

CLEARWATER DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT BOARD MEETING

June 10, 2020 – 5:30 PM – Main Library – Council Chambers

Members Present:	Paris Morfopoulos	Chairman
	Ray Cassano	Vice-Chairman
	Venkat “Vincent” Devineni	Treasurer
	Shahab Emrani	Member
	Festus Porbeni	Member
	Keanan Kintzel	Member
	Caitlein Jammo	Member
Also Present:	Frank Hibbard	Ex-officio Member/Mayor
	Mark Bunker	Ex-officio Member/Councilmember
	Amanda Thompson	CRA Director
	Anne Lopez	CRA Program Specialist
	Rosemary D'Amour	CRA Public Relations and Programs
	Howard Smith	CRA Business Assistance Administrator
	Elise K. Winters	DDB Attorney

1. **Chairman Morfopoulos called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.**

2. **Approve the Minutes from the March 4, 2020, Meeting**

Member Cassano moved to approve the minutes from the March 4, 2020, Meeting. The motion was duly seconded and upon roll call the vote was:

Ayes: Chairman Morfopoulos, Member Devineni, Member Emrani, Member Porbeni, Member Kintzel, and Member Jammo.

Nays: None.

Motion carried.

3. **Citizens to be Heard Regarding Items Not on the Agenda. None.**

4. **New Business**

4.1. Adopt DDB meeting policy and procedures. Board Attorney Winters briefly reviewed the documents, noting that Roberts Rules of Order was used loosely as a guideline and the City's policies were closely followed, and summarizing the newest rules items and officers' duties. Ex-officio Member Bunker questioned whether the new rule regarding removal of unruly was added because of his board appointment; Attorney Winters stated, and CRA Director Thompson confirmed, that these documents had been under review since at least September 2019.

Member Jammo moved to adopt DDB meeting policy and procedures. The motion was duly seconded and upon roll call the vote was:

Ayes: Chairman Morfopoulos, Member Cassano, Member Devineni, Member Emrani, Member Porbeni, and Member Kintzel.

Nays: None.

Motion carried.

4.2. Adopt the February 2020 Financial Statement for Filing. CRA Program Specialist Lopez reminded the Board of the new procedure for the CRA Director to authorize disbursements up to \$5,000, and

reviewed the document noting February expenditures totaling \$11,889.00, with cash in bank \$228,064, and that the property tax payment from the CRA had yet to be received. Member Devineni's question regarding calculations involving the tax revenue was clarified by CRA Director Thompson.

Member Jammo moved to adopt DDB meeting policy and procedures. The motion was duly seconded and upon roll call the vote was:

Ayes: Chairman Morfopoulos, Member Cassano, Member Devineni, Member Emrani, Member Porbeni, and Member Kintzel.

Nays: None.

Motion carried.

- 4.3. Adopt the March 2020 Financial Statement for Filing.** CRA Program Specialist Lopez reviewed the document, noting March expenditures of \$32,909, and answered questions regarding allotment for meeting minutes and legal fees.

Member Emrani moved to adopt DDB meeting policy and procedures. The motion was duly seconded and upon roll call the vote was:

Ayes: Chairman Morfopoulos, Member Cassano, Member Devineni, Member Jammo, Member Porbeni, and Member Kintzel.

Nays: None.

Motion carried.

- 4.4. Adopt the April 2020 Statement for Financial Filing.** CRA Program Specialist Lopez reviewed the document, noting April expenditures of \$6,454.

Member Emrani moved to adopt DDB meeting policy and procedures. The motion was duly seconded and upon roll call the vote was:

Ayes: Chairman Morfopoulos, Member Cassano, Member Devineni, Member Emrani, Member Porbeni, and Member Kintzel.

Nays: None.

Motion carried.

- 4.5. Approve funding request for the City of Clearwater Back to Business Assistance grant program for up to a maximum of \$50,000.** CRA Program Director Thompson presented the request for funding of the emergency support program for businesses in response to the Safer At Home order adopted by the Clearwater City Council on May 7, 2020. Seeking approval to grant funding for businesses approved within the downtown district up to \$50,000.

Chairman Morfopoulos asked for clarification on timeline of payout from DDB funds; CRA Director Thompson stated that a portion would be this fiscal year, and that funds could be spent over two fiscal years.

Member Kintzel asked about requirements for business application. CRA Director Thompson stated that businesses must have a City of Clearwater business tax receipt, noting that many businesses do not, and have proof of income and expenses for a specified period prior to COVID-19.

Member Emrani asked for clarification of the DDB's role in approval of businesses. CRA Director Thompson stated that the application period has closed, businesses were City-chosen, and the City estimates there will be a second round of funding. If the DDB would like a larger role, she would

investigate that possibility, however the City has currently assumed all responsibility and liability for the program.

Ex-officio Member Hibbard noted that 767 businesses had applied, 619 brick & mortar and 148 home-based, and that staff continues to sort and check qualifications. The City chose to adopt the standards that the County used in an effort to get the money out quickly. The council would appreciate your support.

Chairman Morfopoulos called for citizens comments; there were none.

Member Kintzel moved to approve funding request for the City of Clearwater Back to Business Assistance grant program for up to a maximum of \$50,000. The motion was duly seconded and the floor was opened for Board Comments.

Chairman Morfopoulos commented that this grant process is more favorable and less restrictive than the County's process and it is commendable that the City staff has taken this on and moved through this during the crisis. He was happy the DDB has the reserves to help fund this.

Member Jammo suggested line item number 45, Future Initiatives, for funding rather than funding from reserves; CRA Director Thompson agreed and offered to revisit if necessary.

Member Devineni asked how a second round would be publicized so no one missed the opportunity.

Member Emrani agreed with Member Devineni and asked how do we go about letting the downtown businesses know if there is a second round. CRA Director Thompson stated that TV and radio ads, and robo-calls, as well as regular social media channels would be used with CRA staff and DDB members being asked to push the message. Publicity could be added to a future agenda if requested.

Upon roll call the vote was:

Ayes: Chairman Morfopoulos, Member Cassano, Member Devineni, Member Emrani, Member Porbeni, and Member Kintzel.

Nays: None.

Motion carried.

- 4.6. Approve a funding request from Downtown Clearwater Merchant's Association (DCMA) in the amount of \$10,000. CRA Business Assistance Administrator Smith** presented a short video promoting downtown businesses to preface the request and introduced Lina Teixeira who spoke on behalf of the DCMA, stating that the video had over 12,000 views on her pages alone and a petition to continue the street-closure outdoor seating downtown had over 800 signatures. Carolyn Bradham, of Kara Lynn's Kitchen, addressed the Board, noting that of the \$10,000 requested, \$4,000 would be used for production costs of a second video, promotion of both, and \$6,000 would fund music on the street Friday and Saturday nights on the 400 and 500 blocks of Cleveland Street. Ms. Bradham noted

Chairman Morfopoulos asked about the funding and payments for the bands. To which Ms. Bradham noted there are nine open restaurants on the 400 block and four on the 500 block, and bands are being placed one at each end of the seating area with 'block captains' managing any conflicts or sound overlap.

Member Jammo asked what the status of the events that DDB approved funding at the beginning of the fiscal year. CRA Director Thompson stated that DCMA has already submitted a request for payment.

Member Kintzel asked about where is to promotion. Ms. Bradham social media posting and the restaurants are posting on their social media. Member Kintzel then asked how much of the budget

would be used for promotion vs creation as video. Ms. Bradham said that it depends on the cost on the videos and that all remaining funds would be used for promotion.

Ex- Officio Member Bunker stated that he has been down on Cleveland Street since the closure and has heard nothing but great feedback. He wanted to know if there was a way to stagger the bands, so they do not blend together one another. Ms. Bradham said that there is now a block captain so that it works better.

Citizen Don Gutierrez stated his concern that an RFP should be issued when using city funds to maintain transparency and “avoid the misconception the city is feeding insiders”. Chairman Morfopolous explained that both the city and DDB will have a RFP process when needed but that business can come to the DDB and they have be granted fund. CRA Director Thompson then explained that DCMA is coming to the DDB to ask for funds and they when the DDB is requesting participation then a formal request is issued.

Citizen Rebecca Kay stated that she would like to see more art and craft fairs, and the Pierce Street Market is missed. A regular event just two weekends per month would make a difference to downtown. She also promoted Thursday trivia nights at Downtown Pizza as a good time for all.

Discussion included process for paying the bands, and the budget line items from which to fund which was clarified by CRA Director Thompson as split special events and promoting downtown.

Member Jammo moved to approve a funding request from Downtown Clearwater Merchant’s Association in the amount of \$10,000.

The motion was duly seconded and discussion was opened.

Member Emrani requested more information on the second video and the funding. Ms. Teixeira stated that the song is being written for and about Clearwater, the DCMA would own the rights, and the song would be used widely for advertising, and clarified that the street music would be funded for two-four months depending on fees.

Upon roll call the vote was:

Ayes: Chairman Morfopoulos, Member Cassano, Member Devineni, Member Emrani, Member Porbeni, and Member Kintzel.

Nays: None.

Motion carried.

- 4.7. Approve budget line transfer in the FY 19/20 budget.** CRA Program Specialist Lopez summarized the issue that the transfer would cover attorney fees and meeting minutes preparation for the year.

Member Kintzel moved to approve budget line transfer in the FY 19/20 budget.

The motion was duly seconded and upon roll call the vote was:

Ayes: Chairman Morfopoulos, Member Cassano, Member Devineni, Member Emrani, Member Porbeni, and Member Kintzel.

Nays: None.

Motion carried.

- 4.8. Chair appoints Audit Committee.** CRA Program Specialist Lopez summarized the request to adopt the entire board as an Audit Committee to review responses to City’s RFP for CPA firm to conduct audit.

Chairman Morfopoulos appointed the Board to the Audit Committee and noted there will be a brief session of the committee July 8, 2020.

5. Old Business Items

5.1. Bylaws. Board Attorney Winters reviewed changes made, noting some procedural items had been moved into the bylaws. The attorney asked for comments on the updated document within the next couple of weeks.

5.2. Funding Request Form and Procedure. CRA Director Thompson reviewed, noting that the new process involves funding on a rolling basis rather than at one point in the year, staff review of the request, Board comments, followed by presentation at the meeting during which time the Board would choose to grant, deny, or continue the request.

In discussion, it was confirmed that comments should be made individually by email after review, and that the approved form would be available online via email or on the website as well as in paper form.

Member Cassano moved to adopt the new grant funding request policy. The motion was duly seconded and discussion was opened.

Chairman Morfopoulos commented that this new process was more flexible not only for the Board but for applicants.

Upon roll call the vote was:

Ayes: Chairman Morfopoulos, Member Devineni, Member Emrani, Member Porbeni, Member Jammo, and Member Kintzel.

Nays: None.

Motion carried.

5.3. DDB work plan. CRA Program Director Thompson proposed a timeline for approval including a work session Tuesday, June 23, 2020, at 5:30 pm in Chambers to clarify goals; and e-survey available for three weeks to approximately 50 email addresses and on social media for feedback regarding work in plan areas (Marketing, Business Assistance, Policy & Projects); public comment on work plan at July 8 regular meeting; and draft plan and preliminary budget prepared for discussion August 1. There was consensus.

5.4. CRA Updates. CRA Program Director Thompson stated that the Cleveland Street median lighting project should have an RFP released any day.

CRA has established a partnership with Amplify Clearwater to assist with special events paperwork, which service is paid for by the CRA.

Two façade grants approved at 80 Court Street and Philly Joe's, and housing incentive approved on Chestnut.

Cleveland Street 400 and 500 block closed to vehicular traffic through Labor Day, with improvement to signage and \$20 Restaurant Voucher Program. CRA Business Assistance Administrator Smith stated that feedback has been great from residents. Approximately 1,400 residents had applied for the voucher through www.downtownclearwater.com as well as 11 businesses. The \$20 voucher will be covered by \$10 from the business and \$10 from the CRA.

Member Porbeni asked for an update on wayfinding and the USF mural project. CRA Director Thompson stated that approval from FDOT and the county had come through at last for a sign and now the bid can be released.

CRA Public Relations and Programs Manager stated that the USF team has the software and applications built, but COVID-19 delayed testing until the students are available again; launch should be two weeks after testing.

6. **Chairman's Report.** Chairman Morfopoulos stated that there are fewer events due to the crises but reminded us that the restaurants downtown have additional seating outdoors and are open for business. He thanked the City for the willingness to work with the businesses in this regard.

7. **Board Members to be Heard.**

Member Devineni shared comments from his physician father in India regarding the coronavirus, with hopes that a vaccine is found within one-two years and a V-shaped recover could be seen here by the end of the year.

Member Emrani is warming up to the idea of the two-block seating as permanent and wondered what steps should be taken to approach the City Council about that. He shared many ideas to invite participation from the public. The more marketing funds we can allocate, the better off we will be.

Member Cassano agrees with the other board members and appreciates improvements for the street seating areas.

Member Kintzel thanked the mayor for his appearance in the downtown video, encouraging residents' interest in downtown. He also suggested finding ways to bring bicycle traffic to downtown.

Member Porbeni agrees with the closing of two blocks on Cleveland Street, thanked Amanda and her staff for all the help during the COVID-19 crisis, was glad to see everyone back.

Member Jammo asked to approach the podium and, upon permission, echoed all positive comments and offered two motions: first, on support of Resolution 20-01, the purpose of which is to denounce police brutality but also to acknowledge the systemic inequalities that face members of our communities and take steps to address them, and second, on implementation of the resolution.

Member Cassano moved to adopt Resolution 20-01. The motion was duly seconded and discussion was opened.

Member Emrani commented on his respect for Clearwater's police force, and noted that they would likely also support this resolution. He also thanked Member Jammo and complimented her on the composition and thoughtfulness of the resolution.

Chairman Morfopoulos noted that we had civil, dignified protests in Clearwater and those protesters and their leaders should be thanked and commended, as well as all of the civic leaders over the years who helped make that happen.

Upon roll call the vote was:

Ayes: Chairman Morfopoulos, Member Devineni, Member Emrani, Member Porbeni, and Member Kintzel.

Nays: None.

Motion carried.

Member Jammo continued by requesting that the DDB take affirmative steps to support elimination of systemic racism, including the creation of a committee to field submissions specifically addressing these issues, funding the project with \$10,000 from line item 45, Future Initiatives.

Member Emrani moved to adopt committee and fund the committee. The motion was duly seconded and discussion was opened.

Upon roll call the vote was:

Ayes: Chairman Morfopoulos, Member Cassano, Member Devineni, Member Porbeni, and Member Kintzel.

Nays: None.

Motion carried.

Ex-officio Member Bunker thanked the Board for the opportunity to be there, agreed that the Cleveland Street seating was beneficial to all even with emergency access issues everyone is aware of, and was grateful for the resolution's wish to make downtown "a welcoming place". He also suggested some of the business could somehow program more toward the African-American community.

Ex-officio Member Hibbard noted that he'd served as an Ex-officio Member on the DDB in the early 2000s and thanked the board for their investment in downtown, sharing his commitment to downtown as well and that he appreciates the momentum he sees happening. Another protest is planned for Sunday night, and he has an outline for summit on racial inequality to try to make important change. Imagine Clearwater work session Tuesday and public comments open Thursday.

Chairman Morfopoulos would like to review the Cleveland Street closing over the summer before making official recommendation to City one way or the other. Loss of parking and access for delivery vehicles are concerns.

The Chairman also proposed a policy for the DDB reaffirming that no form of discrimination in any form, including on the basis of race, color, religion, age, disability, gender, sex or, marital status or national origin. Anyone making a statement or action should be issued warning, and upon a second instance will be asked to leave.

Member Cassano moved to adopt anti-discrimination policy. The motion was duly seconded and discussion was opened.

Member Emrani asked if the policy was motivated by Member Jammo's resolution. Chairman Morfopoulos noted that the current circumstances and Member Jammo's resolution focused attention on the current situation and the DDB should take a stand. Ex-officio Member Bunker asked if it had to do with not mentioning the word Scientology.

CRA Director Thompson and Attorney Winters asked for time to review the language, and the attorney shared concern about creating a new policy that, on the surface, was illegal.

After much discussion regarding the legal definition of discrimination and the Board's ability to enforce action against speakers.

Member Jammo sought to amend the motion to adopt anti-discrimination policy to be drafted for review by CRA Direction and counsel for adoption at a future meeting. Member Cassano accepted the amendment. The amended motion was duly seconded

Upon roll call the vote was:

Ayes: Chairman Morfopoulos, Member Cassano, Member Devineni, Member Porbeni, and Member Kintzel.

Nays: None.

Motion carried.

8. The meeting was adjourned at 7:52 p.m.