

Court International Building, Ground Floor-RM #150 2550 University Avenue West St. Paul

Meeting of the Central Corridor Business Advisory Committee

Monday, August 17, 2009

Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Lu Hang, Sonda Reis, Emily Reller, Jim Roth, Jim Segal, Brian Thoemke, Christine Wiegert,

Others Present: Robin Caufman, Joey Browner, Dana Happel, Shoua Lee, Karri Plowman, Rita Rodriguez, Jessica Hill, Hue Pham, Linda Jungwirth, Shawn Walding, Sia Lo, Sai Thao, Marilyn Porter,

1. WELCOME

Karri Plowman opened the meetings at 4:05 PM. Around the room introductions were made.

2. Business Mitigation /Marketing

Sai Thao introduced the NDC and the work that they've started by handing out . They received funding that allowed them to hire two Small Business Consultants – Sai Lo and Marilyn Porter. The SBC's have prepared packets of information. So far they have each been working with 4 businesses. They outline the services that they can provide. For example, for they are working with one business to update their branding, creating websites. .

Sai Thao outlined how they work with businesses. They talk to them to identify their needs and then spend about 10 days to come up with a plan including marketing, brandings, loans,

The NDC has also established the Business Resource Center in the Rondo Library where small businesses can go to use the laptops and computers. Interns are also on hand to assist the businesses.

Marilyn added that this is a pilot program that they plan to tweak as they gain more experience working with the businesses and identify their needs.

Karri asked what have your learned so far, what is the demand? Marilyn said that the businesses have been open to working with us. A few businesses have been hesitant.

How have the businesses been selected. Sai Thao said that the current 8 clients are ones that the NDC has worked with before, primarily through their existing training programs. The program will expand as they develop their program.

Marilyn also noted that the DNC has two part time graphic designers on staff.

Sai Thao noted that it is taking more time than anticipated to work with each business. At least 4-5 hours is spent on research. Creating a website also takes a lot of time and hand holding because people have not used these tools before.

Karri Plowman asked if the business association can help promote the businesses. Sai Thao yes, he sees this as something that U7 can do.

Jim Segal mentioned that one of his stores in a strip mall has a webpage and link on the strip malls webpage. This can be a inexpensive and cost effective approach to joint marketing. For example www.whatsontheavenue.com. This could also be tied into the corridor wide marketing.

Karri Plowman asked for the SBC target businesses. They are focusing on businesses between Emerald and Rice Street and under a \$1 million. Mr. Plowman suggested expanding the program to the smaller businesses in Downtown St. Paul, especially in Lowertown. Many of these businesses fit the criteria but are outside of the geographic boundaries.

Jim Segal noted that he feels his business could benefit from these programs.

Sai Thao talked about the graphic design program and the graphics tools and software they purchased. It is staffed part time by students from the Graphics Design school. Karri Plowman asked if they could expand the program if they had more in-kind donations.

Karri Plowman asked Sai Thao to talk about their loan program. Mr. Thao said that they would work with their existing programs and loan officers to underwrite the loans. Jim Roth noted that they have a variety of resources, but not SBA.

Karri asked Sondra Reis if she thought the non-profits could benefit from this type of program? She indicated that the non-profits are struggling and would likely tune out any messages or attempts to

Karri Plowman asked how non-profits would be impacted by construction? They will be affected by the ability of their employees and clients to get to them.

Karri Plowman gave an update on the marketing efforts. He is working to set up 3 listening sessions with UABA, St. Paul Chamber and Midway Chamber. The first session is with the Midway Chamber on August 26. He has approached _____ about funding.

Jessica Hill asked if Karri had met with any of the Minneapolis business groups. Karri is willing to do a listening session but didn't know if they were interested because they are more established.

Jim Roth gave an update on the First Friday Group. The group has been meeting monthly since Aug. 2008 to provide updates of outreach and business mitigation issues. They are being more proactive by creating subcommittees. One subcommittee is focusing on corridor wide marketing. The small group has meet once to prepare to work plan for marketing campaign during construction. Examples may include encouraging corridor businesses to utilize corridor businesses or promoting lunch on the avenue. Once they have a solid plan, they will share it with public and private organizations for support as well as this

Karri Plowman provided an update on the "What Businesses Need to Know" one-pager that they've distributed to corridor businesses. He identified the business lists that it went out to including the CCP, Midway Chamber and St. Paul chamber lists

Jim Segal asked that the one-pager be sent to the BAC members.

3. PROJECT UPDATES

Jim Segal reported on his parking workshop. He said that the designers developed interesting plans but he is not optimistic that it will work out. Mr. Segal noted that American Bank is willing to share some of their parking. However, the bank thinks that they will need 1/2 the parking lot for their employees.

Karri Plowman asked how the city will proceed. Jim said he did not know but didn't understand how businesses are going to work together. His impression was that the businesses were expected to implement on their own. Jim Roth noted that he has heard that the meetings were very positive. Robin Caufman added that we are having conversations with the City about next steps. The City will be preparing a summary of each of the workshops and outcomes. We will be sending each of the business and property owners a follow up packet and indicate that they can contact the outreach coordinator or City staff if they'd like to proceed with the plans. The City's \$600,000 forgivable loan program will help encourage people to work together and share parking.

Karri Plowman asked Emily Reller to talk about shared parking downtown. She noted that the businesses downtown need to share parking because it is more limited.

It was suggested that the City of St. Paul be invited to attend the next meeting to provide an update on the parking workshops, the loan program and next steps.

Robin Caufman provided an update on the FEIS, the timeline and the next steps. The FEIS was published on June 26 and comments were due on July 26. We have compiled the 200 comments and working on a response. We anticipate the Record of Decision on Aug. 18 which then allows us to proceed with advanced utility relocation on 4th Street.

Rita Rodriguez provided an update of her outreach activities. The outreach staff rode the bus to talk to transit users about light rail. We talked to over 200 people. Many riders did not know about the project. We plan

Brian Thoenke asked if we have looked at putting information in the buses. Mr. Plowman suggested putting something on the curves inside of the buses.

Shoua Lee reported on the four parking workshops in her area. Over 20 businesses attended the workshops. Ms. Lee talked about the designs of the parking workshops which included increased parking and better circulation. Ms. Lee also highlighted the latest DBE event co-hosted by the Hmong American Partnership and attended by 40 people. She thanked Lu Hang for co-hosting.

Hue Pham reported that she has been trying to follow up with the businesses to clarify the confusion that is out there. She also talked about the Vietnamese Festival in downtown Minneapolis where we handed out information to festival goers.

Dana Happel reported that Xcel started its utility relocation downtown. She has been working with the downtown property owners and businesses to notify them of road closures, coordinate loading zones etc... She also talked about the design work that has been done over the past 6 months on Cedar Street related to ramp access, bus stop location, lane configuration etc...

Christine Wiegert asked who is being involved in the discussion – building owner, property managers or tenants. Ms. Happel said she has been working with the property owners; the property owners indicated that they would prefer to communicate with their tenants. She offered to set up a meeting with TKDA to talk to them about issues or concerns. Ms. Wiegert indicated that their staff are getting nervous about road closures etc...

Jessica Hill reported on the soil borings that started two weeks ago at Harvard and Washington Avenue. The soil borings were suppose to last one week, but it went faster than expected. We have been working with businesses to accommodate their schedules or requests.

Brian Thoenke asked if there is a certain distance or location we need to test. The soil borings are being sites based on known contamination sites.

Mr. Plowman said it was encouraging that we were able to accommodate businesses. Robin Cauffman noted that we are working with businesses to respond to concerns.

Joey Browner reported on National Night Out. We mingled with the public and talked to people about the project. Many people were glad we were there to answer their questions. We also attended the Vietnamese Festival, Dragon Fest and will be staffing a table at the Center for Hmong Arts and Talent Art Fair and State Fair.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Karri Plowman adjourned the meeting at 5:30 PM

Next Meeting: September 21, 2009