

Downtown Bismarck Sub Area Plan Implementation Task Force

The Downtown Bismarck Sub Area Plan Implementation Task Force met at 8:30 am on June 10, 2014 in the Mayor's Conference Room on the 4th Floor of the City/County Building at 221 North 5th Street in Bismarck. Present were: Co-Chairs Commissioner Brenda Smith and Mayor John Warford along with members Larry Oswald, Kevin Ruhland, Kate Herzog, Jason Tomanek, Kelsey Ruhland, Jim Christianson and Kayla Ver Helst. Also present were Jeff Ubl and Bill Wocken.

Mayor Warford and Commissioner Smith welcomed the committee members and thanked them for agreeing to serve. The minutes of the May 13, 2014 meeting were received and moved for approval by Kelsey Ruhland. The motion was seconded by Larry Oswald and approved by acclamation.

Commissioner Smith asked the sub-committees working on "branding" the downtown to report on their work since the last meeting. Kate Herzog said the group had been considering banners to be hung from the decorative light poles in the downtown. These poles are located along 5th Street and on about three blocks of Main Avenue frontage and in Chancellor Square. She said every other light pole is fitted with a banner bracket and that 100 banners could be hung on the available brackets. At present, outside of the winter season, the poles have no banners on them. It was decided by consensus of the group that the City Commission be requested to provide 100 banners at a cost not to exceed \$6,000. Kate will convene a group to look into design of these banners.

Kate Herzog also reported that a small group had met to consider the roadway changes advocated in the downtown plan and to investigate where changes could be accomplished most quickly. The group concluded that efforts should be concentrated on 5th Street as the Civic Center construction progresses. Kate's report is attached to these minutes. The group discussed the improvement of 5th Street and concluded that, at the end of construction, the sidewalk on the east side of the street should be expanded to include the proposed promenade design. By consensus the task force agreed that this work should be pursued.

The group discussed the Main Avenue improvements and the 6th Street Cultural Trail projects and concluded that both should be studied during the upcoming year and that those studies needed to be included in the city 2015 budget. The improvements being replaced with the 6th street parking ramp project would be constructed so that they are sympathetic to the proposed cultural trail and possible two way traffic on Chancellor Square.

Kayla Ver Helst reported that she had made a presentation on the task force's work to the City Commission at its meeting of May 20, 2014 and that she would appear at the Commission meeting on the 4th Tuesday of each month.

Jim Christianson reported that the finance and parking subcommittees' work had been begun and that there would need to be much more work done as projects progressed. He went on to describe improvements being made at the Parkade and how that facility will better fit into the downtown plan.

Jason Tomanek reported that his office had sent some thirty letters to area design professionals asking for their input into downtown design and streetscape standards the design standards committee will propose. The task force was very interested to hear of great interest from the community in this activity.

Bill Wocken said he would ask Gloria David to report on the downtown plan web page and social media links at the next meeting.

Kevin Ruhland reported that he had conversed with Michelle Allan, a housing development specialist from his firm, regarding housing in Bismarck and barriers to housing development in the city. Ms. Allan had observed that Bismarck housing proposals tended to be developer motivated. In many other locations cities were asking for proposals on city assembled sites. Several task force members commented that the size of housing projects and incentives, like site assemblage, are needed for successful projects in today's market.

Commissioner Smith asked Jeff Ubl for any thoughts he might wish to share with the group. Jeff said there needed to be a city mechanism in place to monitor projects within the area of the plan to ensure that new developments follow the accepted downtown plan. He said that he felt it was important for the city to carry on educational support for the plan and that the city's commitment to the improvements that were identified needed to continue.

There being no further business to come before the task force at this time, Commissioner Smith declared the meeting adjourned at 9:47 am. The next meeting will be held on July 8, 2014 at 8:30 am in the Mayor's Conference Room.

Reported by Bill Wocken