



Colorado Springs Downtown Development Authority
Board of Directors Meeting
8:15 a.m. December 12, 2023
111 S Tejon St Ste 703, Colorado Springs, CO

Meeting minutes

Board members present: Chris Lieber, Jeff Finn, Laura Neumann, Patrick Stephens, Carrie Bartow, Jordan Empey, Amber Brannigan, Jeremy Shirley, Troy Coats, Michelle Talarico, Dave Lux (remote)

Board members absent:

Staff members present: Susan Edmondson, Carrie Simison, Austin Wilson-Bradley, Chelsea Gondeck, Ana Valdez, Jessica Vasquez

Guests: Somer Mese and Dan Norton (Colorado Springs Utilities), Ryan Tefertiller, City of Colorado Springs

Call to order and welcome

8:15 a.m. Chris Lieber called the meeting to order.

Minutes

The board reviewed minutes from the Nov. 14, 2023, board meeting. On a motion by Jeff, seconded by Laura, the minutes were unanimously approved.

Financials

The board reviewed financials dated Nov. 30, 2023. Susan stated that it was a straightforward month with nearly all anticipated revenue received, and ordinary expenses. Austin noted that the remaining \$4,500 of the grant to Munchies will return to the TIF fund because a portion of the project was not fulfilled.

Carrie arrived at 8:20 a.m.

2024 Budget

Chris directed the board to two resolutions presented in the board packet:

Resolution to set mill levies at 5 mills for 2024. Jordan moved, second by Carrie, resolution passed unanimously.

A resolution to amend the 2023 budget is postponed to the Jan. 9 budget hearing.

Informational

Electrical underground fire and infrastructure update

Susan introduced Dan Norton and Somer Mese of Colorado Springs Utilities, coming before the board for an informational presentation about the Kiowa underground fire, its root cause, and how CSU is working to ensure utility infrastructure health in the city center. CSU believes that boring and drilling by fiber companies through the concrete housing may have damaged the wires running through the vault. In light of that information, they are testing other vaults to check for any possible failures. Somer further explained that planned upgrades are prioritized by age and condition and shared a handful of upcoming upgrades to certain blocks' wastewater, water, and wire systems. Susan stated that Downtown continues to face problems with boring into pedestrian areas by third party contractors and fiber companies.

The board asked that plans and timelines for any alley improvements be shared with staff, as DDA intends on facilitating certain enhancements to alleyways and alignment on timing will be important.

Jeff Finn asked about the status of overhead versus underground transmission lines in the Downtown portion of the route from the Kelker station to Drake. Somer stated that at the October CSU board meeting, it was decided that the lines will be placed overhead. Questions arose regarding how that decision may negatively affect the COS Creek Plan and if all easements have been granted from stakeholders. Laura Neumann stated she was surprised to hear this news, as the property she represents has not agreed to an easement and she was under the impression that talks were ongoing about this issue. Somer and Dan did not have extensive knowledge of those aspects of the project but offered to connect the board with those on CSU staff better equipped to answer specific questions. Michelle stated she will make further inquiries.

The board thanked them for their time and commitment to follow up questions, and Somer and Dan departed at 9 a.m.

Grants

Majestic Building fire

The Dec. 4 fire on Bijou Street has left four street-level businesses unable to operate: Taste of Jerusalem, Local Honey Co., Yobel, and ICONS. The retail establishments are likely facing a total loss of inventory, it is undetermined when ICONS may reopen, and Taste of Jerusalem's fate is more uncertain as it sustained the worst damage.

There has been an outpouring of community desire to help, and in order to leverage that Susan swiftly put together a "gift card cash mob" announcement that DDA would match purchases of gift cards at Yobel and Local Honey Co. up to \$50 each for a total of up to \$2,500 per retailer that will be provided in the form of grants directly to the retailers. This particular move was an effective way to quickly leverage support for two of the businesses when much still remained unknown about how quickly any of the businesses could reopen. Even with insurance coverage the businesses will face significant losses as well as lost wages for staff during a vital time of year.

The board discussed ways to help the four impacted businesses be able to reopen within Downtown – either at their current location or elsewhere – and to continue contributing to the economic vitality of Downtown. Susan stated that because much is still unclear, it is too soon for staff to be able to propose the proper grant criteria – but waiting another month will continue to keep the businesses in jeopardy.

Jeff moved to allocate up to \$100,000 to assist in the reopening of Taste of Jerusalem, Local Honey Co., Yobel and ICONS at their current locations or elsewhere in the DDA boundaries and to authorize staff to craft the grant application requirements for consideration of such funding, and further that the aforementioned gift card match dollars are to be included within that \$100,000 total. Carrie seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

TIF

316 N Tejon St. agreement modification

Susan directed the board to the memo regarding 316 N Tejon St. The original TIF application was to renovate the 100-plus-year-old Mediterranean-style building into two restaurant spaces, upstairs office and significant patio space, as well as a new-construction condo complex in the back, consisting of four floors of 12 units over ground-level parking.

The condo project has been placed on hold but may re-emerge at some point when financing is more favorable. Susan sought a motion to amend the TIF Reimbursement Agreement dated April 15, 2022, with TGFF Inc. to provide for 60 percent TIF reimbursement on the commercial property under all previous terms with removal of the obligation on constructing the condo complex.

Carrie moved to approve the amended TIF agreement, Laura seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Troy Coats disclosed his affiliation with the project and abstained from voting.

Process overview and discussion

Due to time constraints, this agenda item moved to a future meeting.

Michelle left at 9:38 a.m.

Public realm improvements

Tejon Reconfiguration design

Chelsea shared an image of a proposed design element for the Tejon reconfiguration project. The rendering is of metal mountainscape that Parking Enterprise staff has suggested placing on the curb of tree beds along Tejon Street. The board discussed the challenges with the feature such as maintenance, cost, risk of injury, poor aesthetics, and creating more difficulty for snow removal. Board questioned why Parking Enterprise is engaging in urban design considerations that are more appropriate for City Urban Planning and Public Works staff to manage with input from Downtown Partnership.

Jeff moved that the DDA express strong objection to the proposed metal mountainscape features as they are inappropriate, impede pedestrian movement, are of poor aesthetic quality and would be a misuse of Parking Enterprise funds that are supposed to be spent on much-needed streetscape improvements and repairs. Amber seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

O'Neil Group/VeLa residential project

Susan asked Patrick Stephens to brief the board on O'Neil Group's recently announced 36-story residential tower that is planned for the southwest corner of a block bounded by Sahwatch and Costilla streets and Cascade and Vermijo avenues. Patrick said that O'Neil Group was approached by VeLa Development, which has completed similar projects in other markets, because they were encouraged by the population growth and favorable economic conditions in the Colorado Springs market. The project will consist of 497 units, and ground-floor retail opportunities. Patrick also noted that O'Neil Group is undergoing the process for URA designation.

Jordan and Laura left at 9:55 a.m.

30 West office project

Jeff shared details and a presentation of the 12-story office project by Norwood Development Group slated for the northeast corner of Sahwatch and Cimmaron, which is the first new-construction Downtown office building since 2001. The project will offer higher quality office space, highly amenitized. There is a growing list of tenant interest, and when over half of the space is committed/leased the project could begin construction. He is optimistic that they can break ground in 2024 and deliver in 2026.

Final remarks

Susan invited the board to attend the Majestic Building fire fundraiser at Bread & Butter Neighborhood Market on Saturday, Dec. 16.

Board meeting was adjourned at 10:10 a.m.