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**Downtown Fort Worth, Inc.**

**Fort Worth Public Improvement District #1**

**Advisory Board Meeting**

**Wednesday, April 26, 2023**

**MINUTES - DRAFT**

The Advisory Board for the Fort Worth Public Improvement District #1 met on Wednesday, April 26, 2023 in the Conference Room at Downtown Fort Worth, Inc., located at 777 Taylor Street, Suite 100, Fort Worth, Texas 76102.

**Advisory Board Members in Attendance:** Larry Auth, Gavin Behr, Laura Bird, Johnny Campbell, Gary Cumbie, Carlos De La Torre, Jennifer Eslinger (representing Nicole Nadvornik), Marie Holliday, Ashlee Johnson, Whit Kelly, Ed Kraus, Walter Littlejohn, Michelle Lynn, Renee Massey, Mark Michalski, Don Perfect, and Jed Wagenknecht.

**Board Members unable to attend**: Amber Finley, Drew Hayden, Mark Michalski, Don Perfect, Carissa Taylor and Courtney Towson.

**DFWI Staff present:** Matt Beard, Brandi Ervin, Becky Fetty, KayLee Pratt, Shane Smith, and Andy Taft.

**Guest:** Sargent Joel Starry and Lieutenant Roger Stewart with the Fort Worth Police Department HOPE Unit.

**City Staff:** None.

**CALL TO ORDER** – With a quorum being present, Chair Auth called the PID #1 Advisory Committee meeting to order.

**CONSIDERATION OF THE JANUARY 11, 2023 MIUNTES** – Mr. Auth called the Advisory Committee’s attention to the January 11, 2023 minutes. The minutes were emailed prior to today’s meeting.

**UPON A MOTION BY Carlos De La Torre and duly seconded by Gary Cumbie, the PID #1 Advisory Committee unanimously approved the January 11, 2023 meeting minutes.**

**HOPE UNIT UPDATE** – Sgt. Joel Starry, with the FWPD HOPE unit, talked about the homelessness issue downtown. Last year there was a 30% increase in the homeless population county-wide. Starry’s unit handles the homeless camp complaints around the city. In 2021, they responded to 584 complaints. Last year’s complaints increased to 1,612. To date they have received 871 complaints. If complaints continue at this rate, they will see over 176% increase from last year. (Many of the complaints are duplicates and could also be attributed to more people using the MyFW app.) Even with the increased workload, his unit has been taking care of cleaning up camp sites and getting in front of that population.

There has been a huge shift in the homelessness population demographics. It is a younger generation. Sgt. Starry said they are seeing more violence, weapons and drugs. The goal is to get these people off of the streets. Starry said it is important to educate your staff and to know your NPOs, the different security groups, and the downtown Ambassadors, who all help the HOPE unit to handle these issues.

If you have a homeless person on your property and they refuse to leave, then they will be charged with criminal trespassing. The DA’s office prefers that the PD issue a citation. The HOPE unit has no control over what the courts will do. (If a homeless person is issued a citation and returns to your property, they will be arrested. However, this can get lost in translation unless the same officer is dealing with the situation.) There have not been enough consequences for the transient population for a long time. Mr. Taft asked if the distribution of **No Trespassing** signs to property owners is helpful. Sgt. Starry said the signs are wonderful and he encourages businesses to put them up. Starry said to call 911 for documentation purposes, then reach out to your NPO. (Mr. Beard said he will send the PID 1 Advisory Board members the contact information for the downtown NPOs.)

**FINANCIAL REPORT FOR 2nd QUARTER OF FY 2022-2023 –** Brandi Ervin reported the following:

* We are half-way through the fiscal year.
* PID 1 revenue is currently $46,754. This is only 31% of the annual budget, however the Tarrant County Homeless Outreach grant was signed on March 20, 2023 and we should receive $49K in the 3rd quarter.
* Operations are 47% of the annual budget.
* Other expenses are almost at 12% due to the tree light repair being in that line item. (Those repairs were not done until April.)
* Transportation and Planning are at 62%. The payment for Molly the Trolley has been made as well as the $10K Bike Share sponsorship.
* Marketing is at 41%.
* Research is at 47%.
* The State of Downtown report was completed using 50% of the annual budget. The remainder of those funds will be used for a residential survey later in the year.
* Administration is at 48%.
* Total Operating expenses are 47% of the annual budget.

Ms. Ervin informed the committee that we had to make a mid-year adjustment, to reallocate $9K from Landscaping in Operations to the Ambassador Program line item. This was needed in order to keep the services the same as the previous year. The mid-year adjustment was approved by City Council yesterday.

**UPON A MOTION BY Marie Holliday and duly seconded by Jed Wagenknecht, the PID #1 Advisory Committee unanimously approved the 2nd Quarter FY 2022-2023 financial report as presented.**

**PID #1 REPORT:** Matt Beard recapped that in September 2021, Sundance Square submitted a proposal for a campus landscape planting plan adjacent to their properties for the raised brick beds and several beds where tree grates were removed, and plantings were placed in those beds. The plan stated that the beds would have a less frequent digging schedule, improve the eco system, and create a diverse and inclusive downtown. The PID Advisory Committee reviewed the landscaping plan on November 10, 2021, and staff, at the guidance of the PID Committee, has been doing an assessment on the plants’ performance, aesthetics and maintenance needs over the past 18 months. (The PID manages roughly 200 planter beds, 11K square feet, throughout the 543 acres in PID 1 and does 3 seasonal plantings each year in the fall, spring and summer per our contract with the city.) Mr. Beard showed before and after images of the planter beds and many of the plants remaining dormant or dead in some cases. His report included the following:

* The pot-to-pot planting increases the density and is troublesome for the plants.
* The wax leaf ligustrums are harmful to the trees. The perennials grow 6’ wide x 10’ tall, causing stress to the trees.
* The number of replanting and the original excavation can cause the trees distress.
* The leaves and trash that accumulate in the shrubs have become a headache.
* The aggressive woody root system, especially with the ligustrums, even if trimmed, causes stress with the plants and trees.
* Over the past 16 months there has been significant replacement of the plants.

Beard stated that this is not an image that we would like to project downtown and therefore, **staff does not recommend adopting Sundance’s planting model.** Mr. Taft added that we would not see any savings based on the species that Sundance has planted. The floor was open for discussion:

* The committee agreed that the PID’s current planting program, with 3 plantings during the year (spring, summer, and fall) is more aesthetically pleasing.
* After getting through the important seasons, the PID refreshes the beds.
* Dirt in the planter beds is not a good look. Even topsoil would be preferrable over “skeletons” for a couple of harsh months (during the winter).
* Two years of observation on the performance of the plantings is a great base to make a decision.
* The committee would like to go back to the unified model with plants that are successful.
* The ornamental beds will never establish a shrub because there is not enough dirt or land.
* It is not cheaper to put expensive material in the beds and have to replant them.
* Pansies and begonias are pennies by comparison and have a fresh kempt look.
* The consistency is a maintenance program. The 3 plantings keep things looking fresh and it is uniform.

The next PID 1 budget will have the traditional planting scheme whether it involves Sundance Square or not. The committee agreed. There were no objections.

Also discussed was the removal of the tree grates and tree wells. The grates are designed to be part of the sidewalk, add more space around the trees, provide walkability and the grates are ADA compliant. The removal of the grates provides a tripping hazard. The PID does not have contractual responsibility for the tree grates or the trees. Many of the grates were removed, without permission, to house the shrubbery that was planted later. (If you choose to go with a planting under the trees, you increase the maintenance effort.) Consistency of maintenance is key. Staff received requests to replace the tree grates. Mr. Taft stated that the party that removed the grates has some degree of responsibility to put them back and that has not happened. Mr. Beard showed some images where the grates were removed and replaced with plantings. The floor was open for discussion.

* If the tree grates were put into the PID contract, then staff would recommend that the grates be put back.
* The trees, tree wells, and tree grates are the responsibility of the property owners. The property owners need to be made aware that it is their responsibility, and the city is working on that.
* Ed Krauss stated that the past two winters have been rough and some of the plantings did not survive. Mr. Beard said that Horticulturist Dr. Robert Moon’s assessment is that the wax leaf ligustrum has a woody root system that is harmful to the trees’ health. Also, there is a new fungal development at the base of some of the trees.
* Mr. Taft added that the original concept of the “one time” plantings was to not disrupt the tree roots. A much larger pot violates that at the beginning, but the replanting further aggravates the problem. There have been more digging and deeper holes.
* Staff will opine the city on the success of the attempt to have the tree grates put back in.

**Staff’s recommendation is that the tree grates be put back in or identify plantings that would be more successful and an image that the city wants to project.** The PID Advisory Committee was in agreement for the grates to be replaced. There were no objections.

**TRANSPORTATION** – Information pertaining to the city’s street resurfacing plan was included in today’s handouts. Please be aware of the schedule if your property is in the plan. It should take about 2 days to strip the old pavement and do an overlay. This will be highly disruptive for a short period of time.

**OTHER MATTERS** – There were no other matters for discussion.

**REQUEST FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS** – There were no requests for future agenda items.

**ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING** – (Due to time, the Marketing and Research reports will be given at the next PID 1 meeting.) With no further business to come before the PID #1 Advisory Committee, Chair Auth adjourned the PID #1 Advisory Committeemeeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Larry Auth, PID #1 Chairman