

**DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Meeting of the DDA Board of Directors
March 28, 2023**

The March meeting of the DDA Board was called to order at 8:03 am.

ROLL CALL

Present: *Mayor Brian Turnbull, DJ Boyd, Margene Buckhave, David Cole, Steven Huprich, Mike Jaafar, Ryan McKindles, Greg Presley, Shawn Riley*

Absent: *Aaron Cozart, Jim Long*

Also Present: *Lori Ward/DDA Executive Director, Jeri Johnson/DDA Marketing & Communications Director, Jessica Howlin/DDA Marketing & Administrative Assistant, Sandi Wiktorowski/City of Northville, Barbara Morowski-Browne/City Council, John Carter/City Council, Marilyn Price/City Council, Fred Shiel, Nancy Darga, Dave Gutman, Joe Corriveau, Jim Nield, Mary Keys, David Veselenek, Brian Scherle, Toni Genitti, Susan Haifleigh, Bob Buckhave, Bobby Johnson, Michelle Johnson, Michelle Anoil, Mishelle Lussier, Angela Jaafar, Landon Garrett, Dan Johnson*

AUDIENCE COMMENTS

None.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA

Motion by Turnbull, seconded by McKindles, to approve the agenda and consent agenda.
Motion carried.

STREET CLOSURE UPDATE

Riley said at the May 2022 DDA Board Meeting the DDA discussed street closures and board member Greg Presley made a motion to reopen Center Street as quickly as possible and keep Main Street closed through November 1, 2022 per the current agreement. This motion passed on a 5-4 vote. At the June 6, 2022 City Council meeting, the DDA motion was presented. After reviewing information and data, City Council, at their August 1, 2022 meeting, voted to permanently close both Main and Center Streets to vehicular traffic.

Riley read a letter to the Board on behalf of board member Jim Long, who was unable to attend the meeting. Presley asked if the traffic study is now complete. Ward said the first phase of the study is complete, and was focused on pedestrian safety. The study will be presented to the City Council. Fleis & Vandenbrink (F&V) met last week with mobility network to discuss findings. The second portion will begin immediately and focuses on vehicular safety issues. This study will take several months. Presley said he drove back to Michigan from Florida last weekend and stopped in Franklin, Tennessee. This community with a population of

about 6,000 was comparable to Northville in that it has one main downtown street, similar number of businesses and is not a college town. Presley said he brings this up as a good example of what a thriving lively downtown looks like. Presley referenced what was said in May, and said the City should go back to bollards for events and close the streets for event closures as opposed to seasonal. The experience Northville has gone through has been instructive and if the only thing that comes out of this is bollards, it has been a positive experience to get to this point.

Boyd said he can certainly support reopening Center Street. Boyd added that it is important to consider the flexibility of adding bollards to both Main and Center Streets as they have both historically been closed for events. Huprich said Center Street should be reopened right away and he supports a seasonal closure on Main. Huprich added that it may not be necessary to continue to keep Main Street closed until a long-term solution is in place. Huprich said he would support reopening both with the idea that a plan will be worked out for seasonal closures.

McKindles said Center Street should be opened right away and move to reopen Main Street in November. McKindles said the DDA needs to consider installing bollards and it would be important to do so at both Main and Center Streets. Cole said he supports reopening Center and reopening Main Street either immediately or seasonally. Cole added that as a property and business owner in Northville, he has seen property value decrease for the first time and is seeing a financial impact on closures. Cole said having streets closed seasonally or occasionally for events has historically worked out well for the City.

Turnbull said when the streets first closed, Council said they would be flexible. This was done a year ago and since then Council has received a lot of additional input on the decision. Council needs to make a decision now for MDOT. If the streets remain closed permanently, the City could lose between \$7,200 and \$60,000 per year. City administration is currently looking at bollard solutions and Council is analyzing the F&V study. Turnbull said that Mike Domine, DPW director, has received several letters over the past few months from the school district on the impacts of street closures and the superintendent of Northville Schools will be presenting at the Council meeting next week.

Buckhave said she has a completely different view on the closures. There was already a vote made on this several months ago and the DDA/City Council cannot go back and have a do over on the vote. Buckhave said most of her customers love the streets being closed and to be able to walk and have outdoor dining. Platform dining is not as safe as having the streets closed and Buckhave said she would like more information on the recent bus accident at Center and Dunlap Streets. Buckhave added that she is not in favor of only closing Main Street as this would be detrimental to Center Street.

Jaafar said he commends the City for their response during Covid but now that Covid is behind us, life has become more normal again. Jaafar was in favor of seasonal closures to be flexible but after hearing the mobility presentation, is in favor of opening both Main and Center and only closing for special occasions by applying through the normal permit process.

Riley said the town has become so caustic with polar opposite conversations on whether to reopen or keep streets closed. Riley said the prime location has always been Main Street, and there are ways to market your business to generate traffic. In the summer, street closures are amazing. Right now, the entrances into town look horrible and bollards would be beautiful. Riley added that Center Street being closed does not solve the traffic issues. Bypassing Main Street does not divert traffic through neighborhoods like the rerouted Center Street traffic. Riley said the charge of the DDA is to attract businesses into town Riley is not opposed to considering a seasonal closure on Center Street but doesn't think it solves traffic concerns.

Ward said one of the reasons this is on the agenda is that after last month's motion, several board members and City administration felt the motion was not specific enough and asked the DDA to revisit the conversation. Turnbull said it was not discussed at the last Council meeting because one councilperson was absent. Boyd said subsequent to Council's action in August, the DDA was tasked with starting the planning process. GMA was retained and once the design plan came back, the DDA began exploring how to potentially fund the expensive project and which elements the DDA wanted to move forward with completing. The first item is a \$14,000 electrical study to determine how to potentially use structures throughout winter. The DDA can fund a \$14,000 study but the question becomes how to find money to implement the recommendations. Boyd said one option is to issue bonds, either through the DDA or through the City. Going through the City offers the bond issue up for referendum and Boyd is not convinced a referendum on the topic of street closures would pass.

AUDIENCE COMMENTS

Jim Nield: There are two sides to the issue and Nield said he offered City Council a compromise solution in February. Nield said the proposal to council included a concrete planter and steel platform with tubing which can be moved and stored during winter. Nield said he designed and built the Senior Center and is willing to offer the same effort on the streets. If the City is willing to reopen the streets with exception of events, Nield is willing to help get a prototype for the establishments that are interested in outdoor dining. The DDA should support all merchants on both Center and Main; the drive by visibility on both streets is very important. Nield commended Nancy Darga for her work with the mobility study and said the streets need to be reopened so Darga is able to apply for grant applications.

Susan Haifleigh: Haifleigh said she is here speaking as a citizen and believes in the rule of the law. Council voted to permanently close the streets. This group is not here to decide something different from Council, if they should decide to change their minds that would be wonderful. Haifleigh lives on Wing and never realized that the streets would be closed permanently. The City does not have the capability to close them permanently. Council made a decision and the community needs to support that whether we are for or against the decision. The mobility team spent 4-5 months working through data. It is critically important to reopen Center. It cannot be open as it was before, but needs platforms and calming. Center Street can be wonderful and better than it was. Haifleigh said she cannot support closing one street and not the other.

Bobby Johnson: Johnson said they are still in favor of permanent street closures, and feel permanent closures allow for the best long-term solution, for mobility safety. Generations before us have always spoken of the importance of investment and there is a time and money

investment to make this really great in the future. Talking to parents in the kindergarten line, this generation loves the permanent street closures. Everyone knew in August that there was not enough time to get it perfect last winter and its just now getting to the good weather everyone is looking forward to. There's been a lot of optimism and positive talk about how awesome summer is going to be. The City needs to look at both Main and Center, and not separate them when making a decision, so Northville can remain unified. Both streets need to be looked at together to create a cohesive downtown environment.

Michelle Anoil: Anoil said she sits on the EDC, BZA and is a land use planner and EDC planner. A couple things as this process motors along – it is super important when a city makes decisions to take the public along during the process. To Riley's point about how fractious the town has gotten, part of the reason is that people don't feel like they've been brought along on the process. People feel like their voices haven't been heard. The past can't be changed but it can be corrected going forward. Anoil said she is not in favor of permanent street closures but the City needs to have a public forum. The community is steeped in history, and the focal point is the intersection of Main and Center. Anoil said it is boggling that history is out the door and the streets are closed. If the City decides to continue the closures, there needs to be equity and both would need to be closed. Anoil said she does not support closures and both streets need to be opened.

Angela Jaafar: Jaafar is here to represent several businesses that are not able to be at the meeting. Jaafar's sister owns Lava Grille. It is on Main Street outside of the closures. Jaafar said there needs to be a solution for that, because including them in the social district but not the closures is not working. What is a good solution for all businesses? Every business is unique and has a story. Jaafar said on the east side of the closed portion of Main, is her family's car wash business. A lot of customers come in saying they want the streets reopened. They would like to access businesses through Main Street and want to visibly see what's there. Some people like the ideas and some feel isolated. Jaafar said she is very careful about her ability to thrive as a business owner at the expense of another business. If some need to find a way to pivot and work harder than others it's not fair. Jaafar stated she respects all the boards, commissions and elected officials. The original decision was made it was prior to cost analysis, mobility study, MDOT information and there wasn't enough information to make the right decision.

Landon Garrett: Garrett thanked everyone in the City. If the streets hadn't closed, Center Street Grille wouldn't still be here today. Garrett said he is also a business owner in Downtown Plymouth as well. Center Street has gotten a vibrance for what has been done here to save the businesses. In Plymouth, Garrett has people ask why can't Plymouth do what Northville has done. Garrett said from his understanding, the roads were closed until November and the decision will be revisited in the winter. It is hard to activate the street in winter. Garrett would love for the streets to be closed all the time and taking it away this month is not fair to anyone. Garrett said if it is seasonal and businesses transition into parklets, it would be impossible for Center Street Grille to transition. It would take 2-3 months to get approval from the state and a \$30,000 investment for just two parking spots. This decision was made as a group to keep it until November, and have meetings weekly, biweekly, where everyone can get together to make this work. There should not be a difference between the two streets.

Joe Corriveau: Corriveau said he is in favor of opening both Main and Center streets. These streets have somehow become owned by these businesses that are benefiting from them. Everyone owns the streets. Corriveau commends Council for pivoting, the streets were closed and now they need to be reopened. Corriveau doesn't want to keep hearing that an issue that was dealt with three years ago can't be revisited. It is not popular to ask for people that are not in favor to support the bonds. As a resident that lives on a street that now gets all the rerouted traffic, people are driving down Wing Street at 50 miles per hour. Corriveau asks that both streets open back up.

Bob Buckhave: Center Street businesses have been given a taste of the honey that Main Street enjoys all the time. Buckhave said he and many other Center Street businesses are 250 feet away from Main Street and are treated differently from Main. Buckhave said they used to own Northville Square and fought tooth and nail to get a left turn signal at Main and Center so people would turn left and go past the building.

Brian Scherle: Scherle said everyone already knows his opinion to keep the streets closed. The biggest concern at this point is that Riley mentioned, the volatility of the community. Scherle is not here to be a part of it. Scherle said he was previously subject of a confrontation and this past weekend was subject to another at his restaurant. That is not okay. Another issue is the integrity of the Council and DDA. As a business owner, Scherle looks to these groups for guidance. If the decision had been different the outlash would not have been the same, everyone would have moved forward. The problem now becomes how we move forward and grow as a business and community. The decision was not made three years ago but in the fall to permanently close the street. Scherle agrees with the equity of closing both, the two cannot be separated.

Mishelle Lussier: Lussier has been incredibly disappointed to live in this city over the past few weeks. Lussier doesn't understand businesses being threatened, council members not talking to other council members because they don't agree with each other, what has happened - pink signs have suddenly changed our lives? Lussier said everyone knows her position, at what cost can this be changed. Is there going to be a mob mentality to change? Lussier said to Scherle's point, if it had gone the other way, Lussier would not go out with signs, try to change it or spread misinformation.

There were no more audience comments. Jaafar said this topic is very important. DDA has made a recommendation on this twice and Jaafar feels like those recommendations were ignored. Turnbull said this decision will be made next week and DDA input is very important. Boyd said the city needs to come together as a community and recognize the good arguments on both sides. Boyd asked if Council looked at traffic adjustments if the City were to prevent northbound turns. Turnbull said Council has been looking at F&V data over the past year, and considering all options. Boyd said there have been comments that the closed streets have been both an economic advantage and disadvantage, maybe it is business by business. McKindles asked about whether progress has been made on the bollard expense and that may impact some of the decision-making process. Ward said the bollards were about \$10,000 apiece for retractable, which included between \$3,000-\$4,500 for the bollard and then labor and installation costs. It would be less than \$250,000 to do all four entrances. Ward said that the new city manager is working with DPW to see if there are alternative quotes for bollards.

Barbara Morowski-Browne said city manager George Lahanas, in cooperation with DPW, is looking at bollard solutions. Morowski-Browne said that he identified a product that will work, they have a key twist and are actually not hydraulic but have a spring mechanism that can literally go into the ground and right back up. Two issues the City is looking at are the durability and maintainability of this spring bollard option. Turnbull said hydraulic are too expensive. McKindles said for a city that shuts down as much as Northville, bollards would be a great benefit and investment. McKindles added that it is a good idea to consider waiting to reopen Center Street until November. Jaafar agreed with McKindles, and said after listening to business feedback, it isn't fair to expect them to reopen immediately.

Ward said there are recommended motions in the board packet. Ward stated that the mobility network's recommendation is to reopen Center Street and redesign the stretch with traffic calming, and to reopen Main Street with either seasonal or event-only closures. Buckhave asked what calming is. Haifleigh said it would be designed starting at 7 Mile and go all the way up Center Street to help traffic get into town slower. Cole asked if the two recommended motions could be combined into one motion. Cole supports and recognizes all the comments about fairness and businesses being affected. Riley said the happy middle would be to treat both streets the same as outlined in the Main Street motion, which would not completely reopen Center Street year-round. Buckhave said the confusion of opening/closing is difficult. A permanent closure would be learned and people will know how to navigate. Buckhave sees a seasonal closure as the best option to a full closure. Riley said streets are still able to be closed in winter for events such as the chili festival.

Motion by Boyd, seconded by McKindles, to recommend to City Council that the DDA and City Council partner in developing a plan to be completed by July 1st and implemented by November 1st, for non-permanent closures on Main and Center Streets, with an emphasis on creating a street closure plan that is flexible, safe, well designed and affordable. Temporary closures of Main and Center to accommodate special events may be permitted with City approval. **Roll call vote: Yes: Cole, Boyd, McKindles, Presley, Riley, Turnbull. No: Buckhave, Jaafar. Absent Cozart, Huprich, Long. Motion carried.**

Cozart and Long were not present at the DDA Board meeting. Huprich abstained as he left the meeting early and was not present to vote on the street closure recommendation.

PURCHASE OF STREET LIGHTING

Ward said attachment 5 is a communication regarding street lighting replacement. The DDA completed about \$27,000 in street lighting replacements this year. Many of the lights are needing to be replaced due to age as well as the rerouted traffic on Cady and Hutton has created an uptick in conflicts between vehicles and lighting. Staff recommends that the DDA approves the purchase of four Spring City luminaries in the amount of \$6,200.00. **Motion by Turnbull, seconded by Boyd** to approve the purchase of four Spring City LED luminaries for a total of \$6,200. **Motion carries.**

DDA 2023-24 BUDGET DISCUSSION

Boyd said a couple items on the budget to note include the DDA anticipated expenditures are listed at approximately \$1.1 million and the DDA has slightly less in revenues. Most of this gap

is covered in reserves and there is currently about \$88,000 in escrow for street repairs. The actual deficit is a lot closer to zero. Boyd said the budget information included in the packet is the same information that was presented at the February 28th meeting.

Boyd said revenues could fluctuate some due to tax revenue changes and buildings that are going to come on the tax roll but haven't yet. The DDA has also seen a substantial increase in fees and permit revenues over the past year. Boyd said the DDA Board can expect to see some budget amendments throughout the year. One large project that may trigger a budget amendment is the pedestrian plan and mobility plan since it is unknown which elements may be implemented at this time. Cole asked if the line item for \$96,000 is in anticipation of the pedestrian plan. Ward said in part it is, but it also includes bike racks and facilities and street lighting. Ward said there may be additional projects the DDA wants to do as part of the update and the DDA needs to determine whether to roll the costs into a bond to free up funds for other budget items.

Presley said two important items to remember when planning are included on page 19 of the budget narrative and are improving connections of the historic downtown to the new development and figuring out electrical access in the streets going forward.

Motion by Boyd, seconded by Cole, to accept the budget as presented with knowledge it will be adjusted through the year. **Motion carries.**

COMMITTEE INFORMATION AND UPDATES

- a. *Design Committee:* No report.
- b. *Marketing Committee:* Riley said the latest marketing report is included in the meeting packet.
- c. *Parking Committee:* No report.
- d. *Organizational Committee:* None.
- e. *Economic Development Committee:* Ward said staff is putting together a narrative for the April 3rd meeting.

BOARD COMMUNICATION

None.

Motion by Turnbull, seconded by Boyd to adjourn the DDA Board meeting. **Motion carries.**
Meeting adjourned at 10:37 am.

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Howlin, Marketing & Administrative Assistant
Northville DDA