report - Vanessa

Downtown Business Street Signs

Vanessa reported that a sign for Pampered Pooch at 349 Talbot and a Hair Salon at 459 Talbot are being designed, a sign for The Clay Oven at 648 Talbot was installed and the Ruby Blues sign was relocated to 571 Talbot.

Summer Students

Earl reported that he has applied for Canada Jobs funding for 2 student positions and we are awaiting approval. The students that worked for us last year have expressed interest in returning this year.

LED Snowflakes - Earl

Earl reported that 60 LED snowflakes were removed by Entegrus and placed back in storage on January 29th - 31st.

We now have 6 units that are no longer working. Our supplier, Classic Displays, has provided us with a cost of \$680.00 to repair them. New units are currently priced at \$1,100.00 until Feb 29th when they go back to \$1,295.00 each. Duane offered to investigate the possibility of Entegrus repairing the snowflakes if sufficient materials could be sourced economically.

Banners

A discussion was held about designing a new set of banners for the 2024 season. A committee of Vanessa, Sarah V.P., Russell and Grayden was established.

8.3 Parks Dept Update - Adrienne

Adrienne reported that the winter greens were removed from the planters on February 1st and 2nd and the protective covers installed.

Adrienne noted that she is investigating the installation of a new hydro service at the Talbot and First Ave Welcome sign location vs installing a solar light at a cost of \$1,984.00. Recent update - the electrical light at the Talbot and Stanley Street location is being repaired

8.4 Council Update - Mayor Preston

No report

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

Russell and Earl reported that they are discussing the possibility of having Fanshawe students create a business occupancy / vacancy list and map of locations within the DDB footprint. This will permit us to better understand the current type and number of businesses, vacancies and the annual turnover of businesses.

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

8.6 CIP Program - Russell

Russell reported that a residential and facade application at 539 Talbot Street is under review. A report to Council is being prepared in regards to the railway lands.

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 provided a report that the Global Flavours event is scheduled for the month of February and features many Downtown restaurants. The DDB is providing \$300 Downtown Dollars in prizes. See www.railwaycitytourism/globalflavours.html for full details.

8.8 Economic Development Report - Sean

No update

8.9 SBEC - Sarah Lynch

Sarah reported that the Summer Company program for age 15-29 students is being launched and the Starter Company for all others is being launched shortly. Visit www.SBECinnovation.ca for full details

Sarah also reported that the Horton Winter Market is scheduled for Saturday April 20th from 9am - 1pm

8.10 Chamber of Commerce Report - Paul

Paul reported that the February Business After 5 is scheduled for Wednesday February 21st at the CASO Station cohosted by United Way Elgin-Middlesex and the CASO Station

The Impact Award nominations are open - visit www.stthomaschamber.on.ca and nominate a deserving business you know.

9. Coming Events

- Shop Hop - Saturday March 30th - 10am - 5pm, Easter Bunny 11am - 1pm
- Home Show - Friday April 12th, Saturday April 13th and Sunday April 14th
- Nostalgia Nights Car Show - Saturday July 13th 4pm - 9pm
- Downtown Oktoberfest - Saturday September 21st 1pm - 8pm
- Downtown Pumpkin Prowl - Friday October 25th 5pm - 8pm
- Tree Lighting and Light Up Talbot - Friday November 22nd 5pm - 8pm
- Downtown Santa - Saturday December 7th 11am - 2:30pm

- Horton Winter Market - Saturday April 20th from 9am - 1pm

Chamber Events:

- The Canadian Economic Report is being issued today
- St Thomas Uncorked - Friday February 9th
- Lunch with the Mayors - Thursday February 15th at CASO
- Business After 5 - Wednesday February 21st at CASO sponsored by United Way with a special Eclipse presentation at 3:30pm
- Impact Awards - Friday April 12th at Memorial Arena at 5:30pm
- MP/MPP Luncheon - June 27th at ECRM

Visit www.stthomaschamber.on.ca for full details

10. Adjournment

Motion by Paul, Seconded by Tina, "To adjourn the meeting at 9:56am" Carried

Next Meeting: Wednesday March 6, 2024, 2024 at 8:00AM Room 304 City Hall.