

Medical SSMID Commission Meeting Minutes

November 8, 2023, 8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m., CRB&T

Present: Eric Dalton, Gordon Epping, Eric Griggs, Pauline Herb, Michelle Jensen, Michelle Niermann Okpara Rice, Michelle Stramel, Nathan Van Genderen

Absent: Suzy McGrane-Hop, Russ Nieland

Guests: Scott Freres and Siraj Asfahani, The Lakota Group; Jennifer Pratt, City Liaison; Dr. Timothy Quinn, Mercy; Casey Greene, St. Luke's

Staff: Peggy Degnan, Phil Wasta, Nikki Wilcox, Caleb Woods

Welcome, Introductions & Call to Order

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

Consent Agenda

Van Genderen moved to approve the minutes and financials with Jensen seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.

Discuss/Approve Revised FY '24, FY '25, FY '26 & FY '27 Budget and Budget Projections

Wasta explained the following budget years:

FY'24 – Wasta explained which budget lines have an automatic 3% escalator. With regard to Parkway Improvements, the pedestrian crossing near Mercy will come in lower than budgeted at \$39K, but 10th Street from 1st Avenue to A Avenue NE will require a \$26K increase. Executive Director compensation came in over budget in FY'23 by \$10,469 because the annual bonus was not budgeted. To remedy this, an increase of 10% of base salary has been added to allow for potential bonuses through FY'27.

Summer of 2024 – The 8th Avenue / 10th Street / Mt. Vernon Road SE roundabout, roadway and parkway project will be under construction and will likely carry over into 2025.

FY'25 – Will be a catchup year with regard to Parkway Improvements because no additional projects are planned.

Summer of 2025 – The A Avenue from 6th Street to 10th Street NE will be under construction.

FY'26 – Both the 8th Avenue / 10th Street / Mt. Vernon Road SE roundabout, roadway and parkway project as well as the A Avenue from 6th Street to 10th Street NE projects will be invoiced to the SSMID. Anticipating a total of \$943,015 which includes \$693,015 for 8th Avenue / 10th Street / Mt. Vernon Road SE and \$250K for A Avenue from 6th Street to 10th Street NE. The \$693,015 includes LED programmable lighting and MedQ signage for the roundabout which the Standards Committee has recommended. \$250K is budgeted for A Avenue from 6th Street to 10th Street NE. In order to cover these expenses, we are proposing to dip into the Required Reserve Fund Balances of \$280,000 for the SSMID and \$500K for MedQ, Inc.

FY'27 – Reflects the drop in reserves from \$280K to \$78K for SSMID and from \$500K to \$190K for MedQ, Inc.

It is anticipated that reserves will rebuild in FY28 as no other major parkway improvement projects are anticipated.

Van Genderen asked where the \$500K and \$280K required reserves came from with Wasta explaining the history of their creation by previous SSMID commissions. Wasta also noted that each year there have been carry forwards from previous years due to coming in under budget. For example, \$50,300 was brought forward from FY'23. Niermann asked if there are requirements about the reserve funds from the City for SSMIDs with Wasta responding that there are not. As an example, the Downtown SSMID budgets all of their funding each year with no reserves. Niermann asked if the Medical SSMID has a policy statement on the topic of reserves to which Wasta responded there is not. She, Epping and Wasta feel it should be put in writing so we have a historical record.

Wasta went on to explain that the SSMID can increase revenues rather than dipping into reserves by increasing the levy rate from the current \$2.75/\$1,000 assessed valuation, and asking MedQ, Inc. to increase their voluntary contributions above the current \$100K/year per entity. Epping reminded all that the levy rate had started at \$3.75/\$1,000 assessed valuation. Niermann stated the potential of increasing the levy rate should be based on our next vision; therefore, that may imply waiting another year or more. Wasta reminded the Commission that Dr. Quinn and Niermann, as the Directors of MedQ, Inc., have ultimate control of how those funds are spent.

Wasta stated that the budgets are conservative with the calculation of property tax revenue assuming a 3% increase per year, which may be low. Also, the new CRB&T building should add +/- \$15K/year after the building is done in FY'26 or FY'27.

Epping made a motion to accept the revised FY'24 – FY'27 budget and projections with Rice seconding. The motion was unanimously approved.

Nomination of Casey Greene to fill Niermann's Seat

Niermann has accepted the role of Chief Operating Officer for the East Division of UnityPoint Health and Casey Greene has been named the new Market President for UnityPoint Health – Cedar Rapids. Niermann is recommending Greene to fill her seat on the Medical SSMID Commission. Greene introduced himself to the Commission and described his professional background.

Rice motioned to approve Greene and Van Genderen seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

Discuss Filling Seat Vacated by Dr. Sterling

Wasta shared that Sterling has stepped down from the SSMID. Wasta shared that there are some who have expressed interest or who have been discussed to join the Commission in the past including Barb Tupper, Coe College; Dawn Brouwers, His Hands Free Clinic; Alejandro Pino, YPN; and Brian Steffen, Rock Valley Physical Therapy. Herb mentioned an administrative or accounting person from OB GYN Associates, P.C. Wasta mentioned that Jim Sherman from OB GYN Associates, P.C. has been engaged in safety and security issues in the past. It was also mentioned that it would be good to continue to have an independent medical practice on the Commission. Dalton expressed his support for this. Wasta recommended that he reach out to Jim Sherman to determine if he is interested. Rice mentioned lack of diversity on the Commission and to keep that in mind moving forward.

Discuss / Approve Medical SSMID Commission Meeting Schedule for 2024

Wasta explained that the meetings have been on the second Wednesday of every other month starting in January from 8:00 – 9:30am. It was decided to leave the meeting schedule as is.

Committee Updates and Executive Director's Updates

Included in packet.

Workshop – The Lakota Group RE: Master Development Plan Update and New 5-Year Action Strategies

Freres shared they are taking next steps in the master plan process. He noted the pandemic changed how downtowns work and he wants to make sure this plan is relevant for the next 10 years. Items that should now be determined are to prioritize/put timeline together, budget, and develop a plan of action based on the community input.

Niermann asked for a breakdown of participants with Asfahani responding that there were 15 stakeholders during the focus group sessions; an additional two stakeholder meetings tailored to healthcare institution staff with 7 to 10 per institution; around 25 stakeholders at the stakeholder open house; 6 community members at the public open house; and 180 community members who participated in the digital workshop. Asfahani reviewed the below feedback from the participants:

Nine key themes:

1. Population Growth and Demographics – 60% core theme
2. Economic Impact and Challenges – 69% district core theme
3. District Branding and Identity – 56%
4. Community Health & Wellness – 78%
5. District Expansion and Funding – 54%
6. Collaborations and Partnerships – 70%
7. Safety and Security – 77%

8. Programming and Recreational Opportunities – 69%
9. Talent Retention – 67%

Top four from above:

1. Community Health & Wellness
2. Safety & Security
3. Economic Impact & Challenges
4. Talent Retention

Participants also mentioned public art, urban design, placemaking and wayfinding/signage.

Greene asked to define safety and security with Asfahani responding that homelessness, feeling safe while walking alone and crossing streets were concerns. Freres commented when talking with police and they said homeless, mental health and drug dependency in greater downtown continue to be issues. It was noted much intervention will be needed to change perception. Law Enforcement already has an outpost in the District. It is believed the perception is worse than reality, but a strong perception impacts public space said Freres. Wasta commented we are low compared to other cities our size, but the public expectation is for it to not exist which is unrealistic. The District is not lively in the evening, so the homeless might feel safe here.

Four (or Five) Pillars: (New Initiatives)

1. Policy: Increase workforce housing, revitalize underutilized areas, develop community building, embrace eco-friendly initiatives, explore boundary expansion, encourage workforce well-being, identify childcare needs, (adjustments to fiscal house said Freres.)
2. Management and Marketing: Implement brand integration, encourage hospitality partners, diversity business offerings, host recreation events, host health and wellness programming, foster collaboration beyond healthcare, collaborate across institutions. Wasta mentioned so far SSMID has not done any grant or fund finding. Niermann said events and activities suggest we may need staff to work coordinate this. Wasta said we need to be mindful of our audience. Jensen said to partner rather than do it on our own. Freres said events and activities are the focus or driver is community building and does not need to be a large event.
3. Appearance and Identity: Enhance District's built environment, establish green corridors, develop walking/biking paths, create and program green spaces, enhance gateway signage, enhance ADA accessibility. Green mentioned he likes the arches at Czech Village and Newbo.
4. Access and Infrastructure: Enhance pedestrian safety, enhance physical security measures, address rising mental health issues and implement surveillance tools.
5. Community Building: Potential 5th Pillar

Pratt said she sees homelessness as a collaboration. Wasta said to keep what is still relevant but take new information and build from it. Freres stated a fifth pillar can be added because initiatives and public opinion change along the way. He also mentioned the possibility of creating an entity if needed for housing. Greene feels we need to improve perception before anything else. Pratt said the housing issue is more complex. It was mentioned if properties on the edges of the District could be owned and developed by the SSMID, it would strengthen the neighborhood. Discussion ensued of taking a more active role by partnering with a non-profit housing entity that has tax exempt ability or invest in it. The possibility of developing a partnership with the Affordable Housing Network or Four Oaks was mentioned.

Next steps for Lakota Group:

- Refine initiatives and action steps
- Finalize photo-simulations
- MedQuarter master plan update
- SSMID Board presentation in January 2024

Additional next steps for Lakota Group and Wasta:

- Build a timeline and determine budget.
- Revise matrix to have five pillars and send it to board members.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 9:58 a.m.