

## **River to Rail Initiative Notes**

### **Meeting Date/Time**

December 2, 2020

11:00 am – 1:00 pm

### **Agenda**

#### **Introduction**

- Attendance – Bruce Buxton, Tyler Glynn, Dave Badeaux, Jennifer Bergman, David Chanski, Eric Charpentier, John Schommer, Mary Devine Johnson, Shane Riffle, Lisa Jordan, Matt Kilian, Allison Medeck

#### **City of Brainerd**

- David Chanski – Incentives Report- To date 143 projects, \$58,552 in permits saved, \$3,428,269 in valuation (not including things that do not require valuations as part of the permit), The City is doing some historical work to see what the impact has been but gut reaction is that people are learning about the incentives and they are generating new interest as they become known.
- Jennifer Bergman – Parking Commission- there are 4 members and they are scheduling their first meetings (Chuck Marohn, Kevin Yeager, Brenda Billman Arndt, and Brian ?). Paul Sandy has several studies to manage existing parking and how to design/pay for/install parking facilities.
- - Other – The City/BPU have installed banners and holiday banners

#### **Visit Brainerd**

- Mary Devine Johnson – Lodging tax revenue is down 50% for 2020 and expected the same for 2021. They have adjusted accordingly. They have moved into a downtown location and are part of the scene. They are working with the Brainerd history groups to try to conduct historical tours during 2021.

#### **Brainerd Cares Grant Program**

- Tyler Glynn – Have been working on it for 6 months. In all 78 businesses within Brainerd will/have received \$726,293 to help. Final round of checks will go out this week. A lot of work by the County and BLAEDC with a lot of cooperation from all the cities. Brainerd contributed \$300,000 from their Cares funding to the pot so their businesses could be helped. He did not have the numbers for the non-profit groups in the area.

#### **Brainerd Restoration**

- John Schommer – The speaker system has been installed and is working. There are some adjustments to be made but it has been well received. Karl Samp from BLACF is providing some funds that they intend to use for a remote microphone. There is a effort to have a joint meeting with Downtown Council to discuss future murals, etc. as both would like to see something. The discussions with Hockey House building owners is underway but that mural is large and may be awhile in coming to fruition.

#### **Crossing Arts Alliance**

- Lisa Jordan – Kringle Market is open and thankfully retail sales have made up for lost revenue from closing workshops due to pandemic. They are doing some online classes and have been distributing creativity kits throughout the city to give people things to do during the pandemic and create interest in the arts.

#### **HRA**

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- Eric Charpentier – Housing is an issue and to that end, they just recently had a meeting with a developer about housing in the R 2 R corridor. It is very preliminary and will take time to develop with lots of meetings with the City and HRA so hopefully more to come.

### **YMCA**

- Shane Riffle – He first thanked Brainerd, BLAEDC, Crow Wing County, and all others that advocated for them to receive a part of the Cares grants. They've hire GROW to help them master plan and fund the future YMCA for the area. This is a long-term project. They are beginning to partner with many organizations to help provide activities and health benefits to our community. Again, this takes time but as we are stretched for staff and money, sharing will help. They are interested in helping with housing and bringing employees to the area in any way they can be of benefit.

### **Downtown Council – Brenda Billman Arndt**

- Organization – Not a membership organization yet, being sponsored by the Chamber at this point, but are working toward an independent group. About 10 people are in the core group. They have done some door knocking as needed to discuss events and needs with those that do not normally participate and that is helping to grow the group. They want to hire a part time event coordinator that could eventually lead to a full time position. Partially this is because all of them are small businesses with no/few employees so workload is an issue.
- The Window Walk is this Friday with 30 businesses agreeing to participate so everyone should take time to come downtown and take a look. They have had various events including the Spooktacular but some have not been held due to the pandemic. Suffice it to say, everyone is hoping for a much better 2021.
- Activities & Direction.

### **Riverfront Committee**

- David Chanski – The committee has taken a short break since they are awaiting the legislature. They applied for about \$3.8M in grants for the first project and \$2.85M was recommended to the legislature. The legislature will hopefully take this up in January and approve it so funds will be available by 7/2021. The money must be spent by 6/30/2024 but cannot be spent early as there is no reimbursement for previous expenses. There will likely be a fundraiser for that portion that had to be cut from the plan due to the reduction in the grant funds recommended.

### **Chamber of Commerce**

- Matt Kilian – The chamber has been focused on the restaurants, bars and breweries during the roller coaster ride of the pandemic. They have been legislatively active and with the improved state financial forecast, they hope to have some action quickly - both state and federal. They have developed Cuisine Cash and have had \$50,000 in sales in large part by employers that bought when Christmas parties had to be cancelled,

### **BLAEDC**

- Tyler Glynn – BLAEDC is moving forward with the high priorities of finding workers. Tyler mentioned several companies that have needs for many employees and have had little luck finding them. He talked about going through some strategic planning and rebranding in 2021.

### **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.

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**Water Tower**

- Dave Badeaux – They have received funding from the Historical Society to get the Architectural drawings done for the roof repairs. They are currently in step 2 of 3 to get much closer on dollar estimates and then they will go forward with serious fundraisers to accomplish the work. All they have been doing with the “trinkets” is showing the Council that there is significant support for preserving the tower.

**Set Next Meeting Date**

- February 3, 2021 Zoom meeting again