

**Medical SSMID Commission Meeting Minutes**

**March 8, 2023, 8:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m., PCI Medical Pavilion 1**

**Present:** Eric Dalton, Gordon Epping, Eric Griggs, Pauline Herb, Michelle Jensen, Suzy McGrane-Hop, Russ Nieland, Michelle Niermann, Okpara Rice, Michelle Stramel

**Absent:**, Julie Sterling, Nathan Van Genderen

**Guests:** Scott Freres, Lakota Group, Inc.; Jennifer Pratt, City of Cedar Rapids

**Staff:** Peggy Degnan, Jesse Thoeming, Phil Wasta, Audrey Wheeler, Nikki Willcox

**Welcome, Introductions & Call to Order**

Rice called the meeting to order at 8:02 a.m.

**Consent Agenda**

Jensen moved to approve the consent agenda with Nieland seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.

**Master Plan**

Wasta introduced Freres, President of Lakota Group, Inc. who facilitated the initial master plans and has returned for a five-year check-in. Freres noted significant progress and acknowledged the cooperation between the City and MedQuarter to leverage resources and find funding for streetscape and infrastructure. He asked for thoughts on what commission members want to accomplish with the next plan.

Epping praised the initial plan from Lakota Group and thanked Freres. Nieland declared interest in best practices from other communities. Jensen feels defining areas of focus and communication are needed. Niermann wants to define what to do next after the highly visible projects and to look broader at North Liberty competition and the workforce challenges.

Additional highlights from Freres:

- Public investment spurs private investment.
- Residential and mixed-use development within a district builds density and sense of place.
- Plan needs strategy around talent attraction.
- Currently there is more parking than vitality which is a sign of underdevelopment.
- There is a need for a hotel and green space to create a gathering place.
- Greatest investment is sidewalks and outdoor spaces because they are tied to health, wellness and quality of life.
- Try food trucks and allow them to be an incubator for restaurant development.
- Find out what the competition is doing and tailor it to the flavor of Cedar Rapids.
- Downtown and Med Q progress affects each other. A bigger conversation is needed regarding downtown.
- Attraction of labor is biggest obstacle. Younger people are more focused on quality of life than dollars.

Nieland feels a mix of private and public investment would work and it needs to be joint discussion but inquired about who leads to which Freres suggested the City and SSMIDS coming together for an initial conversation. Freres further suggested looking for opportunities such as engaging Wellington Heights as a DEI opportunity.

Epping agreed with Wellington Heights engagement and suggested bringing Coe College into the discussion. He is concerned about the competition from UIHC.

Pratt noted that the timing is perfect for a larger discussion as downtown is just starting their next vision plan.

Wasta believes the issues in MedQuarter are different than in other districts as the workforce hasn't returned fully in other districts. MedQuarter workers are back, but are less engaged in the district. Bringing awareness and activation of programming is important.

Rice asked about next steps. Freres recommended creating an outline of next steps starting with global district discussions that lead back to individual SSMID plans. He will write up outline and send to Wasta.

### **District Marketing Initiative Update**

#### MedQ Perks+

Wasta targeting launch first week of April on MedQ Perks+. Differences between 2022 and 2023: the first program included discounts provided by business owners. Perks+ Program is a points program where MedQ is making the investment; therefore, no longer contingent on retailers discounting goods or services. It is to be marketed by employers to make MedQ employees more aware of what is in the district and to encourage carry-outs from restaurants on the way home and other conveniences.

### **Executive Director Update**

#### Second Annual Mental Health Summit

To be held at Kirkwood on May 25<sup>th</sup> offering CEU and CEH credits. Cost is \$59 for full day.

#### Fiscal Year 2024

State property tax rollback and backfill will finish 2024 with anticipated tax revenue that is in budget.

#### SSMID Appointments

Wasta thanked Griggs, Jensen and McGrane-Hop for agreeing to reappointments. Rice to roll off as Chair, bringing on McGrane-Hop on as Chair. We will need to elect a new Vice Chair.

#### Child Care Update

Wasta and provider will work with EA's Economic Development staff to apply for grayfield funding. Dalton and Jensen have concerns because parents want childcare to be closer to home rather than work. Finding quality staff is challenging. TrueNorth is opening their own childcare.

#### Bigbelly Trash/Recycling

Wasta anticipates an April installation with maintenance and repair on existing trash and recycle units.

#### 2023 Planter Program

Blooms is supplying plants for 44 self-watering pots up from 32 last year.

#### 10<sup>th</sup> St. from 1<sup>st</sup> to A Avenue Project

Construction to start on April 3<sup>rd</sup>. Wasta said there will be a preconstruction meeting with St. Luke's.

#### A Avenue from 7<sup>th</sup> St. to 10<sup>th</sup> St. Project

The project is now a larger and more extensive project so being pushed back to 2025.

#### 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue / 10<sup>th</sup> St. / Mt. Vernon Rd. SE Roundabout Project.

Reaching out to Standards Committee to review plans to be completed by May and go out to bid this summer. Projected to start in 2024.

### **Adjourn**

Epping moved to adjourn with Dalton seconding. The meeting adjourned at 9:12 a.m.