

## River to Rail Initiative

### Notes

#### Meeting Date/Time

April 7, 2021

11:00 am – 1:00 pm

#### Agenda

##### Attendance

- Bruce Buxton, Tyler Glynn, Jennifer Bergman, David Chanski, Eric Charpentier, Shane Riffle, Matt Kilian, Allison Medeck, and Karl Samp and Shane Riffle by Zoom

##### General Comments

- Purple Fern – 2020 was her best year yet.
- During Pandemic 7 new businesses opened downtown.
- ICS is having an economic impact study done to show the economic impact of the school construction and will share it when it is complete.
- The YMCA has engaged the University of Minnesota to perform an economic impact of the YMCA and potential improvements on the community as well.
- Weekly articles in the Dispatch have been enjoyable.

##### City of Brainerd

- David Chanski –
  - Incentives Report- an update of the construction values and incentives will be available at the next meeting. They are noticing a significant uptick in permits.
  - The City is working with a consultant on the zoning code update and they want it to be a representation of the City as it is and what they would like to see in the future. The current code is not friendly to development and they want to change that.
  - The Parking Commission meets on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday, has 7 areas of emphasis, wants to decide if the City is a provider of parking or simply a manager of parking, they are considering terminating the lease of the BN property for parking, and looking at means of enforcement on streets and city lots.
  - Starbucks opened last month.
  - There are parties interested in the Tim Horton's site.
  - The EDA meeting in March will have Bruce Miles, consultant, help them with a strategic planning session.
  - The City entered into an agreement for the services of BLAEDC for 2021.
- Jennifer Bergman –
  - The EDA dedicated \$15,000 to the DDBC for a coordinator. The interviews have been completed and as we are meeting they are meeting to determine who they would like to hire.
  - On the Sesquicentennial the City appointed Badeaux and Stanglien as representatives of the council and agreed to the main week of events to be 9/18-25/2021 with a time capsule, Crazy Days, Farmer's Market, History Walks, and with the Park Board having a special event on 9/25.
  - The City is considering Banners with the sesquicentennial logo on light poles throughout the City. They have requested BPU to assist with the installation and are considering selling the banners after the events to reestablish a fund.
  - They are considering a ribbon cutting for the splash pad in Memorial Park.
  - The Farmers Market is being rebranded as "Market Day".

## River to Rail Initiative

### Notes

- Jennifer also provided further updates immediately following the meeting:

#### Sesquicentennial Celebration Week: Sept. 18-25, 2021

- 18<sup>th</sup>—Kick-off with a proclamation from Mayor Badeaux
- 18<sup>th</sup>—Brainerd Lakes Chamber time capsule event / community festival
- 25<sup>th</sup>—Brainerd Parks and Recreation community picnic
- Downtown Sidewalk Sale and events during that week TBD
- History Walk Tours dates and times during that week TBD
- Northern Pacific Center event TBD
- Stage North production (**Gary, will you reply with the dates and times for this, please?**)

#### Other initiatives:

- Light pole banners throughout the city will be installed; the banners will include the sesquicentennial logo.
- Weekly history tidbits in the Brainerd Dispatch on Mondays; this is a partnership between the Dispatch and the local historians.
- Installation of a monument at The Crossing to commemorate the beginning of the city and the sesquicentennial.
- Sesquicentennial page on the City's website including calendar of events, history tidbits, etc.

#### **Visit Brainerd** (via email from Mary Devine Johnson)

- DDBC hired Rylie Weber as the coordinator. Rylie's family owns and operates the 612 Station on Front Street and she has been a member of the DDBC board for about a year. She has an outstanding background in marketing, public relations and special events planning! The DDBC is thrilled to have her on board and believes that having someone who is part of the downtown business scene with her professional background will be beneficial to maintaining momentum.
- DDBC held two seasonal shopping promotions that were very well received. In February it was the "Can't Get Enough of Your Love" punch card/drawing promo and in March it was a "Pot of Gold" scratch-off discount cards.
- DDBC is organizing a new event called the Spring Fling on May 7-8 which is shopping themed event with demonstrations, live music and prizes.
- DDBC is organizing Downtown Market Days to be held Tuesdays from 3-7pm June-August. This will be a farmer's market plus (hopefully) live music, demonstrations, family/kid events and more. They will be looking for sponsors if anyone is interested.
- DDBC has two open board positions for businesses owners, so please spread the word, or express your interest to Brenda Billman-Arndt at the Purple Fern.
- DDBC/Brainerd Restoration have started the conversation with the City of Brainerd and BPU about updating the holiday lights in the next couple of years. This will most likely be a multi-year and -phased project.
- Brainerd Restoration will be co-sponsoring the third "Music in the Parking Lot" event with the Lakes Area Music Festival on August 12. This is a free event meant to draw people downtown in the evening.
- Brainerd Restoration has ordered a microphone to go with the new downtown speaker system! This will be available for events to provide wider broadcasting. They are also looking at phase two of where to install speakers.

## River to Rail Initiative

### Notes

- Visit Brainerd has been busy advertising for the summer season. We anticipate it will be a very busy summer; Destination Analytics consumer data shows that more than 70% of people are ready to travel but only 30% of them are ready to fly, so drive destinations (350 miles or less) are the target this season. Outdoor destinations and attractions are still at the top of the list. Avoiding crowds is still at the top of the list. Camping/RV'ing is a hot travel segment.
- Visit Brainerd is excited to announce that we'll be offering History Walk Tours which will start and end at our storefront location in downtown. We are working with the Brainerd History Group and have recruited 10 new volunteer tour guides! Watch for more information but there will be multiple tours available each week during the summer. The Crow Wing County Museum has offered to provide discounted tours to people who attend the History Walk tours, so that is an excellent cross-promotion. We are hoping this will be a well-received new attraction for the community.

### Brainerd Restoration

- No specific report..

### Crossing Arts Alliance

- No report.

### HRA

- Eric Charpentier –
  - A developer has entered into a purchase agreement on the Thrifty White property but there is a lot of work to do and closing is not scheduled for a year with a lot of contingencies.
  - They are investing money in the HVAC systems of the Northstar building out of the capital budget.
  - They are working with the DDBC on safety and aesthetics with the potential of a HRA concept grant.
  - They are looking at small cities grants as it might relate to the 2025 Washington St. improvements with a potential to change the looks. MnDOT has expressed interest in the needs and wants of the city including pedestrian movement, signage and lighting. This ties in with the zoning code revisions.
  -

### YMCA

- Shane Riffle –
  - They have engaged a consultant to perform an assets optimization study and formulate a real estate development plan,
  - There is a thought/potential to buy an adjoining parcel for part of their child care plan.
  - The author of the book about livable cities has offered to come to Brainerd to review Pensacola activities and our plans and discuss potential. They are looking at a bicycle friendly community and safe routes to schools (Paul Sandy will be involved in this process).
- 

### Riverfront Committee

- Karl Samp –
  - LCCMR funding was approved by the House and is being reviewed in the Senate for any amendments and is expected to be on the floor next week (4/15).
  - There is stimulus funding and criteria has not been finalized and he wondered if it might fit to help fund that part of the plan that was not funded by LCCMR. There

## **River to Rail Initiative**

### **Notes**

will be a work session with the council in May/June as soon as the criteria is finalized.

- He had a meeting with a potential donor for the amphitheater. No results yet.
- This whole thing may come together is a potential loan from the BLACF guaranteed by a irrevocable trust. This may also work for the YMCA proposals.

### **Chamber of Commerce**

- Matt Kilian –
  - MnDOT reached out and wants to get a business group together to get input for the Washington St. project in 2025.
  - Also reported on the Sesquicentennial and added that Sue Galligan will be the Chamber representative assisting with it. They are also thinking of a fundraiser to assist with the Tower renovation, perhaps getting the JayCeas to combine efforts.

### **BLAEDC**

- Tyler Glynn –
  - He has been having discussions with the County on the upcoming stimulus funding but since no criteria is finalized, there are decisions.
  - BLAEDC is restarting the business retention and expansion visits from previous years
  - BLAEDC is in the process of going through some rebranding as well.

### **Sesquicentennial Planning Discussion**

- Mary Devine Johnson, Dave Badeaux, Matt Kilian – Matt will schedule a meeting soon but they are still talking about options (series of events branded for the sesquicentennial along with one major event, historic walking tours, time capsule, etc.). They all said they would help but could not be in the lead position. There was a suggestion to do a public notification for people with interest to come forward.

### **Next Meeting Date**

- June 2, 2021 at 11:00 am in the CTC Room of the BLACC/BLAEDC offices.
- It was noted that several people RSVPed to the meeting but did not attend.
- We will be reaching out to also update emails of those who did not respond at all to make sure they are receiving the invites and notes.