

CLEARWATER DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT BOARD
April 5, 2006 – 5:30 PM
OED Training Room – Second Floor – City Hall
Regular Monthly Meeting

Members Present:	David Allbritton	Chairman
	Bob Fernandez	Vice Chairman
	Bob Clifford	Treasurer
	Geri Aranjó	Member
	Dennis Bosi	Member

Absent:	Beth Coleman	Member
	Josee Goudreault	Member

Also Present:	Carlen Petersen	Councilmember
	John Doran	Councilmember
	Geraldine Campos	Director – Economic Development & Housing Department
	Doug Matthews	Director – Public Communication
	Anne Fogarty	Main Street Coordinator
	Linda Byars	Board Administrator

The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM at City Hall.

To provide continuity for research, items are in agenda order although not necessarily discussed in that order.

ITEM #1 – Citizens Comments – Items Not on the Agenda

No comments were brought forward.

ITEM #2 - Downtown Marketing Request for Proposal – Selection Committee Recommendation – Chairman Allbritton

Chairman Allbritton stated that the Selection Committee had the daunting task of selecting the most appropriate consultant to formulate a marketing and implementation plan for downtown Clearwater during the 12 to 18 months of streetscape construction period. The committee's job was to distill the information provided by those responding to the Request for Proposal (RFP) and make a recommendation to the Board as to the company best suited for the assignment. The committee met on several occasions (February 14th and 24th, March 1st and 27th and April 3rd.), throughout the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) and Request for Proposal (RFP) process, to evaluate each of the proposals and determine the best course to assist the businesses who may suffer economic difficulty and inconvenience during the construction.

Postcard Mania Marketing Group, DEM Communications, Inc., Dewey and Associates, Inc., Savvy Buzz and Vaughn Wedeen Creative, Inc. were the four respondents to the RFP released March 6, 2006. Each response was professionally written, of the highest caliber and offered a broad range of talent and strategic skills. After much deliberation the committee selected Vaughn Wedeen Creative, Inc. as the best choice.

Based on qualifications, practices and experiences the Vaughn Wedeen group demonstrated the most favorable assessment and approach to the project. The Vaughn Wedeen group is nationally recognized with proven results, Main Street qualified, experts in urban retail and experienced in working with diverse business groups.

The Selection Committee considered it necessary to take a “fresh approach” to marketing downtown. Vaughn Wedeen will evaluate current and past marketing efforts and assess the effect of the various grants and programs provided by the CRA and the DDB. An outside perspective, from a firm not so directly associated with Clearwater, may stand to bring a more objective strategy to the promotion of downtown.

Treasurer Clifford expressed his concern that the Vaughn Wedeen proposal is not clear as to the message and what the DDB can expect from the product. The “portfolio and references” section of the proposal identifies graphic design pieces that are impressive. However, the proposal does not specify that design work would be included as part of the marketing strategy report. Having a visual component is important. The requirement for examples of proposed print advertising and graphics should be included in the promotional plan.

Conversation ensued regarding a creative strategy as part of the overall plan; the cost of printing, billboards and magazines; the diverse market of downtown, a campaign that helps everybody and the importance of participation by all involved.

Treasurer Clifford moved to approve the recommendation of the Selection Committee to accept the downtown marketing proposal from Vaughn Wedeen Creative, Inc. and to authorize Vaughn Wedeen Creative, Inc. to proceed with the development of a strategic marketing and implementation plan for downtown Clearwater, including the scope of work, to be described in a legal binding contract between the parties with confirmation that the group will create a visual strategy including samples of applicable graphic design work; Member Aranjo seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

ITEM #2 – Main Street Report – Anne Fogarty

Ms Fogarty reported that 35 volunteers picked up 5.27 tons of trash during Spring Clean-up campaign. She announced that the Pet Fair merchant event would take place on Saturday, April 8th from 10:00 AM until 2:00 PM in the City Hall parking lot. Four food vendors will participate along with six downtown merchants. Pet Smart has agreed to sponsor radio advertising on Mix 101.7 FM. The event is being promoted in print ads, the city’s website and the C-View video bulletin board.

Annie Rose’s Deli, a take-out deli open from 10:00 AM until 4:00 PM, is doing business at the former Beautiful Baskets location on Cleveland Street.

Cleveland Streetscape Update:

Ms. Campos stated that staff is in the process of meeting “one-on-one” with council members regarding the streetscape project agenda item scheduled for consideration at the April 17th and 20th meetings. Bids were received for the Cleveland Streetscape construction project on March 15th. Based on an 18 month construction period the bid received from *Gibbs and Register* was the lowest at \$11.275 million. The original budget estimate was \$6.6 million. The revised value engineering process deleted some items from the original plan. The goal of the process was to maintain the integrity of the project and the original vision for Cleveland Street with pavers, trees, etc. Because Station Square Condominium construction will be staged at the Station Square Park for the next two years the park was deleted from the original plan. Construction between East and Myrtle Avenues will be postponed and completed with St. Square Park. Delaying those items decreased the cost by \$1.3 million. When the time comes to put those items back the money will come from a loan against retained earnings.

The plan for kiosk signs (much like “mall directories”) on each block between Ft. Harrison and Osceola Avenues could cost between \$44-50,000. Historic pillars also add a substantial amount to the overall expense not included in the budget. These items are important to the design of the Streetscape Project. The CRA is contributing \$1.5 million; Penny’s for Pinellas an additional \$3.9 million; the balance will come from utilities.

With other funding sources nearly exhausted, **Ms. Campos** approached the DDB for funding the kiosks and historic pillars stating that doing so would present an opportunity for the Board to participate. At the next monthly meeting Ms. Campos would have a more clear sense of the cost.

Ms. Campos reiterated that the council would hear the staff recommendation to approve the contract with *Gibbs and Register*, after which, if approved, mobilization would take approximately two weeks.

Member Clifford stated that the DDB should play their part and fund the kiosks. He would like to see “things of substance” that fit well into the downtown. This is a huge opportunity for the DDB to be recognized. On behalf of the stakeholders he would like move forward with the details.

Ms. Campos agreed that plaques, pillars or bronze signs could be placed within the streetscape to bring attention to the contributions of the DDB.

Vice Chairman Fernandez stated that in the past the DDB has received little if no recognition. He expressed his concern that an article in the paper regarding the death of mural artist Morgan Rios recognized Citizens for a Better Clearwater and not the DDB for funding the murals in downtown including those at Ft. Harrison Avenue and Cleveland Street and Gaslight Alley Park.

Ms. Campos announced that the CRA annual report is on the Economic Development and Housing webpage, which is being modified and updated in an effort to assist developers in marketing downtown.

Member Aranjo would like to see the kiosks within the downtown streetscape. She has noticed that shopping malls often have directories where is advertised movies, businesses and interesting promotional ideas. Company's actually lease the space and maintain the changes.

Member Clifford stated that advertising kiosks could create an income stream. He asked if consideration had been given the cost of maintenance.

Ms. Campos answered that she has yet to break out the cost. In many cases, maintenance may be part of the package.

Conversation ensued regarding the increased tax base, doing the right thing with taxpayers money, cost of construction and the downtown economy.

ITEM #3 – Final Comments

Treasurer Clifford congratulated staff for the Request for Proposal for marketing downtown Clearwater.

Member Aranjo stated that the Pet Fair was "great"; an event that we can "build on". She noted that two dog shows were taking place in Orlando at the same time that may have taken some participants away from Clearwater. However, the event was well attended, the artwork was great and many vendors were represented.

Vice Chairman Fernandez thanked the selection committee for the time and effort in selecting the right candidate for the marketing and implementation plan for downtown. He was happy that the process is "behind us". He expressed his concern that the "hype" created for downtown has slowed and that projects seem to be going "nowhere". He questioned the progress of Med Village, Harrison Village, the town homes at Court Street and Prospect and others. He was please to see that Water's Edge is moving along on schedule as is the town homes near Martin Luther King Avenue and Court Street. "A timeline should be established to get other projects going", he said.

Councilmember Petersen advised that the delay with the Balk/Med Village Development is due to environmental issues out of the control of the city.

Vice Chairman Fernandez requested that more DDB meetings should be televised. He has heard that property owners and others enjoy watching the meetings on television.

Member Bosi thanked the Selection Committee. The process was "tougher" than anticipated. He would like to see the entire Board "on the same page" and involved throughout the course.

Councilmember Petersen thanked Member Bosi and Chairman Allbritton for serving on the selection committee, which was a difficult task. She is looking forward to the result of the marketing and implementation plan for downtown.

Councilmember Doran acknowledged the Selection Committee and their choice of Vaughn Wedeen Creative, Inc. "The selection was not an easy one under any circumstances", he said.

Councilmember Doran continued that he has been (surprisingly) informed that business on north Clearwater Beach was up 24% over last year; some businesses have reported a "record year". The same may apply to Cleveland Street. This is an exciting time to be in Clearwater. Many have stated that they are disappointed with the "slow start" and delays with the streetscape. Some stores are leaving. With the infrastructure in place we should see an increase in activity and new businesses.

Treasurer Clifford agreed that there is a lot going on. Investments are up in downtown, which is positive to see. "I see it everyday", he said.

Chairman Allbitton stated that Clearwater has had a lot of promises made and delays has caused animosity. Once the first shovel is in the ground we will begin to build the vision and future of downtown. "This is the most exciting time in five years", he said. "With future beach development we can create a great partnership and build off of each other."

With no other comment, Chairman Allbritton called for a motion to adjourn.

Vice Chairman Fernandez moved to adjourn the April 5, 2006 regular meeting of the Downtown Development Board; Treasurer Clifford seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

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John Doran
Geraldine Campos

Councilmember
Director – Economic Development &
Housing Department
Director – Public Communication
Main Street Coordinator
Board Administrator

Doug Matthews
Anne Fogarty
Linda Byars

Summary of Motions:

04.05.06.01

Treasurer Clifford moved to approve the recommendation of the Selection Committee to accept the downtown marketing proposal from Vaughn Wedeen Creative, Inc. and to authorize Vaughn Wedeen Creative, Inc. to proceed with the development of a strategic marketing and implementation plan for downtown Clearwater, including the scope of work, to be described in a legal binding contract between the parties with confirmation that the group will create a visual strategy including samples of applicable graphic design work; Member Aranja seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

04.05.06.02

Vice Chairman Fernandez moved to adjourn the April 5, 2006 regular meeting of the Downtown Development Board; Treasurer Clifford seconded and the motion carried unanimously.