

Medical SSMID Commission Meeting Minutes

May 12, 2021, 8:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m., Zoom Meeting

The Medical SSMID Commission met virtually in regular session. Those present are listed below. The meeting was held as an electronic regular Commission meeting because a meeting in person was impossible or impractical due to concerns for the health and safety of Commissioners, staff and the public presented by COVID-19.

Present: John Albert, Tim Charles, Michelle Jensen, Suzy McGrane-Hop, Mary Meisterling, Michelle Niermann, Okpara Rice, Karen Smith, Julie Sterling, Sarah Wickenkamp

Absent: Gordon Epping, Mike Sundall

Guests: Sandi Fowler – City of Cedar Rapids

Staff: Jessica Komisar, Phil Wasta

Welcome & Call to Order

Rice welcomed everybody and called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

Consent Agenda

Smith moved approval of the March minutes and March and April financials with Albert seconding. The minutes, financials and reports were unanimously approved.

City of Cedar Rapids Updates

Fowler, who is the Medical SSMID City liaison provided an update on the City of Cedar Rapids:

- Just approved FY '22 budget which will begin July 1, 2021. Anticipate federal stimulus incentive and will be working on how that money can be spent and how to match it with the City's priorities. COVID has impacted hotel/motel revenue the most which has also impacted the community organizations that used to receive hotel/motel tax revenue.
- Seeing 40-50% ridership in public transit and expecting that number to rise as individuals return to worksites. Not collecting fares because CARES act injected a lot in transit across the country.
- Local Option Sales Tax for paving for progress will be back on the voting ballot in November to renew.
- Will be continuing City-wide Derecho debris pick-up with one final sweep through end of June. Map online that shows current pick-up progress.
- ReLeaf program with Confluence and Trees Forever working on public input session and will see more focus group engagement.
- Hiring first DEI (diversity, equity, inclusion) manager and taking applications for citizen review board

New COVID and Vaccination Updates from Commissioners

Jensen said they had a technician turned away from a care facility because they were not vaccinated. Jensen asked commissioners on company protocols on who they allow in their buildings from a vendor standpoint. Niermann said she hasn't heard of anything in that regard but is not surprised. Niermann added COVID numbers increased a little over the last couple of weeks but are still significantly lower than prior peaks. Vaccinations for 12-15 year olds will be coming shortly. Wickenkamp asked commissioners to talk to peers and encourage these vaccinations.

Commission Member Nominations/Re-Elections

Wasta said it is a heavy year as half of the seats are up for re-appointment. Epping, Niermann, Sterling and Sundall have all agreed to renew their terms. Smith and Wickenkamp will be stepping off. Wasta has approached 2 stakeholders about joining the Commission for a 3 year term starting July 1 – Pauline Herb with Cedar Rapids Bank & Trust and Michelle Stramel with Via Sofia's. Rice moved to approve Herb and Stramel joining the Commission with Meisterling seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.

Preliminary FY'22 Budgets

Wasta reviewed the preliminary FY '22 budgets for MedQ Inc and the SSMID. Wasta said there is a reduction overall in parkway improvements to focus more on maintenance and beautification throughout the district. Highlights include:

MedQ Inc

- Increase in holiday décor (\$25k to \$35k) because of more trees and increase in lighting materials and labor costs

- Net income at \$34k

Med SSMID

- Increase in park and green/parkway maintenance (\$7,800 to \$25k)
- WOW project line item is new (\$25k) and can include a mural, beautification project, lighting plan, etc.
- Net income shows we are going over by \$111k but we will be pulling from unspent revenues from previous years which will end up being \$230k to the good.

Wasta said he will bring more information and a final approval to the next meeting in July.

District Marketing

'20/'21 Digital Marketing Campaign

Wasta reminded Commissioners the digital campaign has been highlighting district businesses and a “don’t delay care” message. It was launched in November 2020 and has had 3.55 million total ad impressions and 13,380 website sessions. The average click through rate is .91%, industry average is .82%. We aren’t seeing the Google response we had hoped for and are a little below industry average and will be considering shifting from Google to more Facebook to optimize efforts. March/April business highlight was Kathy’s Pies which received a great response in addition to the MedQ to-go campaign.

Medical District Awareness Campaign

The regional awareness campaign is targeted to “tweener” communities where they have a choice on where they go for healthcare and to attract them to the MedQ. It is a multiplatform campaign including responsive video ads, Google responsive display ads and an “over-the-top” element on streaming services. Target area is a 30-mile radius around Linn County excluding Coralville and Iowa City and including Independence and Manchester. Wasta said this is perhaps something that gets launched sooner rather than later with higher levels of vaccinations and COVID comfortability.

Banner Replacement Project

Wasta said the new banners and hardware have arrived and presented new banner designs surrounding the messaging of “stay well in the MedQ”. Banners will be placed on 120 poles and will be installed in the coming weeks with the hope to be completed by mid-June.

Medical SSMID 10th Anniversary Event(s)

Wasta said September of 2011 is the official vote-in date of the Medical SSMID and the branding and marketing committee has been coming up with ideas on how to celebrate our 10th anniversary but also be cognizant of programming/events with COVID safety in mind. Ideas include a possible reboot of the MedQ scavenger hunt, food trucks in the 4th Ave pocket park, ice cream trucks to businesses and highlighting top 10 accomplishments. Wasta encouraged Commissioners to e-mail him with other ideas.

Executive Director’s Updates

2021 1st Avenue Parkway Improvements

Wasta presented the design for 2021 1st Ave parkway improvements from 10th to 12th Street. Wasta said one of the pieces of feedback he received during stakeholder surveys was from Moose McDuffy’s not having enough night lighting on the sidewalks along 1st Ave. Wasta had the City’s lighting planner review and they agreed that the light levels on 1st Ave from 6th-10th were low so they had Alliant adjust the heads 5 degrees and they reviewed 10th-12th Street lighting and added 2 more poles because the spacing was not ideal.

Tree Stump Removal Update

Wasta said he had a conversation with Scott Hock with the City regarding stump removals. Removal isn’t 100% planned or funded yet but the City is building a plan. Hock will work with the MedQ if we want to amp up district stump removal efforts. The City has a map of all of the removed trees and are willing to enhance where the upturned root balls are at. Wasta said he will be moving forward with this effort and is pleased with Hock’s partnership.

Meals To Go From the MedQ Promotion

Wasta said most participating restaurants in the Meals To Go promotion were very receptive to it. Wasta said it got good media attention and interviews from the restaurants. Wasta said when he re-capped with restaurant owners, they were all supportive of the effort and wanted to do it again.

Adjourn

Albert moved to adjourn the meeting with Smith seconding. The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 a.m.