**DDA Board of Directors Meeting MINUTES**

**Tuesday, January 9th, 2024**

**Location: Blairsville City Hall**

**Time: 12 PM**

Megan Kimsey (Chair) called the meeting to order at 12:02 PM.

Present for Meeting: Megan Kimsey, Sharon Davis, Chris Wadle, Johnny Collins, Rhonda Mahan, Steve Rowe, Mayor Jim Conley, DDA Director Kristen Bentley

Guests: Crystal Fairless, Union County – Blairsville Chamber of Commerce

A Quorum was established.

Conflicts of Interest: Sharon Davis made a motion to allow Board Member Courtney Waller to join via phone. Rhonda Mahan seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion passed.

Courtney Waller joined via phone at 12:05 PM.

No public Commentary.

Minutes (12/5/23): Kristen Bentley stated that the DDA Director position was listed incorrectly in the minutes. Sharon Davis made the motion to approve the minutes pending the position correction. Rhonda Mahan seconded the motion. All in favor. Motion passed.

Financials (November and December 2023): Rhonda made the motion to approve the financials of November and December 2023. Chris Wadle seconded. All in favor. Motion passed.

**New Business:**

**Officer Nominations 2024:** Megan explained that for 2024, we want to make sure the elections run how they should, instead of how it has happened in the past. Megan explained that when you are nominated, you must accept or deny the nomination. If accepted, you must exit the room. We will bring everyone back in to vote.

Chair – Megan was nominated. Megan accepted and exited the room. Sharon, as current Vice Chair, assumed the responsibilities of Chair upon Megan’s exit and asked for a motion to make Megan Chairman for 2024. Rhonda gave the motion and Chris seconded. Megan was then asked to step back in the room.

Vice Chair – Chris, Courtney, and Sharon Davis were all nominated. All accepted and left the room (Courtney was placed on mute, since she joined via phone). Rhonda requested to know the nominations for all other positions. All three of the above Vice Chair candidates were nominated for Treasurer. Sharon and Courtney were also nominated for Secretary. Rhonda stated that with Chris’ experience on boards and in his line of work, he would make a fantastic treasurer because he has the background and experience to help us establish a budget, stick to it, and help get us on track. It was also mentioned that since Courtney was Secretary for 2023, she might want a break from taking minutes because it is a big task. Steve recommended we approach the candidates to accept the positions as follows: Courtney as Vice Chair, Chris as Treasurer, and Sharon as Secretary. The room agreed. Candidates were asked to step back in. Megan asked each if they would accept the above roles. All accepted. Rhonda made the motion to place each of the board members into the new roles. Johnny seconded. All approved. Motion passed. The new executive board members are:

Chair – Megan Kimsey

Vice Chair – Courtney Waller

Secretary – Sharon Davis

Treasurer – Chris Wadle

**Payment to the Glenda Gooch Foundation:** Kristen mentioned that from the information she has from previous years, we send a donation to the Glenda Gooch Foundation to utilize their parking lot for festival weekends. The DDA used the parking lot for Mountain Music & Moonshine Festival 2023 and have not sent a donation yet, so we needed to vote to do so, that way we can stick to our word. The donation amount is always $1,000 per festival. Rhonda made the motion to approve sending the Glenda Gooch Foundation a $1,000 donation for allowing the DDA to use their parking lot for the 2023 Mountain Music & Moonshine Festival. Johnny Collins seconded the motion. All approved. Motion passed.

**Proposed Amendment to City Resolution:** Kristen referred to the 2005 resolution to enact our DDA with the City (in our packet). Stipulations are there for the parameters. Georgia’s code has changed since our resolution was created. Kristen suggested that we request to ask the council to amend to where it matches the Georgia code. That section needs to be redone in our resolution, as it does not currently reflect all of the stipulations necessary to make a sound decision regarding board membership . Sharon made the motion to request that the change be made to the Resolution to Enact the DDA so that it reflects the Georgia State Code at the next city council meeting. Rhonda seconded. All approved. Motion passed.

**Legal Services from Richard Serrell:** Kristen mentioned after talking with Marvin Harkins, the attorney for the City of Blairsville, there was a list of local attorneys that were suggested for our DDA to work with. Most do not have the time to take on a new client. Richard Serrell was excited for the opportunity to take on the DDA, though he mentioned it’s not his area of expertise, he is willing to jump in and help us. Kristen mentioned he was invited to our meeting to introduce himself, but he had another meeting already scheduled. Rhonda asked if we could ask him to lower his hourly rate, and Johnny Collins further emphasized how he may feel inclined to do so. Megan suggested tabling the decision to work with him until he can attend a meeting to allow the board to ask questions and until we can come to an agreement on an hourly rate. Kristen is going to request him to join the February meeting. No action was taken.

**DDA Apparel:** Kristen provided proofs of t-shirts, hoodies, and hats that the DDA could sell at festivals to raise brand awareness, which is a goal for 2024. A quote and the mockups shown were provided by Coosa Creek Marketing Products. Megan suggested changing some colors and looking at some cheaper hoody options. Courtney mentioned that Comfort Colors, though more expensive, are desired among consumers. Megan said to contact Gene Boyd with STG Marketing for another quote. Steve also suggested Kristen get with Crystal Fairless for other contacts and said to not utilize a task force, but just to have some meetings, make some decisions and present them to the board for approval in February. No action was taken.

**Office Updates:** Megan discussed that Chris reached out about updating the DDA office. Rhonda provided an update that floors have been ordered. We have someone ready to install floors when they arrive. A paint color has been decided on. Kristen would like to keep her desk, but is looking for some new seating for visitors/merchants. No action taken.

**New Financing Report Structure**: Kristen updated the board that she and Kaye Mcann (City Clerk) have discussed changing the way finances are reported and communicated in 2024. The new system is based on a formal transaction report conducted by DDA Director (Kristen).

Kristen noted that in the new finance reporting structure, the Director records every transaction in a new log - new transaction log allows for much more detail vs the information previously available utilizing just the UCB bank statement. It includes the date of the transaction, the date funds were added/removed to the account, parties involved, amount, and business purpose - this is essential to ensure accountability and transparency for all involved.

2. Director ties out the transaction log to the UCB transactions prior to each meeting - budget update template is sole responsibility of the Director.

3. New categories - previous categories were too broad and did not provide the level of tracking desired for all involved. New categories and subcategories are included on the first tab of the attached budget template - every expense will now tie to a category / subcategory laid out in the approved budget for 2024.

**Main Street 101 Training:** Kristen provided an update that all DDA Board Members must now complete Main Street 101 by December 31, 2024. All board members are also required to complete DDA 101 within their first year on the board. Currently there is not an in-person class for Main Street 101. Kristen will sign all board members up, so we can get started. Rhonda suggested finishing it before spring, so we can take what we learn and apply it to 2024. No action taken.

**Old Business:**

**IT Audit:** Joey Dyer is coming in the week of January 15th to conduct our audit of the Gmail account. His rate is $70/hr. and he believes it will only take 1 hour. No action was taken.

**Historical Society:** Kristen said she met with Mickey Cummings and they have finalized what we owe them from the 2023 festival season. We are outstanding $2,000 for use of the lawn for Mountain Music & Moonshine Festival and $536? From our share of the port-a-potties. Megan Kimsey asked Kristen to obtain a copy of the port-a-potty invoice for our records. Megan also asked how Kristen’s meetings have been going with the Historical Society. There has been a lot of new ideas introduced for the Heritage Festival and we are waiting to meet again to get a gameplan. Chris made the motion the approve paying the outstanding balance to the Historical Society. Rhonda Mahan seconded it. All approved. Motion passed.

**Kathy Papa:** Kristen asked the board to read more on the Rural Zone tax incentives, so we could ask Kathy questions at our next meeting (where she will be in attendance). No action was taken.

**Work Plan Action Items Update:** Kristen mentioned that all bolded items on the Work Plan (attached in our packet) are items that she is currently working on. No action was taken.

**Director’s Update:** Attached in the packet for review. No action was taken.

Rhonda Mahan made the motion to adjourn the January 9th DDA Board Meeting. Sharon Davis seconded. All were in favor. Meeting was adjourned at 1:10 PM.