

CLEARWATER DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT BOARD
December 7, 2011 – 5:30 PM – City Hall - 2nd Floor Meeting Room

Members Present:	David Allbritton	Chairman
	Dennis Bosi	Vice-Chairman
	Thomas Wright	Treasurer
	Tony Starova	Member
	Sean Belanger	Member
	Paris Morfopoulos	Member
Absent:	Andrew Winkler	Member
Also Present:	Paul Gibson	Ex-Officio/Councilmember
	John Doran	Ex-Officio/Councilmember
	Geri Campos Lopez	Director of Economic Development and Housing
	Anne Fogarty-France	Board Administrator
	Courtney Orr	Downtown Manager

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. at City Hall.

1. Citizen Comments – Items Not on the Agenda

Howard Warshauer, stated that they formed the Coachman Park Enhancement Committee (CPEC) in February 2011. Their goal is to expand and enhance Coachman Park to become an even bigger asset to downtown Clearwater. They have been working on researching different parks located in downtown areas across the country and have had good results. The committee feels that Coachman Park is in a good position for expansion. He informed the board that he would like to do a presentation at next month's meeting to share their findings.

2. Approve the Minutes from the November 2, 2011 Regular Monthly Meeting

Member Wright moved to approve the minutes from the November 2, 2011 meeting. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

3. Adopt October 2011 Financial Statement for Filing

Member Wright stated that he would like to table adoption of the October 2011 Financial Statement until next month because he needs some explanation on certain line items. The board agreed to table this item until next month.

4. Retail & Restaurant Recruitment Grant Wording Change – Courtney Orr

Ms. Orr stated that a memo was included in the agenda packet describing the requested language change for the Retail and Restaurant Recruitment Grant. Last month staff recommended changing the requirements from a 'financial review' to a 'financial statement' feeling that it would be sufficient but they later learned that this was still costly to produce. Pam Rowan, the applicant from the Eye Shop informed her that it will cost six thousand dollars to have the required financial statement done.

Ms. Orr stated that she checked with a Certified Public Accountant regarding this requirement and to find out what other options they might have. They advised that we could request a compilation but that would be redundant. Staff is requesting that the board omit the financial statement requirement entirely and just accept one year corporate and three years personal tax returns.

Chairman Allbritton asked who comprised the committee to which Ms. Orr responded that besides herself, Jay Ravins, Member Wright, and Anne Fogarty France are on the committee.

Member Allbritton asked what their recommendation was to which Ms. Orr responded that Ms. Rowan has a solid application and should be approved for the full thirty-five thousand dollar grant.

Member Wright stated that they also checked with the board's auditors to get their opinion and they informed the committee that the best case scenario would be to get all the information but it would be very expensive for a small business.

Member Belanger stated that this is a new business so they will not have a corporate tax return to which Ms. Rowan responded that they have another branch. Member Wright stated that a company has to be in business for at least one year to qualify for the grant. Ms. Rowan explained they have owned Rowan Eye Center in New Port Richey for several years.

Member Belanger stated that he would like to see a summary plan or a presentation from the business informing the board of why they think their business will be successful. He suggested that they might want to include that statement in the contract. Chairman Allbritton stated that it would be good to have the business put on the presentation for the board. Ms. Orr responded that they have a checklist that they go by which includes the business plan and all the necessary requirements have been met.

Ex-Officio Councilmember Doran stated that he checked with some people who do audits and reviews and they have to do a lot more work than when he used to do audits. He informed the board that a compilation is where the business gives the accountant their figures and the accountant just validates that these figures are correct. He feels that the board should request a table of assets and liabilities.

Member Morfopoulos stated that when someone comes to request the board for a grant, they usually give a presentation with their request so the board can vote appropriately. A plan is usually presented to the board prior to an approval of funds. The corporate tax return has some additional data than a personal tax return.

Member Belanger asked if they were limiting the wording in the grant to which Ms. Orr responded that they are just omitting the requirement entirely.

Member Wright stated that the corporate tax return needs to be prepared by a CPA to which Member Morfopoulos asked why. Member Wright responded that the CPA has to uphold the law.

Ex-Officio/Councilmember Doran stated that Return Preparers are now available and the board can have them do it as well instead of a CPA. Member Starova stated that he thinks the board should have the tax returns prepared by a CPA.

Member Morfopoulos asked what the difference was between a Return Preparer and a CPA in regards to the board's protection to which Ex-Officio/Councilmember Doran responded that there is no difference.

Member Belanger moved to remove the financial statement requirement from the Retail & Restaurant Recruitment Grant. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

Member Starova asked if they can add that tax returns need to be prepared by a CPA to which Member Belanger responded that he does not think it will make a difference.

Ms. Orr asked if any new language was to be added to the grant to which Chairman Allbritton responded no.

5. Retail & Restaurant Recruitment Grant – Eye Shop, 432 Cleveland Street

Ms. Orr stated that they have a complete grant application for the Eye Shop which will be located at 432 Cleveland Street. The committee as well as the board's attorney reviewed the application and were comfortable with everything that was submitted. The committee suggests that Ms. Rowan be given the full thirty-five thousand dollar grant.

Member Wright requested that Ms. Orr read the checklist to the board so that they know what documentation is required in order for a grant to be approved. Ms. Orr read the check list to the board.

Vice-Chairman Bosi asked what the estimate on the build out cost was to which Ms. Orr responded twenty-one thousand dollars for interior design and seventy-five thousand dollars for construction.

Vice-Chairman Bosi asked what the interior design consisted of to which Ms. Rowan responded that interior design included cabinets, flooring, lighting, and Plexiglas displays. The previous store was a Jamba Juice and they had their bathroom in the front of the store which now needs to be moved to the back. Ms. Rowan advised that the entire interior of the store needs to be remodeled.

Member Morfopoulos asked if it was within their policy to give a grant to an eye shop to which Ms. Orr responded that an optical store is classified under accessories so it is an approved use to provide a grant to per the Retail Recruitment Strategy.

Member Starova asked where their other business was located to which Ms. Rowan responded that it is located in New Port Richey.

Member Belanger asked how many pairs of sunglasses they will need to sell in order for their business to be successful to which Ms. Rowan responded that they need to sell two pair of glasses a day.

Ms. Lopez asked if they will be accepting insurance to which Ms. Rowan responded that they will be taking vision plans but not Medicare.

Vice-Chairman Bosi asked if they have a parking area to which Ms. Rowan responded that they do not have any parking at the moment but they are working on it.

Member Morfopoulos asked how will the money be disbursed and how will they know if it is being put towards construction and renovation to which Member Wright responded that the business will have to do

the construction and a DDB member and Ms. Orr will do a walk through and make sure that it has been done according to the grant documents before disbursing funds.

Member Morfopoulos asked if they will be advancing the money to the business to which Ms. Orr responded no.

Member Belanger asked if Ms. Rowan expects people to be coming from Pasco County to which Ms. Rowan responded no and stated that this is going to be a separate venture. They will be focusing more on healthy eyes that need glasses.

Vice-Chairman Bosi asked what they are doing to bring people to their store to which Ms. Rowan responded that they have hired Joto Extreme PR, a local public relations and marketing firm to help with their advertising and public relations.

Member Starova asked why Ms. Rowan chose downtown Clearwater to open her business to which Ms. Rowan responded that she lives on Clearwater Beach and thinks this area is a great location for her business.

Member Starova asked if she knew about the grant before she decided to open her business to which Ms. Rowan responded that she found out through the Real Estate agent. She was working with the former Jamba Juice space property owner for fourteen months trying to agree on a lease but the cost was too high. She ended up looking on her own and found other spaces but returned to the former Jamba Juice location.

Member Belanger stated that he would love to see her bring more people to downtown Clearwater to which Ms. Rowan responded that her closest competitors are located on Missouri Avenue, US Highway 19 and East Bay Drive. These locations are a good distance away so she should not have any problems getting people to come to downtown Clearwater.

Member Wright asked if there were any opticians located on Clearwater Beach to which Ms. Rowan responded not yet.

Member Wright stated that Ms. Rowan's business has an A+ rating with the Better Business Bureau and they are very steady financially. The committee could not find any reason to reject her grant request.

Vice-Chairman Bosi asked Member Wright how they recommended the whole thirty-five thousand dollars when they only have ninety thousand dollars in the fund ending balance to which Member Wright responded that it is a budgeted line item and the board has already approved that. They have not had anyone come for the grant in the three years that he has been on the board and that is why they have approved the entire thirty-five thousand dollars.

Vice-Chairman Bosi stated that they will be ninety thousand dollars over budget and will not be able to offer funds to the next person. He felt the board has been spending money on items that have not benefited Cleveland Street. Member Wright responded that they should not penalize a new business for other businesses lack of performance.

Member Starova stated that when it comes down to it, the only thing that is going to help the Cleveland Street District is having more stores. He felt that they should approve the full grant for Ms. Rowan. It is

hard to get someone to go through the entire grant process. Chairman Allbritton agreed with Member Starova's statement.

Vice-Chairman Bosi asked if the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) is helping the business to which Ms. Orr responded that the CRA felt that the Ms. Rowan's business was eligible for the DDB grant so they are letting the board handle it.

Ex-Officio/Councilmember Doran stated that Vice-Chairman Bosi's point is that the DDB is exceeding their budget and they can only do that up to a certain point before the money is exhausted.

Vice-Chairman Bosi stated that they only have a two hundred thousand dollar income and as long as he has been on the board they have always exceeded their budget.

Member Starova stated that they might not have a recruitment grant next year so the board should help someone this year.

Member Morfopoulos stated that he understands what Vice-Chairman Bosi is saying but he does not feel that this should be discussed on this section of the agenda.

Member Wright moved to grant thirty-five thousand dollars in funding to the Eye Shop from the Retail & Restaurant Recruitment Grant line item. The motion was duly seconded and Members Allbritton, Wright, Starova, Belanger and Morfopoulos voted "Aye"; Member Bosi voted "Nay". Motion carried.

Member Starova asked when the projected opening date for the store was to which Ms. Rowan responded January 15th, 2012.

Member Wright informed Ms. Rowan that he appreciated her answering all his questions and hopes that she will be a part of the Downtown Clearwater Merchants Association (DCMA) as it will help her business as well as the Cleveland Street District.

Ms. Rowan thanked the board for granting her the funding.

6. Economic Development Strategic Plan Presentation – Geri Campos Lopez

Ms. Lopez stated that she would like to give the board a general summary of what the plans were for the economic development of the city. For the last three to five years the city has been feeling the recession and seeing a decrease in the tax base. It has hurt the overall dollar amount collected. The city's focus has been primarily on the downtown area and the beaches. They have looked at the tax base citywide and an argument was made that they need to focus their efforts citywide. They needed to figure out what the city's assets were, what improvements needed to be made and how to implement them. To accomplish this they hired a Texas based company, TIP Strategies, Inc., who presented their recommendations on August 1, 2011 based on a study they had conducted. Their real purpose was to provide a blueprint for positioning Clearwater for sustainable economic growth and prosperity in the future.

Ms. Lopez stated that three main challenges came up: 1) they are overly reliant on real estate taxes, 2) the aging population's overall growth has been flat, and 3) larger older households live on fixed incomes.

Ms. Lopez stated that TIP Strategies recommended focusing on five goals:

- 1) Land use – encourage the development of sites and buildings needed to accommodate higher intensity employment opportunities.
- 2) Investment climate – develop the policies and tools to compete for new private investment and jobs.
- 3) Business retention and expansion – create an environment that promotes the prosperity and growth of existing businesses.
- 4) Business development – support an entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem and collaborate with regional partners to market Clearwater to target industries.
- 5) Talent and place – improve the existing amenities in Clearwater and continue to invest in city’s infrastructure and people.

Ms. Lopez stated that based on the report they put together the following strategies: 1) employment center overlay district, 2) technology district within downtown and the CRA, 3) medical overlay district, 4) business-friendly initiatives, 5) formal incentives policy, 6) business retention and expansion program, and 7) leverage tourism marketing for economic development.

Ms. Lopez stated that in order to implement the strategies, staff recommended restructuring the current job responsibilities of the Assistant Director of Economic Development and adding one new full-time equivalent (FTE) Economic Development Specialist as suggested in TIP’s Strategic Plan Report. Staff also asked for new funding. City Council has agreed to additional funding and restructuring. New job responsibilities are as follows:

- 1) Fifty percent of the Assistant Director’s position will be devoted to Economic Development and Plan implementation.
- 2) One new FTE Economic Development Specialist will conduct research, generate and analyze data to support business retention and expansion program as well as other plan implementation activities.
- 3) Fifty percent of the Downtown Manager’s time will be assigned to the implementation of a Technology District in downtown Clearwater as well as the software cluster development and other business recruitment activities.

Ms. Lopez stated that Rod Irwin is going to visit organizations to make them understand what the city’s plans are and what their target is. The more partners they can get for this project the more successful they will be.

Vice-Chairman Bosi asked if this was a citywide plan to which Ms. Lopez responded yes and that it is related to downtown and filling office spaces. Their main target is the Technology industry.

Member Belanger asked how much money they are allocating for recruitment to which Ms. Lopez responded that they have incentive policies in place for the software technology industry.

Member Belanger asked what about incentives for other businesses to which Ms. Lopez responded that they do not have any incentives for other businesses at the moment. Based on research, they have a thirty-five thousand dollar matching grant incentive for technology businesses. The CRA will be funding the grant. They need to do research on other companies before putting an incentive plan in place.

Member Wright asked if the TIP Strategies were aware of ‘Dolphin Tale’ and the aquarium or was the research done prior to that. Ms. Lopez responded that the research was conducted concurrently but they were focusing on the data they were given. That is why they are targeting certain businesses. Tourism is the city’s number one priority.

Member Morfopoulos asked what the economical impact was on Clearwater’s budget to which Ms. Lopez responded that the city was down four million dollars last year. Ex-Officio/Councilmember Doran stated that the operating budget has dropped seventeen percent since 2007.

Member Morfopoulos asked how much of the decrease was in taxes. Ms. Lopez stated that the tourism numbers have grown immensely this past year and that bed taxes are the highest it has ever been. Ex-Officio/Councilmember Doran stated that part of the dilemma is that they have never used general fund money towards business development. If they do, residential tax payers are not going to like it. They are constantly saying that commercial areas are invading their space. Forty percent of the tax base is commercial.

Member Belanger asked what the plan was to which Ms. Lopez stated that their strategies are all laid out and that the numbers are very specific to Clearwater. It is going to be a process and they will not see results overnight. They have to target businesses and find out what they need to help them grow.

Member Starova stated that there are several Informational Technology (IT) companies downtown. He has spoken to them to find out what they needed to move their companies to the Cleveland Street District and they have all said that they need generators but the cost is between three hundred and four hundred thousand dollars. He asked Ms. Lopez if the CRA is willing to take on that kind of expense. Ms. Lopez responded that they will assess their needs and consider the expense.

Ms. Lopez requested the board to think of other organizations that might benefit from hearing this presentation on the Economic Development Strategic Plan and let her know.

7. Adjourn Regular Meeting

Chairman Allbritton adjourned the November 2, 2011 regular meeting of the Clearwater Downtown Development Board at 7:01 p.m.

PLANNING SESSION

The Chairman called the planning portion of the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. at City Hall. He also introduced member elect John Herndon who was in attendance for this meeting.

1. Fiscal Year 2010-2011 Accomplishments & CRA Direction – Geri Campos Lopez

Ms. Lopez stated that Ms. Fogarty France provided the board with a list of accomplishments. The Jolley Trolley is continuing to be a success. The Informational Message Board funded by the DDB will be installed on North Fort Harrison Avenue in February 2012 and on South Fort Harrison Avenue in April 2012. Ms. Orr stated that there was a purchasing issue and that is why the installation of the signs was delayed.

Member Starova stated that since they had made the decision of putting up the signs he has seen a lot more signs being installed in the city and asked if it was because of the board's decision. Ms. Lopez responded that the signs being installed are all state signs.

Member Belanger stated that they have a great sign installed on State Road 60 but he feels that the sign is not being used effectively to which Ms. Lopez responded that the sign on State Road 60 is a state sign as well and the text on the sign is regulated by the state. Ms. Fogarty France advised that city staff had notified the state about upcoming Blast Friday events for traffic messages.

Ms. Lopez stated that the board made a good decision in funding the Clearwater Marine Aquarium Harborview Center. It looks amazing and she feels that it will attract a lot of people to downtown Clearwater. The ribbon cutting ceremony is going to be held Wednesday, December 14, 2011. Ex-Officio/Councilmember Gibson stated that the number of people visiting the aquarium has grown drastically in the past couple of years. In October 2009 the aquarium had four thousand eight hundred visitors and in October 2012 they had forty-two thousand visitors.

Vice-Chairman Bosi asked if they can put kiosks near the new exhibit to which Ms. Lopez responded that they cannot move the kiosks but there are some other displays that might be able to be installed near the new exhibit. She will do some research to find out what she can do and get back to the board with that information. Ms. Fogarty France stated that the downtown guides are ready to be put in the displays at the aquarium exhibit.

Ms. Lopez stated that the DDB release for 'Dolphin Tale' DVD is going to be December 20, 2011 and informed the board that it has been a really big release for Europe.

Member Starova asked if there will be any painting or signs outside the Harborview Center to which Ms. Lopez responded that there will be signage but no painting and that they have pressure washed the outside of the building.

Ms. Lopez stated that the City has Council elections coming up and since they will be having a leadership change, staff has not had a new perspective on what their priority is going to be for next year. Right now they are focusing on what they are doing but when the new councilmembers are in place they can have a better conversation of where their priority lies. The discussion will take place sometime in the spring of 2012. Ms. Orr will be spending fifty percent of her time on events and restaurant recruitment and the other fifty percent on the technology district.

Ms. Lopez stated that for now she recommends having a philosophical discussion about events and how the DDB plans on funding them and in the spring they can have another planning session to discuss what the CRA has in place for 2012. She also stated that the DDB needs to figure out what direction they would like to go. Ms. Lopez feels that it is going to take about three more years before they see progress in the Cleveland Street District. They have had some discussion about helping current businesses and have already taken action on having signage installed to better direct people. The main goal to focus on is filling office spaces.

Vice-Chairman Bosi stated that he cannot see the DDB doing any more that what they are already doing because the budget is already set. They have spent one hundred eighty-six thousand dollars on promotions which has not helped them sustain any new businesses.

Chairman Allbritton stated that they have done a good job in promoting events and that a lot of people come to Cleveland Street District to attend these events but then they do not see them again until the next event because there is not much to do in the area. He also stated that he knows a person who wants to open a blues club in downtown Clearwater but their question was ‘where are all the people’?

Member Morfopoulos stated that they cannot point to any downtown development that has occurred from spending money on promotions. Events that have been presented to the board have sounded like a really good idea but he has not seen any return on investment.

Member Belanger stated that he thinks that the four hundred block of Cleveland Street is more vibrant to which Chairman Allbritton responded that it is because there are more businesses on the four hundred block than there are on the five hundred block of Cleveland Street.

Vice-Chairman Bosi stated that it is hard to make any improvements if you do not have motivated landlords.

Member Starova stated that there is nothing much in Cleveland Street district to attract visitors. People mostly come to downtown Clearwater to have fun. Capitol Theatre is helping to change downtown for the better. It is a different atmosphere in the area when there are shows at the theater.

Member Morfopoulos stated that he thinks the weekly small events will help make a difference in Cleveland Street District. The Dolphin Tale exhibit will also help downtown Clearwater but he feels that spending twenty thousand dollars and events that are held once a month is not going to make a big difference to the district.

Member Starova stated that downtown is exposed to thousands of people per year so they need to give people a reason to come back to the area. Building something for children to do might attract more visitors on a daily basis. Vice-Chairman Bosi responded that they are already spending one hundred eighty-six thousand dollars to attract visitors.

Member Starova stated that they should change their strategy. He feels that they need to invite the landlords to a meeting next year and see if they would like to assist in the growth of downtown Clearwater.

Chairman Allbritton asked Ms. Lopez if they can hold a town meeting to which Ms. Lopez responded yes.

Vice-Chairman Bosi stated that they need to figure out how to reach the landlords to make them come around. The CRA has already approached them to find out what their plans are for their property.

Member Starova stated that the businesses in the area including the library and the Chamber of Commerce are not aware of the other businesses in the surrounding area. He feels that the board needs to hold a public meeting to educate people on the types of businesses that are in the Cleveland Street District. He also feels that they need to put a nice sign up saying ‘welcome to Cleveland Street District’.

Member Morfopoulos stated that one of the issues that have come up is parking in the downtown area. The new streetscape has taken away a lot of parking. There is some parking available at south of Cleveland Street but it is being taken up by county employees that are not using their vehicles all day. He asked if there was any way to make a deal with the county to have the employees use the parking garage

instead so that they can leave that parking area open for customers. Ex-Officio/councilmember Gibson responded that it will be very complicated to do that because county employees are not going to be happy about walking further than they have to. Ms. Fogarty France stated that it took city staff a long time to get the county to open the gates at the back of Capitol Theatre after the office building is closed.

Ex-Officio/Councilmember Gibson stated that he thinks signage is a bigger issue. If they put up parking signs then there will not be a parking problem.

Vice-Chairman Bosi stated that he thinks the budget is set for next year and suggested that the board have a sub-committee in place to go over these important topics and discuss them over the course of the meetings. He feels the board will have more direction this way.

Chairman Allbritton stated that they would like to postpone this planning session for a later date and would like to have an interim planning session without having a regular meeting. Ms. Fogarty France asked when he would like to plan the meeting to which Chairman Allbritton responded sometime in February. Ms. Fogarty France asked if he wanted to hold two meetings in February, one regular meeting and one planning session, to which Chairman Allbritton responded yes. Member Belanger stated that he would prefer to have the planning session in the morning to which Chairman Allbritton responded that he and Ms. Fogarty France will discuss it further and she will send the information out when they have finalized the date and time.

Member Morfopoulos suggested that maybe they should not have too much on the agenda each month so that they can leave the second half of the regular meeting for the planning session.

Member Belanger asked if they can rent the street out. For example, there is a man at the beaches who holds movie screenings on Friday nights and does real well. Maybe they can offer free promotions and charge people who are entrepreneurial to use the streets. Ms. Fogarty France responded that they have had craft shows in the past but when they reconfigured Cleveland Street, the organizers did not care for the new medians and chose not to come back since. She also advised that the fire inspector requires a fire lane on one side so that emergency vehicles can get through so that narrows the street further.

Member Belanger asked if they are actively promoting the usage of Cleveland Street for events. He stated that he took part in the Turkey Trot for Thanksgiving this year and suggested that they do a Santa Run in Cleveland Street District. They can charge fifteen dollars per person and the money goes toward supporting the district.

Member Starova stated that one traffic sign has been installed but it is at the wrong angle. The parking sign is located after Garden Avenue but the parking garage is on Garden Avenue. Ms. Fogarty-France responded that she will find out why the sign was installed there and get back to him with the information.

Chairman Allbritton stated that they need to put together topics of discussion between now and the end of January so that they will be able to talk about specific things during the February planning session.

2. Final Comments

Member Wright stated that he applauds the board for getting a retail grant approved.

Member Starova and Vice-Chairman Bosi wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Member Belanger stated that he enjoyed the spirit of the debate and that they do not have to make everyone happy but they have to trust each other.

Member Morfopoulos stated that the idea is to have a planning session that is more targeted to what the board wants to accomplish in Cleveland Street District and that is what they have to figure out. He also wished the board a Merry Christmas.

Chairman Allbritton stated that they are at a crossroad. They need to figure out what is the best way to promote Cleveland Street District. He is looking forward to having the planning session and also having Member Elect Herndon on the board. He wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

3. Adjournment

Chairman Allbritton adjourned the November 2, 2011 planning session of the Clearwater Downtown Development Board at 7:55 p.m.

CLEARWATER DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT BOARD MEETING ACTION AGENDA

Wednesday, December 7, 2011 - 5:30 pm

12.07.11.01

Member Wright moved to approve the minutes from the November 2, 2011 meeting. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

12.07.11.02

Member Belanger moved to remove the financial statement requirement from the Retail & Restaurant Recruitment Grant. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

12.07.11.03

Member Wright moved to grant thirty-five thousand dollars in funding to the Eye Shop from the Retail & Restaurant Recruitment Grant line item. The motion was duly seconded and Members Allbritton, Wright, Starova, Belanger and Morfopoulos voted “Aye”; Member Bosi voted “Nay”. Motion carried.