

MEETING MINUTES
ST THOMAS DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT BOARD
WEDNESDAY September 4, 2024 8:00AM ROOM 304 CITY HALL / ZOOM

Attendance:

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

Guests – TK Sinha (Reith & Associates)

* = joined via Zoom (internet issues caused for online attendees to miss portions of meeting)

1. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 8:09am 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 Tina, Seconded by Sarah Van Pelt "To confirm the September 4, 2024 Agenda as distributed." Carried.

4. Confirmation of Minutes (Feb 2023, March 2023 and May 2024)

Motion by Russel, Seconded by Renee, "To confirm the Feb 2023 Minutes as distributed." Carried.

Motion by Dave, Seconded by Duane, "To confirm the March 2023 Minutes as distributed." Carried.

Motion by Tina, Seconded by Sarah Van Pelt, "To confirm the May 2024 Minutes as distributed." Carried.

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

5. Deputations

None

6. Chair Report - Grayden

Downtown Dollars Tracking - Grayden

Grayden reported that, thanks to Annette's data collection, there were \$2,535 DDB\$ redeemed in July and \$1,775 DDB\$ redeemed in August. A running total of \$230,290. DDB\$ Total 2021 outstanding \$8,820, total 2022 outstanding \$10,400 and \$18,360 total 2023 outstanding. A total of \$3,440 DDB\$ remain outstanding in 2024.

Grayden made 9 DDB Dollar merchant pickups in July, and 7 DDB\$ pickups in August. Since 2018, when detailed records began, a total of \$4,040 remain unredeemed in 2018, \$650 in 2019 and \$4,435 in 2020 totaling \$52,080.

Downtown Enrichment fund

Grayden has proposed looking at financially supporting businesses that have experienced vandalism to their property.

Once the financial report comes back from Treasury, he would like to consider the Downtown Development Board look at allocating a certain amount in their budget towards improvement and propose the city contribute as well.

Recommended that a committee be appointed to review applications put in through businesses, potentially working with the Municipal Heritage Committee's CIP program.

Social Media

Grayden reported that our X account @stthomasddb has 591 Followers (was 582 in April).

Our DDB Facebook page www.FB/downtownstthomas has increased to 4335 followers (was 4182 Followers in April). Through the month of March, our DDB Facebook Reach was 66.1K over the past 90 days with a net increase in 105 followers.

Our Instagram/stthomasDDB page has 1451 Followers (was 1412 in April).

7. Finance Report - Tina

Tina is waiting on a report from the City of St. Thomas Treasury Department so she can report back to the board.

8. Reports

8.1 Promotions Report – Dave

Print – no print other than The Vibe

Radio – Oktoberfest spot is running on air until September 21/24 at 6pm. This is a 60 second spot not a standard 30 second, playing on a no-charge sponsorship package, not part of annual radio package.

Dave will send out new spots to everyone for all of the upcoming events.

Dave has proposed a promotional switch-up. Reviewed radio package with Grayden, took normal package price \$799 (only have \$629 in budget). Will still have extra package available \$485 in order to not go over what was approved for 2024 budget.

8.2 Downtown VIBE - Reza

Reza is in talks with Grayden to look at the potential synergy of combining the great work of the Vibe with Grayden's idea of doing a Downtown Video series. They will meet and report back at the next meeting.

8.3 Website – Sarah Van Pelt

Sarah Van Pelt reported that (Annette, Sarah L, Grayden and Sarah Van Pelt) met to review the website that has been programmed. Some items needed to be fixed and improved other items such as search engine, database and metatags were worked on, all of the additional changes and adding different pages will cause the cost to increase. Hopeful that updates will cost under \$2500 for additions.

Asked for approval of \$2500 to continue website updates. If the cost is more, Sarah Van Pelt will approach the board for additional approval or put out a request for quotes from other web design companies.

Earl noted that the SSL for our current website has expired and will need to be renewed.

Motion by Sarah Van Pelt, Seconded by Dave, "To renew current websites SSL." Carried.

Motion by Tina, Seconded by Renee, "To accept the approval of up to \$2500 for additional updates to the website." Carried.

8.4 Beautification Report – Vanessa

Vanessa sent her regrets.

8.5 Parks Dept Update - Adrienne

Parks is currently taking down the hanging baskets downtown - since students have returned to school and the plant is put under an immense amount of stress with regular fertilizing it is time.

We have ordered 75 pink and 75 purple mums for planting in the downtown planters to be planted the week of Sept 16 - watering will need to be scheduled for the planters at

minimum twice a week, Earl used to organize this through Moonlight Painters. Sarah Lynch will reach out to Moonlight Painters for a quote for this year.

Matt Robinson, Gardener with the City of St Thomas, can send a confirmation email when they have been installed

Grayden added that he spoke with Danielle Nielson and would like to work toward adding planters in front of the Inn as a beautification initiative. Danielle also suggested that there could be a program added to support businesses in having locks added to dumpsters to prevent mischievous behaviour from occurring, this would be something the DDB could support as well.

8.6 Council Update - Mayor Preston

Mayor Preston sent his regrets.

8.7 Municipal Heritage Committee Update - Russell

Russell submitted a report that most requests are businesses replacing signage above store fronts.

MHC saw concepts for infill site at 325 Talbot St., concept was shown, no planning applications at this time.

Property Standards Committee – met about a designated building downtown, 386 Talbot, two buildings that are one property. They are appealing a fine. Russel will update with the resolution.

8.8 CIP Program – Russell

CIP businesses are applying mostly to fix old façade and windows.

8.9 Railway City Tourism Report - Sean

Sean reported Tourism has been busy with a number of projects. Goosechase planning for Oktoberfest. Working on promotional videos. Summer student finished role this past week.

8.10 Economic Development Report – Sean

Building permit numbers have nearly tripled, lots of positives for the community, new jobs and money driven into the community.

8.11 SBEC – Sarah

Summer Company has finished with the 12 students, meeting their provincial requirements.

Starter Company + applications are currently being supported. Final training for the first cohort is finishing.

Bridges to Better Business Awards Sept 26/24 – tickets are available.

8.12 Chamber of Commerce Report – Paul

Meeting September 10, 2024 at 11am with Chief Marc Roskamp to discuss business concerns that intersect with the police.

Chamber Events:

Business After 5, Wednesday September 18th at Royal Oak Senior Living.

October 2, 2024 Cyber Security event – bringing insurance, legal and IT side together to provide information to businesses.

October 23, 2024, Business After 5 will be at St. Annes, looking for vendors to participate. Has invited other Chambers including Aylmer and Tillsonburg to attend.

Nov 15, 2024, Light Up Talbot warming station in Hepburn parkette and AGM.

This fall working on strategic plan

Visit www.stthomaschamber.on.ca for full details

9. Coming Events

- Downtown Oktoberfest - Saturday September 21st 2pm - 9pm
- Downtown Pumpkin Prowl - Friday October 25th 5pm - 8pm
- Tree Lighting and Light Up Talbot - Friday November 15th 5pm - 8pm
- Horton Christmas Market – Saturday November 16th 10am-4pm
- Optimist Santa Claus Parade - Saturday November 23rd 6pm
- Downtown Santa - Saturday December 7th 11am - 2:30pm

10. Transition and agreement with DDB and EDC and additional items to review

Policy and procedures – Sean and Grayden put together a policy and procedures agreement. Grayden would invite everyone to communicate concerns or suggestions with him as we move forward and he will address any concerns with Sean.

The board asked Sarah L to provide a loose summary of time spent on DDB activities in a spread sheet along with her reports to the board.

New appointment of Vice-Chair

Grayden asked Renee to be Vice-Chair

Motion by Sarah Van Pelt, Seconded by Ian, “To approve Renee as Vice-Chair.”

Carried.

Request for funding

Art Centre request for funding. Noted that if we have not funded the Art Centre for \$1000, we will donate \$1000.

Motion by Tina, Seconded by Dave, “To approve the donation of \$1000 to the Art Centre if they have not received a donation.” Carried.

Matt Robinson has asked the DDB and EDC to investigate purchasing tables and chairs instead of using picnic tables.

Wage increase

Grayden presented that the DDB increase Annette’s wage to \$30/hour until she completes her term at the end of the year.

Motion by Tina, Seconded by Sarah Van Pelt, "To approve a pay increase for Annette until the end of 2024." Carried

Noted Grayden gave \$200 Downtown Dollars to The Kohler Classic Golf Tournament. Shawn DeVree's from Myrtle is hosting an event "Witches Walk" and has asked for a donation of Downtown Dollars.

Motion by Ian, Seconded by Dave, "To approve \$200 Downtown Dollars for Shawn DeVrees." Carried.

Page of partners on the DDB website

Grayden proposed a list of DDB Partners to be added to the new DDB website and asked if the board members had any objections to Grayden setting up partnerships with them. There were no objections to this list of partners.

STEPAC
Princess Ave Playhouse
Joe Thornton Centre
The Library
The INN
STPS
The Chamber
The Horton Market
Elgin County
The City of St. Thomas

Downtown Dollar Program

Grayden will forward the report, sent by Sarah L. regarding the card program. Would like to review current system to streamline as this requires a significant amount of administrative time. Grayden would like to investigate streamlining or implementing a new system for Downtown Dollar program that would involve working with the City's Treasury Department.

Motion by Sarah Van Pelt, Seconded by Tina, "To investigate new processes for the Downtown Dollar Program." Carried.

Dancing with the Stars

The DDB currently has 2 tickets for Dancing with Stars, no one is available to represent, Grayden would like to offer to others to use.

Motion by Tina, Seconded by Duane, "To offer Dancing with the Stars tickets to someone outside of board." Carried.

TK from Reith & Associates will support Megan with the Train Station for Oktoberfest.

Thanks to Dana for her services as she will be taking on a new roll with Fanshawe.

Duane would like a standing invite to the police and Special Constables for a report once or twice a year as well as to present.

11. Adjournment

Motion by Dave, Seconded by Tina "To adjourn the meeting at 9:45 am." Carried

Next Meeting: Wednesday October 2, 2024, 2024 at 8:00AM Room 304 City Hall.