

MINUTES

**LDDA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
CITY COMMISSION CONFERENCE ROOM
Thursday, September 4, 2003
8:00 AM**

PRESENT: Kevin Jones, Joe Mawhinney, Janet Tucker, Chris McLaughlin, Greg Mugg, Jerry Herring, Jim Verplanck, Glenn Higgins, Anne Furr, Becky Abel

ABSENT:

MINUTES: Janet Tucker moved to accept the Minutes of the August 21, 2003 regular Board Meeting. Motion seconded by Joe Mawhinney. Motion passed 6-0.

Kevin Jones arrived.

COMMITTEES:

Downtown Park & Ride – The 9' x 18' shelter is on the site. Two pieces of fascia are missing and are being shipped. The structure is wired and we are waiting for the fixture. As soon as it is complete, signage will be added. There is money budgeted in FY 2004 for the placement of a kiosk for information at the site (as well as in some other locations in downtown). Anne Furr has met with Judy Morris, principal of McKeel Elementary Academy. Some students had been playing kickball on the Park & Ride site, and Anne explained the reasons why this is not acceptable. Ms. Morris asked if the grassy area could be used for reading groups and other controlled outdoor activities. LDDA has no objection to that sort of use, pending an opinion from the City Attorney concerning liability issues. Joe Mawhinney stated that several years ago, an agreement was made with the School Board over shared usage. That agreement would need to be looked at to see if it would apply to the circumstance with McKeel Elementary. Anne purchased a chain lock for the gate that hopefully will be more effective.

Container Gardens Review – Janet Tucker reported that a meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, September 9 at 10 a.m. to review the maintenance contract, expansion plans and other issues regarding the container gardens. There are relatively few problems with the container gardens. Some plants have had some problems with overgrowth or sunlight issues, but Jim Luna is changing out and trimming plants as needed. Peninsular Exterminating Company has handled fungus problems. Additional discussion concerned some people's dissatisfaction with the selection or placement of the plants, but this was thought not to be a big issue.

CITY COMMISSION REPORT: Jim Verplanck reported that the first Budget Hearing for the City was held last evening. The millage increase was tentatively approved, and the budget that included the parking rate increase for the Main Street Garage and parking ticket increases. Jim pointed out that the City proposes to continue its portion of the Park & Ride funding next fiscal year in the amount of \$36,944. The Final Budget Hearing will be held at 6 p.m. on Monday, September 15, 2003.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT: Jerry Herring noted that he perceives a slowdown of occupancies in downtown buildings. Kevin Jones and Janet Tucker reiterated that there is a need for a destination retailer that would particularly appeal to the needs of the 8,000 downtown employees, for example a magazine and card shop. Janet mentioned that the idea had been introduced to a local Hallmark retailer about placing a store downtown and that she would follow up with him to try to convince him to give downtown a try. A discussion followed concerning improving the appearance of temporarily vacant storefronts and of offices that don't have anything interesting to view as pedestrians pass by. Anne will speak with selected property owners and tenants to make suggestions that might make their properties look more visually appealing.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

101 Lake Wire Drive – Anne reviewed the recent history of the property and the plans that the current owner has for the site. The owner objects to paying the impact fees. Since the property is outside of the LDDA boundaries, impact fees cannot be waived unless the City Commission made an amendment to the existing impact fee ordinance. Jim Verplanck and Anne have been instrumental in having the fees reduced due to the reclassification of the type of restaurant. They also were able to share with the owner and facilitate the process that allows paying impact fees over a period of forty-eight months in the area where the property is located (Community Development Block Grant Target Area). Some people have requested that the LDDA expand its boundaries two blocks west to encompass the property (which would allow waiver of most of the impact fees). Anne has explained that a boundary expansion is not like an annexation; rather, the process requires the vote of the entire boundary area, City Commission approval, blight study and redevelopment plan. While the LDDA has considered eventually expanding boundaries that would include the area around this property, the time has not come for that to happen. Since the LDDA has expanded in the northeast section of downtown, it is felt that the process in the current expansion area needs to be complete and show signs of revitalization before new expansion would be acceptable to the taxpayers in the district. No action was taken. Anne informed the Board of all of this background so that they would be aware of the situation if approached by anyone wanting more information.

Hospitality Panel – The Hospitality Resource Panel was put together by the City, Florida Southern College, Chamber of Commerce and the LPD to develop new partnerships to address issues facing bars, restaurants, and the surrounding community. The group includes entertainment establishment owners and other concerned individuals who are attempting to solve potential problems that come with nighttime entertainment. Two problems that Anne is concerned about for downtown are: 1. Safety of patrons traveling home after consuming alcohol, and 2. Trash and debris around the establishments that is not always being cleaned up. Anne stated that there had been two meetings of the panel and a third is scheduled for September 30, 2003. She asked if anyone had additional ideas to bring before the panel. Chris McLaughlin suggested a designated “taxi-only” area be established during certain hours. That may increase the responsiveness of the existing taxi company.

A discussion of downtown concerns continued. Greg Mugg suggested that a “work day” be considered for the purpose of cleaning up between buildings, alleyways and other areas that accumulate trash and bottles in the area. Another suggestion was to request more frequent dumping of dumpsters to help eliminate odors and overflow of trash.

LDDA Board Election – Janet Tucker and Jerry Herring were re-elected without opposition. Their new three-year terms will begin January 2004. We will not need to meet as a canvassing board as originally scheduled for October 7, 2003.

DLP Awards – Anne distributed forms for the Dudley Uphoff, Partnership and Golden Swan Award nominations. Anne will compile any suggestions and submit.

FRA Conference – The deadline to register for this event is Wednesday, September 10. Please let Anne know if you would like to attend any part or all of the conference.

Executive Director's Review – The Leadership Lakeland Breakfast featuring Roger Haar will be held at 7:45 a.m. on September 18, the same day as our regular Board Meeting and the Executive Director's review. Therefore, our Board Meeting will immediately follow the Breakfast (approximately 9:15 a.m.) in the VIP Jenkins Suite at the Lakeland Center. Anne reminded everyone to make reservations for the Breakfast, and pay in advance to avoid standing in line on the morning of the event.

Public Hearings on Budget – The first Budget Hearing is Monday, September 8, 2003 at 5:01 p.m. Please note that the date of the Final Budget Hearing is changed to Monday, September 22 at 5:01 p.m. The change was made to allow enough time to mail the notices for the Final Hearing.

NEW BUSINESS:

Property Appraiser Update – The Property Appraiser has re-mailed TRIM notices to the forty-four properties in District 50 (Area 3), which is the LDDA expanded area. The inclusion of this district will make a modest change in the LDDA's expected income, and once the LDDA receives the DR 422 in October, the budget can be adjusted as necessary.

Arts on the Park – Anne distributed a letter from Arts on the Park detailing their fundraising plan for purchase awards for the Fall Festival in Munn Park on October 4th and 5th, 2003.

Molly McHugh's Application for Conditional Use as a Bar – The Planning and Zoning Board has scheduled to hear the request for a conditional use for a bar on September 16 at 9:30 a.m. at their regular meeting. The meeting will be held in the City Commission Chambers.

Dumpster at Attorney's Title Building – Anne contacted Jeff Holden about the dumpster at this property. Jeff said that the dumpster is there while the debris from a dismantled vault is removed. He is cleaning out the building and plans to have his offices for The Charter Group in back and a pool table showroom in the storefront.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 AM.

The next regular LDDA Board meeting will be held on Thursday, September 18, 2003, at 9:15 a.m., following the Leadership Lakeland Alumni Association Breakfast, in the Jenkins VIP Suite across from the Hollingsworth Room at the Lakeland Center.