

River to Rail Initiative

Notes

Meeting Date/Time

February 3, 2021

10:00 am – 11:00 am

Agenda

Introduction

- Attendance – Bruce Buxton, Tyler Glynn, Dave Badeaux, Jennifer Bergman, David Chanski, Eric Charpentier, John Schommer, Mary Devine Johnson, Shane Riffle, Matt Kilian, Alison Medeck, Karl Samp, Sarah Porisch

City of Brainerd

- Jennifer Bergman – Two new city council members: Mike O'Day and Tiffany Stenglein. Kelly Bevans is the Council President, Gabe Johnson is Vice-President and Chair of Personnel and Finance, Mike O'Day is the Chair of Safety and Public Works.
- David Chanski – EDA had planned to do Strategic Planning in 2020 but moved it to the 2021 budget. City Council/EDA will attend a workshop to define roles in March. The Strategic Planning Session will be next. 2021 Budget has \$30,000 and has designated some of that money to support the new DDBC and part-time downtown coordinator. The remain funds for other initiatives to be determined later.
- 2020 Recap of totals for River to Rail: Issued 94 permits, waived \$27,490.96 worth of fees and \$2,806,123 of permits in R2R corridor. Will be looking back at historical data back to 2017 for potential impact to R2R and hope to have that data by the next meeting.
- New businesses in Brainerd: Starbucks on Washington is close to opening soon. There will be a new business downtown opening soon: YaSure Kombucha. There is some progress on the former Tim Horton locations, no permits yet, but possibly a Caribou Coffee.
- Parking commission met in January and identified 7 different areas. The parking commission will attend a workshop to dive deeper in those issues and then make recommendations to the city council.
- Zoning code--closing phase 1, workshop to happen 2/3/21.

Riverfront

- \$2.85M was recommended to the legislature. Once this has been approved and signed by the governor, funds will become available starting July 1st. Will be working with the Riverfront Committee to look at a capital campaign for funding the amphitheater.
- Karl Samp – ran the idea of putting up a loan for the amphitheater project through one of their investment pools in exchange for a trust. There is someone in mind already.

Destination Downtown Coalition

- Jennifer Bergman shared EDA allocated \$15,000 to support a new position at DDBC and they are working on next steps with that.

Community Giving Foundation

- Karl Samp – Shared an idea of an investment pool for a funding amphitheater. Contributed \$1000 for downtown sound system.

HRA

- Eric Charpentier –Potential redevelopment downtown with a purchase agreement for June of 2022 for the former Thrifty White property. Not sure yet the scope of the project. A lot needs to happen yet. Started a grant application for redevelopment dollars through DEED. If there is a 2nd round of funding, we will not know more until June 1st. Opportunity zone tax credit project.

Brainerd Restoration

- John Schommer –Seeing movement. Potential business in downtown, people are still looking. 6 applications for single family rental rehab in NE Brainerd. 2 for owner-occupied rehab.

Visit Brainerd

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- Mary Devine Johnson – Things are steady, lodging tax revenue is still down. Anticipating it to go up this summer. Will gear up advertising on quarterly basis.

DDBC

- Mary Devine- will be hiring a coordinator and in the process of looking at the job description. Looking at contract employee but is TBD.
- Farmer's Market—in the works to program for this summer. This is one of the motivations to hire a coordinator and then move into additional sponsorship and fundraising.
- Christmas lights—start sooner than later. We should start planning for next year's Christmas Lights Display for downtown. Send Mary an email if you're interested in helping with that. Mary is pulling these pieces together and asked for support from BLAEDC/R2R.
- The mural project for downtown—business owners are open to it. It will be \$20,000-\$30,000 project so not sure they'll be able to pull it off this year unless we get funds from somewhere unexpectedly.

Northern Pacific Center

- Mary Devine Johnson- There are things happening here. The redevelopment of the Roundhouse Brewery to Notch8 is hoping to open in March/April as well as a sign a deal on a 50 room boutique Hotel on the property this spring. Heard this as recent as last week.
- Bruce shared the Mike Higgins reported 60 weddings booked for 2021. The group invited Derek to attend these meetings to give updates on NPC and will reach out some more.

YMCA

- Shane Riffle –The Y has hired a consultant and it's progressing. The next step is for the consultant to come to town. They will be looking at what would be the best site/footprint/impact for the community. They will look at a potential funding model and then hire professional fundraisers.
- Childcare supply group through BLAEDC and First Children's is looking at the childcare shortages, gaps and barriers in CWC. Pine Tech is offering an accelerated 3-month program for those interested in CDA and it could possibly be fully funded. The YMCA is adding one room for infant care.
- Shane and Mary Jetland with Gull Lake Sailing School are working together to collaborate.
- Put together a collaborative, including the Arboretum, Mt. Ski Gull, Crow Wing Energize and Kinship Partners, etc. to start building community wide programming that are outdoors based and benefits being outside.

Brainerd Public Schools

- Sarah Porisch will be the connector updating the group on building projects. They are working with CTC to provide internet services. PAC has a tentative opening date in April. Covid has paused some projects, but overall, all are on schedule.

Chamber of Commerce

- Matt Killian – looking to start in-person events in March. The St. Patrick's Day Parade was cancelled in Crosslake. A decision needed to be made. This is the 2nd year it will not happen.
- Several businesses (2/3 members) that received PPP loans are learning there are taxability issues with it. It is taxable at the state level and unless something changes in the legislature, people will owe 10% back to the state. These needs to be addressed.
- There's a concern of losing a tremendous amount of revenue in our area—pushing for a safe reopening. February 19th is the Eggs and Issues Virtual meeting.
- New Business/Development updates: Crow Wing Food Coop's opening date should be close and will have a ribbon cutting and promotion. The Children's Museum is considering 2 different sites, not

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located in Brainerd. If anyone has a new Brainerd site to propose, now would be the time to do it. Jennifer Bergman shared the city of Brainerd did propose multiple sites. Matt also noted the DDBC has been operating under the Chamber and now will be under Brainerd Restoration. The Chamber will be supportive moving forward.

Community Action

- Dave Badeaux – No final decisions had been made yet about the St. Patrick's Day Parade. It probably won't happen. Looking at a community event/campaign encouraging people to get outside moving away from not focusing on putting people in a direct location.
- Community Empowerment Fund- Dave will share a list of the (15) community groups involved with receiving seed money related to health/fitness/food distribution/etc. If you know anyone who wants to get behind any of these projects-keep an eye on these.
- Bruce asked for a list of the organizations to be sent to BLAEDC staff to get the information to everyone.

MN Economic Assistance Grant

- Tyler Glynn – CWC received \$1.2 million from the state of MN to fund small businesses and nonprofits. It was a quick turnaround. There were 365 grant applications reviewed. The county prioritized those requests. Close to 185 businesses/nonprofits will be funded this 3rd round. Approximately 82 companies will be funded up to \$10,000. After that, the remaining funds will be dispersed evenly to 180-185 that were previously funded. About 280 businesses will get funded. Highly anticipate there to be more funds to help businesses later this spring.

BLAEDC

- Tyler Glynn- Mike Bjerkness' Key Recruitment program has had it's best year since the program began highlighting direct hires for Stern, CTC, Arboretum, and the National Loon Center. Hired 13 individuals, moved a lot of families here.
- BLAEDC Annual Meeting will be virtual this year. Save the date for Tuesday, March 9th @ 7:30am. The featured speaker is Shirley Bloomfield of NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association. You will need to register with Megan at megan@growbrainerdlakes.org.

Sesquicentennial Planning Discussion

- Matt Killian- With the COVID gathering rules there is still a lot of unknown. It might be a better plan to do something singular and later in the year. Bruce Buxton- suggested this is the year to bring people downtown. Have 2-3 little historic tours. Make sure a list is out there with things to do.
- Mayor Badeaux has a logo for the sesquicentennial almost ready to go.

Set Next Meeting Date

- Wednesday, April 7, 2021