Minutes of the Downtown Development District 1 Board
Held June 5, 2024

In accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act, Eric Garretty, the City Manager, called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m. on June 5, 2024.

The meeting was properly posted, and adequate notice was given to the Board and the public.

Members present were Grant Ingram, Michael Armstrong, Jack Little, Colby Kramer, Brendan Weatherman, Larry Fields, and Muriel Stephens. Cathy Partridge was absent. A quorum was present.

During the public forum, agenda item 4, Tate, a summer intern for the Graham Leader, was introduced and gave some information about herself. Tate is a journalism major at Texas Tech.

Dorman Holub, the august City Historian, and Carter Pettit were welcomed to the meeting for a presentation.

Dorman shared that in 2005, he wrote a document called the “walking tour of the square” and gave it to the CVB, which created a brochure. Since that time, most buildings have changed hands. Since there are a lot of people who live in Graham who do not know what any of these buildings are around the Square, as well as visitors to the Square who would like to know the history of the buildings, he has come up with a proof of concept that he presented to this group. The proof of concept is basically a placard with a QR code which would create a virtual walking tour, that could be kept current, unlike a brochure. The QR code would take you to a website for that specific building.

Dorman has already done a considerable amount of research on the building around the Square and he proposes to go to the building owners and ask permission to place a placard on their window allowing people who are walking around the Square to utilize their phones to conduct their own walking tour. Each of these placards would be approximately $20 each.

This public forum item will be added to the next Meeting Agenda for discussion and action.

Agenda item 5: Consider an act to approve the April 2, 2024 meeting minutes. Motion made by Jack Little and seconded by Michael Armstrong, all approved.

Agenda item 6. Consider an act to set the date and time for the board's next meeting as July 2 at 02:00 p.m. Discussion had to move the meeting back a week due to the July 4th holiday. Michael Armstrong made a motion, and Muriel Stephens seconded. All approved. Motion carried.

Agenda item 7: Consider and act to recommend to the city council the creation of a tax increment reinvestment zone with the designated boundaries of DDD1.

Grant Ingram made a presentation referencing Trent Petty's TIRZ presentation to the City Council, with a printed version given to all members.

Extensive discussion was had, including projects, timelines, property appraisals, tax rates, and boundaries for a TIRZ.

Michael Armstrong moved that this Board consider the agenda item as written as it relates to the boundaries of DDD1, which was seconded by Colby Kramer.

After polling the board, four voted in favor and three against recommending a TIRZ to the City Council, with notice given to Council of the split voting outcome.

Agenda item 8: Consider and act to recommend to the city council a vacant structure registry ordinance.

The discussion centered around the question raised: What can we do about encouraging our vacant building owners to rehab, bring those buildings up to code, and attract vibrant businesses to fill those spaces?

The main purpose is public safety. If you have a CO, you are on the list for an annual inspection, but if you do not currently have an active CO, then those buildings are not required to have an annual inspection, and the fire department does not have the authority to enter.

This is on the agenda today because the council has set a public hearing on this proposed ordinance for June 18 at 6:00 p.m. and said they would like input from the DDD1 Board.

Brendan's motion, seconded by Jack, to recommend to the City Council Vacant Structure Registry Ordinance Number 1173 was carried unanimously.

Agenda item 9: Presentation on the Third Street Pedestrian Plaza by Grant Ingram. (This item is for information sharing only.)

Grant stated that the Graham Economic Improvement Corporation contracted with Jacob and Martin for renderings on a potential Third Street Plaza and presented the renderings showing what the Plaza could look like, emphasizing the Arch as the focal point. At one point, the arch was the center of the Square, and we are trying to bring back that emphasis, along with walkability and ADA compliance with curb-less transitions, landscaping, park benches, and string lights across the fountain in front of the arch.

There will be removable bollards, so in case of an emergency, EMS fire can access the square's interior.

We are working with the county to resolve the issue that will inevitably arise with prisoner transport. However, the county judge seems to be open to the idea of

working through that hurdle to make this a reality. So, this becomes an area for events. You're building an environment and an atmosphere of a location where people can gather, which currently requires city crews to come and block during events with the orange barricade. With the Third Street Plaza, we now have a permanent location for a multitude of different events and gives a great location for businesses and visitors to come and sit and eat and mingle and relax on our downtown square.

Objections were raised involving general and handicapped parking access, and some solutions were discussed.

Grant shared that the intention, as of now, is to raise private donations to fund the project. Eric added that it is planned no property tax dollars would fund this project.

Agenda item 10: Update on zoning changes within DDD1 regarding commercial residential use. (Ordinance 1170)

Eric stated that the council has done a couple of readings already. And this topic will be part of the public hearing at 6:00 pm on June 18. He also stated that Grant is in the process of presenting to the GEIC an economic development program that would incentivize building owners to put residential in their buildings.

Agenda item 11: Discussion regarding establishing Board members' tenure and attendance guidelines. Future action if required.

Numerous discussions were had, including the "set positions" of GEIC, City Council representative, and CEO, Chamber & Visit Graham. The additional positions were filled by building owners, business owners/operators in the DDD1, and a representative of the public at large. A proposal was presented to expand the Board with more representation by Downtown Businesses. It was agreed that Michael would present a plan, and the Board could ask the City Council to amend the number and make-up of the Board if desired.

Agenda item 12: Continue discussion regarding project priority within DDD1 with a proposal to consider: 1) a rehab project on the lamppost painting and globe cleaning, and 2) rehab brickwork on the roadway within the downtown square.

Eric shared that budget discussions for the City are proceeding and if DDD1 wants to ask for funding for any projects, we must act quickly. And reminder that the fiscal year runs from October to September.

Michael asked that we consider maintenance of the wheelchair ramps. This can be added to a future agenda item as it is not part of this agenda item.

Discussion requested to clarify that the rehab brickwork is needed due to the tree roots pushing up the brick around several trees on the inside of the Square. It was agreed that no one wanted to do damage to the trees and it would be best to rehab the brickwork in a way that allows the trees to now be restricted in their growth.

Colby has made a motion for the first project to be rehab the lamppost, Brendan seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Motion's been made by Brendan and amended and seconded by Jack for our second project to rehab the brickwork on the roadway within the downtown square as it related to tree roots having disturbed the bricks. Motion carried.

Agenda Item 13: Consider and act to approve establishing two project priorities within ddD1 which would include obtaining quotes/bids and bringing the information back to DDD1 for future action.

Motion by Brendan, seconded by Jack. Motion carried.

Agenda Item 14: Discussion regarding proposed future agenda items.

QR code boards for a walking tour of the square as presented by Dorman.

Item number 16 will entertain a motion to adjourn.

The motion was made by Jack and seconded by Larry. All approved.

The meeting adjourned at 3:49 pm.

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Cathy Partridge (from recording)