

Medical SSMID Commission Meeting Minutes

May 8, 2024, 8:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m., Physician’s Clinic of Iowa

Present: Eric Dalton, Gordon Epping, Eric Griggs, Pauline Herb, Michelle Jensen, Suzy McGrane-Hop, Brian Steffen, Michelle Stramel

Absent: Casey Greene, Russ Nieland, Okpara Rice, Nathan Van Genderen

Guests: Jennifer Pratt, City Liaison; Noah Zeker, City Development; Amanda Zhorne, Owner of Craft’d Coffee

Staff: Jennifar Bassett, Peggy Degnan, Phil Wasta

Welcome & Call to Order

McGrane-Hop called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

Consent Agenda

Wasta explained some minor edits made to the minutes. **Jensen moved to approve the revised minutes, financials, and reports with Herb seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.**

Stramel Resigning from Commission

McGrane-Hop thanked Stramel for serving on the Medical SSMID Commission the past three years. Wasta presented her with a small token of appreciation for her service.

Nominate Zhorne to Serve on the Commission

Amanda Zhorne has been nominated to serve on the Medical SSMID Commission from July 1, 2024 – June 20, 2027. Wasta explained they wanted a locally owned hospitality business on the commission and introduced Zhorne. She shared that she owns and operates Craft’d Coffee inside PCI, plus other businesses in metro, and gave a brief background about herself. **Epping moved to recommend Zhorne with Dalton seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.**

Wasta shared that Russ Nieland may have to roll-off the commission because of an ongoing scheduling conflict. Wasta to keep the commission posted.

Discuss/Approve 2024 Action Strategies

Wasta reviewed the Action Strategies and asked the commission to let him know if they had any recommended changes/additions/edits.

Planning Initiatives:

- Open space - implement 2024 planter program.
- Communication with the City has greatly improved with the involvement of Pratt and her team.
- Dynamics make economic development difficult, but three remaining are 1.) ongoing education, 2.) property acquisition opportunities and 3.) actively promoting the district.
- Childcare Center – still on master plan, but lost our provider. Since Downtown Cedar Rapids KinderCare and KidsPoint have openings, there may not be a need for another center at this time.

Marketing & Management Initiatives:

- Brand Expansion – pleased with +/- 50% open rate with 300+ views every 2 weeks and ongoing day-to-day communications with the stakeholders. The website needs to be more user-friendly so this project will be a part of 2025 budget year.
- No one has inquired about the facade improvements grant for over a year, but new language will broaden its appeal.
- Improve green spaces.
- Strike language about “open cafe” and replace with “pursue outdoor green spaces” as noted in Gantt chart.
- 3rd Annual Mental Health Summit will be held on May 23rd.

Financing Initiatives:

- Surplus funds – should have a way to manage excess funds better. Epping said we tend to be conservative so we aren’t caught in a shortfall. CRB&T manages investments.
- Establish 501(c)(3) not-for-profit foundation.

Construction initiatives:

- 8th Avenue from 8th Street to 10th Street., roundabout.
- Develop designs, budgets and RFPs for A Avenue from 7th Street to 10th Street NE is looking more like 2026 due to funding and project load. A Avenue NE has so much strain on it that it is time to turn Coe Road into a two-way. Coe College doesn’t care for it, but realizes the practicality and Anderson Bogert is engaged. Herb said to strike the word “final” in the last bullet of the action and change to 2026.

Herb moved to approve the 2024 Action Strategies with Epping seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.

Discuss/Approve Funding for 7th Street/8th Street/I-380 Gateway Improvements

The Downtown SSMID’s matching grant request to the IDOT was approved thus, it requires matching funds from EYE-380, Downtown SSMID and Medical SSMID, so Wasta proposed \$12K from the SSMID’s Maintenance & Beautification budget be put toward the grant match. **Epping moved to approve the \$12K for the grant match with Dalton seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.**

Discuss/Approve Revised Façade Improvement Program

Wasta went over the revisions that included innovative applications such as vertical gardens and other ways of greening properties. He noted decisions must go through the Façade Improvement Committee. If able to obtain a placemaking grant, then the SSMID could contribute \$10K to show support if the committee approves. This would be a 50/50 split with the City. **Jensen moved to approve the revised Façade Improvement Plan with Steffen seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.**

Next Steps in Creation of MedQuarter Improvement Foundation 501(c)(3)

Wasta shared the working name for the foundation is MedQuarter Improvement Foundation. The mission statement was recommended by Jonathan Landon with Shuttleworth, specifically because it talks about targeted initiatives. **Epping moved to approve the foundation’s name and mission statement as presented with Griggs seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.**

With regard to the banking relationship, Wasta recommends remaining with Cedar Rapids Bank & Trust. Directors and a president will need to be set up for the MedQuarter Improvement Foundation but signature/agent should be Wasta. He asked who has interest in sitting on this foundation and said that can be decided at the July meeting. **Stramel moved to have the foundation use Cedar Rapids Bank & Trust and for Wasta to be the signing agent for the MedQuarter Improvement Foundation with Griggs seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.**

Report on Wasta’s 2023 Bonus and 2024 Compensation

McGrane-Hop shared the process of how data and stats were calculated for Wasta’s review. She said Wasta received 4.56 out of total of 5. 91.25 out of 100%. She feels the process will be more streamlined so Wasta’s review will be finalized earlier next year.

Committee Updates

Branding & Marketing, Economic Development, Finance & Operations, and Standards reports were provided in the agenda packet.

Executive Director's Updates

Executive Director's update was included in agenda packet. Wasta highlighted a few items as follows:

- Mental Health Summit has 150+ registrations to date.
- The roundabout project is in full swing and 8th Avenue will always have one lane of east/west traffic working. Other major projects consist of staining and coloring of the retaining wall, applying anti-graffiti coating, installing programmable LED landscape lighting and installing the backlit logo sign on the upper portion of the retaining wall.
- UnityPoint intends to sell the 1260 2nd Avenue SE property to Safe Place Foundation. Epping said this entity deals with recovering substance abusers and homelessness. Wasta has reached out to neighboring property owners and heard no concerns of this being problematic. To reside in Safe Place, people have to apply and if they don't follow the rules, it results in immediate eviction. Epping mentioned it is a very strict and positive organization. Wasta thinks this is a 99% done deal, with the last matter of going in front of the Board of Adjustment on May 16th. Safe Place should be in operation by July/August per Wasta.
- All 8 ADA ramps at the intersection of 3rd Avenue & 10th Street SE need to be replaced. The City and the project engineer are in the design phase with work planned for September.
- Planters are scheduled to start going in next week.

Other Business

Wasta distributed a copy of the new MedQ digital map. It is hosted on the website, printable, and able to be updated when changes take place.

Adjournment

McGrane-Hop asked for a motion to adjourn.

Epping moved to adjourn with Dalton seconding. The meeting was adjourned at 8:58 a.m.

/pd