

Downtown Economic Development Committee Meeting Notes

January 27, 2016
2:00 PM
Lower Level Meeting Room B-8

In Attendance:

Council: Mayor Jim Katapodis, Mayor Pro Tem Dave Sullivan, Councilmember Jill Hardy

City Staff: Fred Wilson, Ken Domer, Kellee Fritzal, Michael Gates, Chief Rob Handy, Lieutenant Kelly Rodriguez, Scott Hess, Janeen Laudenback, Bob Stachelski, Antonia Castro-Graham, Simone Slifman, Chris Cole, Dottie Hughes

Public: Susan Welfringer, Steve Daniel, Kelly Miller, Karen Mayer

Mayor Jim Katapodis called the meeting to order at 2:06 PM.

1. Public Comments – None

2. Minutes – Mayor Pro Tem Sullivan made a motion, seconded by Councilmember Hardy, to approve the minutes of the October 28, 2015 meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Discussion Items –

- **Update by Ken Domer Regarding Main Promenade Parking Structure**
Ken Domer reported that City Council will consider award of a contract on February 1st for the improvements and repairs at the Structure as identified in the study conducted by Walker Parking Consultants. Bids came in lower than the \$1.2 million estimate, so additional work is being added, including painting and changing out lighting to LED. The potential date to start work is March 1. The work is primarily physical and will address critical components to enhance safety as well as aesthetic elements. Janeen Laudenback confirmed that the quarterly power washing of the garage is continuing and was most recently done this month.
- **Homelessness Update by Chief Rob Handy**
Chief Handy reported that the homeless population has increased significantly in the Downtown. PD is continuing to meet with businesses and property owners regarding their concerns. PD has also implemented some changes to staffing on a trial basis, including adding two officers to the foot beat with an expanded range and purview. They work staggered schedules and establish weekly goals and plans with their supervisor. There are also two sergeants and PD now has increased

visibility in the area. This also allows for increased flexibility of plainclothes officers and the ability to address minor issues when they occur. They are revising the cadet program and bringing additional cadets on board to address more minor issues. Overall crime was up citywide in 2015 by 16% but is down by 4% in the Downtown. PD will be hiring and utilizing Cadets in the downtown to address issues like illegal vending, smoking on the beach, etc. Mayor Pro Tem Sullivan asked what the responsibility of the Cadets will be and whether they can cite for violations. Chief Handy clarified that they make primarily educational contacts and made about 1,800 last year, but also have the ability to cite as a last resort and issued about 20 citations total last year.

4. Updates:

- **BID Organization**

Steve Daniel reported on behalf of Nicole Thompson and said that he is pleased to hear about the repairs and improvements at the Structure and hopes that they will also address concerns like the current ticket booths and signage. He said it is difficult to get local people to come to the Downtown because they say they don't feel safe so businesses are suffering and the BID would like help changing the perception with the City's help. He suggested putting surveys into water bills. Susan Welfringer said that people feel unsafe coming to the downtown, and asked about the impact on revenue and whether not having good signage keeps people from coming to the Downtown. Welfringer said she has observed people parking at Main Promenade and then walking over to Pacific City. Dottie Hughes commented that revenue has slightly decreased, but that could be due to increased sales of parking passes. Dottie also added that repairs are in progress to the existing antiquated parking signage but that's just a short-term repair solution. Domer commented that Kelly Miller will be talking about wayfinding project that is about to begin and that it will address the signage issue on a broader level in Downtown and the City overall. Chief Handy said there has been lots of progress in crime reduction so it would be a good idea for the BID to make an effort to determine whether people aren't coming downtown because of their perception of the area as unsafe. Mayor Katapodis commented that surveying via the water bills is ineffective. Fred Wilson stated that staff could talk further with the BID and Ken Domer said he would coordinate discussion.

- **Downtown Huntington Beach Activities/Future Events**

Susan Welfringer provided an update on Downtown BID events that have taken place since October, including Halloween, the Tree Lighting and Small Business Saturday. Welfringer stated that the BID is currently running two contests – the scavenger hunt and a year of romance in honor of Valentine's Day and is has developed a program with Marketworks to produce videos highlighting member businesses. Welfringer added that they are working with one of their members to introduce a networking component and that they are in the process of re-

evaluating Artwalk based on the new format for Surf City Nights on 5th Street in cooperation with Cypress Equities.

- **Strand Update**

Karen Mayer reported that 5th Street is working to develop ways to stand out in Downtown and has worked with the BID to develop rotating themed nights for Surf City Nights that include fitness, fashion, action sports, a pet fair, beer/wine tasting and chef demonstrations, a pet fair and the occasional “wildcard week.” They are hoping to roll out this new format in the 3rd quarter of 2016. They continue to work with Pizza Press on a lease for the former US Taco space and have two new businesses open: Love Lola, in the Crocs space, and Jolyn in the former Varga location. The new designs for the entire project are still in process.

- **Visit Huntington Beach Surf City USA**

Kelly Miller thanked everyone at the City for their participation in the successful Epic Big Board project. He reported that the wayfinding program will begin in the following week and that they are in process of completing the development of a self-guided walking tour. VHB organized a successful Instagram meetup that attracted 200 people to come to town to instagram about Huntington Beach. Millers said VHB is retooling the former Ambassador program, which includes a full rebranding to as more concierge-style service instead of assisting PD. The new Ambassadors will be called “Visitor Experience Specialists.” VHB will host 100 top travel agents in May along with a megafam tour the prior week, which will be paid for by the hotels. In 2019, the International Pow Wow will be coming to California, and VHB would like to bring the closing event of the conference to HB. March is typically a soft month for hotels, so VHB is working with the hotels to develop various specials and promotions to attract people to come and stay during that time.

For November, there were decreases of 3.7% in the average daily rate, 5.1% in revenue per available room, and 1.4% in occupancy over November of 2014. However, for the calendar year 2015 to date through November in comparison to the same period in 2014, the average daily rate was up 2.2%, revenue per available room was up 2.1% and occupancy remained nearly unchanged with only a slight decrease of 0.1%.

- **Community Services/Specific Events**

Chris Cole reported upcoming events in February and March, including the Surf City Marathon, and the Beach Cruiser Meet. Registration is slightly down for the Marathon, but it is not of concern to the organizers. Cole also reported that the AVP is slated to come back to the City in May to kickoff their tour and will take place May 6th-8th. HB will be the first instead of the last stop. He also mentioned that planning for the possible air show is still in progress, with the next step being a fly-by and inspection of the show area by one of the Thunderbirds, and that will take place on Friday morning over the ocean and pier.

- **Downtown Development**

Scott Hess reported that permits are ready to be issued for the new Hilton Tower. He also reported that two CUPs requesting live entertainment are going to the Planning Commission for No Ka Oi and the Bungalow, as well as a CUP for alcohol at George's Café. Plans have been received for a mixed-use project at 602 Pacific Coast Highway as well as revised plans for the proposed development at the 4th block of Main Street.

- **Public Works Update**

Bob Stachelski reported that Pacific City street work is continuing for the next two weeks. Public Works is encouraging quick completion of the sidewalk work outside of HSS and making an effort to minimize any delays. Other projects about to occur include installation of the bollards along 5th Street at Walnut and streetlight replacement (expect completion within the month). There is an upcoming study session with OCTA regarding their upcoming changes to the routes which service the Downtown and discussions are underway regarding a possible local circular program and associated funding.

- **Downtown Economic Development Update**

Kellee Fritzel reported that the kickoff of the wayfinding program will take place on February 2nd.

5. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 3:05 PM.