



City of Madison

City of Madison
Madison, WI 53703
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Meeting Minutes - Approved DOWNTOWN COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Thursday, June 18, 2015

5:30 PM

210 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Room 108 (City-County Building)

CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

Present: 9 - Michael E. Verveer; Davy Mayer; Gregory O. Frank; Mary C. Carbine; Ted Crabb; Thomas E. Hirsch; Sandra J. Torkildson; Austin E. McClendon and Adam J. Plotkin

Excused: 2 - Ledell Zellers and Matthew J. Covert

APPROVAL OF April 16, 2015 MINUTES

A motion was made by Crabb, seconded by McClendon, to Approve the April 16, 2015 Minutes. The motion passed by voice vote/other.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

DISCLOSURES AND RECUSALS

None.

1. [36258](#) Report of Mall Maintenance and Special Events 2015

Lisa Laschinger, Mall Maintenance Supervisor, gave a report about early summer Mall Maintenance Crew activities:

- Power washing on Capitol Concourse going well.
- Mall crew washes the Philosophers' Grove areas before programming events.
- Seasonal flower planting will be occurring the last week of June.
- 2 of the 4 fountains on the square are running, hopefully the other two will be running by the end of the week
- John Martins is the acting lead worker for the Mall Concourse
- Hirsch asked about the power washing and if the powerful stream does any damage to the caulk on the granite curbs and features. Laschinger said that she doesn't believe that they have had any issues, but that she can take a look.
- Crabb asked about the sidewalk and terrace on Park Street adjacent to the new Bascom Steps. He asked staff to find out who takes care of this area.
- The electric contractor will be installing under-bench lighting in the 700-800 blocks of State Street in the upcoming weeks.
- Mayer had a question about the use of generators by some of the food carts. Laschinger said that there are a few carts that use more power than expected and that they often trip the breaker. There are the carts that use both power from the poles and a generator. Cnare mentioned that this has been disappointing considering the outreach efforts by the design tem to make sure that enough power would be supplied to the

carts to avoid the use of generators. Crabb wondered if the Vending Oversight Committee could have a discussion about this issue and work with the carts on removing the generators as originally desired by the design team.

- Torkildson noted that there was a crumbling curb by the glass bank that perhaps could be patched by the crew.
- Torkildson asked if the expanded Mall area owners had been contacted by Parks about their new services yet. Laschinger replied that notifications have not yet come out. The DCC encouraged Parks to get them out as soon as possible so that owners could make necessary plans.
- Mayer noted that the Kiosk sign near the entry to the Memorial Library uses the wrong form of Capitol/Capital.

2. [36539](#)

Philosophers Grove

Public Comment

- Anthony Rainier, registered to speak. He is the owner of Teddywedgers and wanted to thank the Committee for their efforts to try to improve the behavior at Philosophers' Grove. He encouraged the Committee to remove the bus shelter, as the behavior is very intense and has gotten worse with the warmer weather. Rainier said that he has decided to close early, and is not open between 5-7 pm due to the mounting problems adjacent to his store. He said that people drive down to the area just to hang out.
 - Frank asked about what he has been hearing from the people hanging out in the area. Rainier said that some of them feel like they have to fight back when they are worried about getting pushed out of the space by the city. He added that a few people have been setting up camp and sleeping in the area, but the behavior really grows worse during the day as the people get more intoxicated.
 - Crabb asked staff to invite the police to come to the next DCC meeting. Verveer said to be sure to let Captain Gloede and the police know that he is requesting their presence at the next meeting.
 - Carbine asked if the police could separate out the police calls that are directly associated with the Philosophers' Grove, especially ones that are associated with the shelter.
 - Torkildson asked Rainier about additional police presence. She wonders if the police are too easy on the people causing behavior problems. She noted that the police don't seem to have a sense of urgency about the people who cause problems.
 - Rainier noted that when there are police around, the crowd disperses, but they quickly come back once the officers leave.
 - McClendon said that the real problem is what to do with people if we try to make them leave. Perhaps we could encourage them and not come down on them too hard.
 - Mayer added that Mr. Rainier mentioned that many of the regulars feel like they are being pushed out. Perhaps that is a good thing that they are starting not to feel welcome in the space.
 - Crabb added that where they go will likely create another problem area.
 - Hirsch noted that people are there for different reasons,
 - Economic hardship. Unemployment / under employment
 - The street is their home
 - Drugs/alcohol and other substance abuse issues
 - Health and Mental health issues
- Nina Berkani, registered to speak. She says that her son has had to become a social worker as well as a small business owner. People in the area constantly ask him for things. It becomes so hard to say no when they are very pushy and constantly ask. He refuses them, but then they come into the store and take condiments when he is busy with other customers. They also come in and repeatedly disrupt his regular customer sales and stop him as he brings groceries in. She noted that people lean on the front facade and make it so potential customers do not feel welcome to come into the store.

She also noted that there are some homeless activists that are pushing back on what the DCC and the BID are trying to do. She believes that the free lunches attract more people, and that she hopes that the bus shelter can be removed as soon as possible.

- Torkildson said that she feels terrible that a young business owner gets harassed daily, and that people trying to make a living are affected by this kind of behavior. She said that we have a responsibility to these affected people as well as trying to help the homeless.

BID Programming Activities

Mary Carbine gave a brief description of the BID programming plan and activities to date. She passed out some promotional materials for the events.

- 50 events have been scheduled to date
- Regular events include the MadCity Bazaar Ian's Open Mic and Friday Kids day events
- Generally events have gone smoothly. The police have been very helpful and on site during events. The regulars stay in the area and sometimes try to help with setup and take down. There have been a few arrests during events and some of the social media chatter around the BID events have unfortunately been negative regarding the concept of displacing the regulars, but that was not unexpected.

Frank noted, as BID Board President, that the BID isn't trying to kick anyone out of the space, they are just trying to make it friendly to a more diverse group of people. He added that the BID has hired Annie Wright as the special events coordinator.

Physical space: Philosophers' Stones, lighting, bus shelter

Rebecca Cnare, Planning Division, noted that the twinkle lights have been reinstalled in the Philosophers' Grove. The stones have been removed from the middle of the area as directed by this committee and the public process that the DCC organized.

Crabb asked about the possibility of widening the sidewalk on West Mifflin adjacent to the cul-de-sac. He said that perhaps the cul-de-sac could be table-topped. Staff replied that there really hasn't been an interest by the Planning and Engineering Divisions to rebuild the street until there is a large redevelopment project on the Museum block. Crabb asked staff to reconsider widening the sidewalks as a measure to help people move through the space better.

Verveer said that he believes the rules about alcohol sales have fueled some of the behavior in the area, and he explained some of the issues with liquor stores selling individual large containers of malt liquor. He added that the police recently did an undercover operation in the area and made some arrests of people who were previously under supervision or on parole.

McClendon asked about the number of arrests. Carbine said that there were two arrests so far during BID events. Verveer said that 4 arrests happened during the sting. Frank said that he hears of arrests happening almost daily.

Mayer wondered what the threshold was for getting banned from State Street. Verveer said that the city can only ban people from a public park, so that the city can only ban people from Lisa Link Peace Park, not the entirety of State Street. However, if people get arrested on county/state violations, it is sometimes a part of their conditions of bail, release/or parole that they can be banned from an area. He added that there have been some early discussions about the potential of declaring the State Street / Capitol Concourse area a park for some of those reasons.

Bus Shelter Discussion:

Staff noted that here is a public hearing at the next Transit and Parking Commission about the removal of the shelter at the top of State Street.

Cnare explained that a small staff team has been looking at issues surrounding the removal of the shelter, and generally prefer to find a new location before the shelter is removed. She went through a few of the considerations that led staff to agree that relocating the shelter may allow the space to be opened up, and remove a pedestrian pinch point. She also noted some small efficiencies that would be gained by the Metro routes that use the stop. Cnare added that staff believes that the shelter should be relocated to somewhere within the State Street district to an existing stop without a shelter, and shouldn't be placed in other parts of the city.

Verveer said that he would like to remove the shelter as soon as possible and put it into storage, at least for this year. He said that this is more of a shelter issue than a Metro stop issue and encourages the removal of the shelter even if the stop remains. He added that it will likely be very difficult to find a new location for the shelter, as some people he has talked to, including Mary's Tailoring on the 100 block, have no interest in having a shelter in front of their business. Torkildson said that we shouldn't muddy the waters and wait to find a new location. It should be separated from the discussion.

CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

Present: Verveer, Crabb, Frank, Carbine, Plotkin, Mayer, Torkildson

Excused: Covert, Zellers, McClendon, Hirsch

Crabb said that perhaps the DCC can advocate for removing the shelter on a trial basis to see how the space changes once the shelter is gone.

There was some discussion about possible locations for the shelter, including looking at places where there is already a shelter of the normal type, so that it would be adding a shelter to the downtown.

A motion was made by Crabb, seconded by Verveer, that City staff should work to remove the bus shelter as soon as possible, for a trial period this year, to observe the changes at Philosophers' Grove after the shelter is removed. The Downtown Coordinating Committee feels strongly that the issue of removing the shelter should be separated from the issue of finding a new location for it, as that will delay its removal. The DCC further encourages the Transit and Parking Commission to remove the corresponding bus stop and reroute those affected bus routes to the stop with the larger shelter located at North Carroll Street. The motion passed by voice vote/other.

3. [33826](#)

Committee Member & Staff Updates

There were no updates.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Crabb, seconded by Carbine, to Adjourn at 7:30 p.m. The motion passed by voice vote/other.

Upcoming Meeting: July 16, 2015