

City of Northville
CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
August 18, 2014

Mayor Pro Tem Allen called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:30 p.m. in the City of Northville Municipal Building, City Council Chambers, 215 W. Main Street, Northville, Michigan, 48167.

ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Pro Tem James Allen, Councilmembers Nancy Darga and Sam Ekong

Absent: Mayor Christopher Johnson, Councilmember Ryan McKindles (both excused)

Also Present: City Manager Patrick Sullivan, City Clerk Dianne Massa, Downtown Development Director Lori Ward, Buzz Bizzell of Bizzell Design, Historic District Commissioner John Argenta, Downtown Development Authority member Carolann Ayers, Planning Commissioner Carol Maise, reporter from Northville Record, and two citizens

Mayor Pro Tem Allen spoke of the recent passing of John Genitti. He thanked Mr. Genitti for his contributions to the City. Genitti's Hole in the Wall made Northville a destination.

PRESENTATIONS

A. Citizens Comments None

B. Wayfinding Signage Program

In the fall of 2013, the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) released a Request for Proposals (RFP) for professional services to design a wayfinding plan for downtown Northville. The intent of the project is to direct and encourage visitors to visit the downtown Northville by helping them reach their desired destinations, increase community identity, support and enhance the community's sense of place, and to create an overall unified signage and wayfinding system. Ten proposals were received ranging in fees from \$25,474 to \$79,033. On November 4, 2013, City Council awarded the contract to Bizzell Design of Davidson, North Carolina, in an amount not to exceed \$25,720.

Over the past six months, Bizzell Design has been working with the DDA Project Steering Committee to identify destinations and points of interest to be included on the signs, locations for the sign installation, and to develop a design for the system that includes dimensions, color palette(s), font families, and symbols. The design developed for Northville complements the historic architecture, is of high quality and durable materials, and provides a template for potential future investment and community branding.

DDA staff met with representatives of the Northville Public Schools and Northville Parks and Recreation to determine areas where coordination may occur. For example, the Northville Schools have expressed interest in having the high school football field on Eight Mile Road identified on the Eight Mile Road and Center Street signs at an additional cost to the schools. DDA staff will continue to work with these organizations as the designs progress and costs are determined.

Once the design has been approved, a set of fabrication and maintenance specifications will be developed by Bizzell Design and the project will be issued for bid. In addition to City Council, the project will be presented to the Northville Downtown Development Authority, City Planning Commission, and Historic District Commission for comment and approval. The DDA currently has a line item in the budget for downtown signage in the amount of \$155,000. This amount was budgeted to provide funding for both the Wayfinding and the Exhibit Design projects. DDA staff estimated the Wayfinding project at \$125,000.

Buzz Bizzell of Bizzell Designs offered a summary of the Wayfinding project. Key elements included:

- The unique and distinctive architectural patterns found in the downtown would be incorporated into the sign design.
- Wayfinding signs promote and strengthen the town brand. The signs also have an emphasis on parking. Lack of parking is a perception. The signs will give visitors “permission” to park and stay to visit the downtown.
- Key elements of the Bandshell, including its twists and turns, create an iconic shape that was used to create a pattern. A comprehensive study of the building colors was done to create a palette that blends all of the colors and match the streetscape.
- Certain signs will include an event overlay panel to be used to publicize certain events.
- Current gateway signs are low to the ground, with event signage that is small and difficult to read. New gateway signs would be elevated, include landscaping, and include six inch letters that are easier to read while driving. Pedestrian downtown directional signs will be smaller and with lettering that can be read at 25 mph.
- Large scale destination signs focus on general navigation with a general goal of directing people throughout the downtown. Signs will announce a public use, purposes, or assembly. Signs will direct motorists to free parking and encourage them to park and walk to various destinations.
- Sign messages will provide the visitor with a menu of things to do in the downtown and give people permission to park, where a visitor might not know parking is allowed. Each sign message has been meticulously reviewed by the Steering Committee to incorporate simple and direct communication to downtown visitors.
- Sign with key traffic draws, even though they are private businesses, will tie their brand into the City/community. Hundreds of cars a day may be going to this location. This is viewed as a win/win.

City Council Questions, Comments, and Discussion:

- Discussion ensued on the civic district and what this means. A comment from Council voiced the belief that civic districts only suggest courts and jail, and visitors will not use this sign to find the library, city hall, or Art House. Other comments countered that they view civic districts as all inclusive with city hall, libraries, police and fire departments, school district buildings, as well as courts and jails.

- Comments voicing excitement in seeing a unified sign system. Discussion ensued pertaining to the different sign messages proposed to direct visitors to Art House, theatres, and parks.
- Certain signs will mention “football stadium” and “football stadium parking” to advise visitors where the high school football field and associated parking is located. Signs going down Center Street will direct parking to Hillside and Cooke School. This is being coordinated with Northville Public Schools.
- Currently, a prototype of a smaller sign is being used on S. Center Street – heading north - to test a letter size of 2-1/2 inches. This is the minimum standard letter height. This study will determine if smaller signs may be used in certain areas, which will create a better budget.
- Discussion ensued on the “horse” mural depicted in the drawings on the building on the southeast corner of S. Center Street and E. Main Street. Comments from City Council expressed a desire to have this type of artwork on certain buildings. It was explained that the colors from the palette study were used to create the colors in the mural. The mural material is the consistency of aluminum foil and is placed on the brick. It looks like a painted mural and can be removed without any damage to the brick. The cost is ¼ the cost of a painted mural. It is a great way to bring artwork to the streetscape.
- The recommendation from the Steering Committee is that all of the gateway signs would be replaced. The decision on replacing the gateway signs would rest with City Council. Discussion ensued pertaining to the various gateway signs, their locations, the effectiveness of those signs, and if the location should be moved (Eight Mile and Novi, Eight Mile and Griswold, etc.). Signs that direct people to turn to Northville, which will meet Wayne County and MDOT standards, were encouraged.
- A comment suggested installing a sign at Seven Mile Road and Sheldon, at the city limits, to catch people heading north on Sheldon, to entice people to continue northbound on Center Street and travel into the downtown instead of turning onto Seven Mile Road.
- Discussion ensued pertaining to the green/white signs usually located at the city limits. Wayfinding signs would replace those signs. The various signs attached (i.e. Tree City USA, Rotary, etc.) could be affixed to a separate pole near the city limits. The City of Trenton gateway signs and “medallion signs” were cited as an example.
- It was noted that the number of signs proposed at each intersection will create a “frame” of the intersection and will not seem intrusive.
- The downtown directional and in-town signs could be done with a split budget spread over two years.
- Additional comments from City Council suggested the signs have reduced text to make them easier to read and to be re-worded to make them less confusing (i.e. parking/walk to shops could be replaced with “free parking”). Other comments pointed out that text such as “free parking” and “walk to shops” are welcoming messages that invite people to park and walk. This is seen as an “action statement,” which gives the impression there is a lot to do in the downtown besides parking a car in this location.
- Discussion ensued pertaining to the color palette and eventually incorporating the colors and brand into the City’s website.

Motion Ekong, seconded by Darga to approve the design of the Northville Wayfinding and Signage Plan, pending final approval by the Downtown Development Authority Board of Directors and Historic District Commission and authorize the preparation of specifications and issue the project for bid. **Motion carried unanimously.**

C. Comerica Community Connection Exhibit Design

The Comerica Community Connection (Connection) was completed in the Fall of 2013 as an effective pedestrian connection between municipal parking and Main Street merchants. The Connection is located between the Marquis Public Parking Lot and East Main Street, and connects visitors and residents with shops, public services, and community facilities throughout the downtown district.

The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for design development, fabrication, and installation of an interpretative exhibit for the Comerica Community Connection. Fourteen responses were received with fees ranging from \$3,550 to \$106,200. At the December 2, 2013 City Council meeting, a contract with Experience Design was approved by Council for a not-to-exceed amount of \$11,500.

Over the last six months, DDA staff and the Project Steering Committee have been working with Experience Design on the development of an interpretive installation for the Connection. Experience Design and DDA staffs are finalizing content and technology application. Following the final approved layout of the exhibit, specifications will be developed and submitted for bid. Graphics, accompanying text, letter heights and dimensions, materials, mounting details, color specifications, and material performance standards will be addressed as part of the package for bid.

The design concept developed for the Connection is a 22 ft. high, 36 ft. long ribbon that includes a collection of historic photographs depicting the rich history of Main Street. The panel is made of phenolic resin, a light weight graffiti-proof material that would be mounted on the west wall of the Connection. Several photographs would be highlighted with a projecting lenticular panel which appears to give movement to the historic photograph below. The exhibit is broken into three twelve-foot panels that would be installed end-to-end to give the appearance of a single ribbon of images.

The project is designed to improve the experience of visitors to downtown Northville, to engage Connection users, increase community identity, support and enhance the community's sense of place, and to create a unified exhibit showcasing the downtown district. Future phases of the project may include an overhead banner system, a QR code linking viewers to text describing in more detail the exhibit, and preparation of a print brochure that provides information on the selected images. In addition, it is the intent of the DDA that the system developed could be utilized as a template for future interpretive panels around the downtown.

In addition to City Council, the project will be presented to the Northville Downtown Development Authority and Historic District Commission for comment and approval. The DDA currently has a line item in the budget for downtown signage in the amount of \$155,000. This amount was budgeted to provide funding for both the Wayfinding and the Exhibit Design projects. DDA staff estimated the Exhibit Design project at \$30,000.

City Council Questions, Comments, and Discussion: A comment from City Council noted that this is an opportunity to interpret the history of Northville; there was concern that the photographic history is not telling the "story" of Northville. The ribbon proposed is like a scrapbook, it doesn't provide a sense of

time or the story of Northville. The City of Wayne has a mural that was cited as an example of “telling a story.” Other comments pointed out that there are banners proposed for a future phase of this project that would hang from the ceiling of the Connection. The banners will have transparent images that highlight different points in Northville’s history.

Motion Ekong, seconded by Darga to approve the design concept of the Comerica Community Connection Exhibit Design as presented and authorize the preparation of specifications and solicitation of bids. **Motion carried unanimously.**

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA

Motion Darga, seconded by Ekong to adopt the agenda and consent agenda as presented.

Approve City Council Minutes: None

Receive Bills List: Checks #89530 to #89673, EFT #500178

Receive Board and Commission Minutes:

- Downtown Development Authority: 3/18/14

Receive Departmental Reports:

- Youth Assistance: 8/2014

Board and Commission Appointments: None

Proclamation / Constitution Week

Subrecipient Agreement for Wayne County CDBG Term July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2019

Motion carried unanimously.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS

A. Mayor and Council Communications

Allen requested the DDA explore decorative bike racks that attach to the base of poles to help integrate bike racks into the downtown. The bike racks in Boyne City were cited as an example.

B. Staff Communications None

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Adjournment: 8:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dianne Massa, CMC
City Clerk

James C. Allen
Mayor Pro Tem

Approved as submitted: 9/15/2014