

**MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION MEETING OF THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN
CITY OF BRANSON, MISSOURI, MAY 4, 2004**

The Board of Aldermen of the City of Branson, Missouri, met in a work session meeting in the Council Chambers of the City Hall on May 4, 2004 at 1:00 p.m. with the following members present:

Mayor Pro Tem Huff presiding, with Aldermen Dick Gass, Stan Barker, Beverly Martin, Ron Huff, David Edie, and Jack Purvis present. Mayor Lou Schaefer absent.

Also in attendance from the City were: City Administrator Terry Dody, City Attorney Dan Wichmer, City Clerk Sandra Williams, Deputy City Clerk Lisa Westfall, and Finance Director Deanna Schlegel.

Mayor Pro Tem Huff called the meeting to order with the “Pledge of Allegiance”, and thanked everyone for attending. He then stated this meeting was planned as an informal roundtable discussion in the conference room but with the good turnout it was moved to the Council Chambers. The purpose of this meeting is a work session regarding the comprehensive planning to provide continuing revitalization of the city’s historic business district, and to maintain the city’s historic business district as an official Main Street program certified by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Mayor Pro Tem Huff then congratulated the Downtown Association on their recent evaluation review by the National Main Street Center, which is a review that was funded by the Missouri Department of Economic Development. The downtown received the highest rating in excellence in all ten of the criteria categories of the evaluation, indicated Mr. Huff. Mayor Pro Tem Huff then turned the meeting over to Administrator Dody for opening comments.

Administrator Dody said every city across this country works extremely hard to maintain its downtown business district, and ours has done an outstanding job of doing that, and there are a lot of opportunities out there to continue moving forward in the revitalization of our downtown and maintaining the quality of our downtown business district. There are grants available and we need to continue looking at capturing those dollars and use them here in Branson. There are only so many resources available, and we need to make every effort to capture those dollars. What we would like to accomplish is just an informal discussion to look at some of the things we could or should be doing to continue moving our downtown business district forward, and how we might capture some of those dollars, stated Mr. Dody.

At this time, Mayor Pro Tem Huff indicated the Board may or may not take any action on what we do here today, and there may be further meetings requested, and then turned the floor over to the Downtown Association.

Stan Bess, 1235 W. Murray, Springfield, Missouri addressed the Board indicating he serves on the Board of Directors of the Branson Downtown Main Street Association, and was the first spokesperson today. Mr. Bess said the association wanted to take this opportunity to visit with the Board about some of the visions they have for downtown as they are very excited about what the future holds for Branson, specifically for the downtown. We have a downtown that has been vibrant and existent for many years, and since the inception of their organization in 1987, they have made it their passion to further help the growth of the downtown by helping businesses that are in existence; and with business recruitment, looking for ideas and suggestions on how to make their businesses better. The association has brought to the Board of Aldermen a plan that the Board of Directors and staff of the downtown association have been working on for some time. It is an opportunity to continue to make this a vibrant community, and they would like to be involved, and help in this process. We want to visit with the Board about some of the visions that we have for downtown Branson. We are very excited about the future of what holds for Branson, for our entire community but specifically for the downtown, and look forward to what the future holds. Branson has a downtown that has been vibrant and existent for many years, and since the inception of our organization in 1987, the association has made it their passion to further help the growth of the downtown by helping businesses that are already in existence, and with business recruitment. Also helping those businesses that are looking for ideas and suggestions on how they can make their businesses better. We have brought a plan that the Board of Directors and staff have been working on for quite some time . It is an opportunity to continue to make this a vibrant community, and the association would like to be involved in this process. Mr. Bess then outlined the plan for the Board of Aldermen. (1) Manage and Implement the newly developed Downtown Revitalization; (2) Plan and Facilitate Façade Renovations with CDBG and HTC Grant Programs; (3) Plan and facilitate Public Improvements through T-21 Grants; (4) Public and Private Signage Plan and Implementation for downtown; and (5) Branson History Museum Plan. We need to make sure that the historic downtown district truly flows seamlessly into the exciting new development of Branson Landing. We want this to be an area that when people enter downtown, they know they have arrived. Want them to say Branson Landing starts at Business 65 and comes through historic downtown. Want the visitors to see a very exciting and vibrant community, offering lots of eclectic and nostalgic types of shopping as they make their way on down the hill into Branson Landing, and that it flows seamlessly. When they are in the downtown, the association wants to make sure that the visitors look at it as a good, cohesive unit. Using signage, whether it be on storefronts, whether it be street signs, whether it be a grand entrance, into the downtown area, the association wants to make sure they work with the City and the developer to ensure there is a plan that will truly spark some excitement in visitors that come to Branson. The history museum is a concept they are very excited about. Branson is blessed by having such an incredibly rich heritage, and there are people in this community who have done a tremendous job in preserving some of the artifacts and things they cherish to help keep those memories. This is a project that certainly will require some work, and should be approached with a definite plan. The association believes that a history museum or cultural center needs to be downtown and will serve a purpose, and can offer another destination for visitors.

The next speaker was Gayla Roten, Executive Director of the Downtown Branson Main Street Association. Mrs. Roten explained how the CDBG Grants worked and how the funds

would be administered; talked about the availability of low interest loans through the National Main Street program for a beautification project for downtown; the historic preservation tax credits available for certain businesses; the T-21 transportation dollars that have to be spent for people movers, and parking garages, not for streets; and the availability of low interest loans for new signage in the downtown area. Mrs. Roten also explained that the next step is to meet with the architects to develop a comprehensive plan that will be submitted when the grant application is submitted, so that it blends seamlessly with Branson Landing, and in this plan there has to be a streetscape design.

Alderman Purvis stated he would like to hear from some of the owners as to what their visions are on the buildings and the downtown. Addressing the Board of Aldermen and answering questions regarding renovations to their businesses and their visions for the downtown were businessmen Jim Hall, David Cook Steve Hartley, Joni Milstead, Gary Burney, Ken Roten, Jeff Justus, Doug Mason, and Bob Warlick.

Alderman Gass commented that he was all for what they proposed but it was just how they were going to pay for it, and discussed with them a possible self-imposed tax on the owners to help pay for the project. Mr. Gass also discussed whether it was possible to obtain federal funds for the Branson History Museum.

Alderman Edie observed that there would be many downtown groups in Missouri that would love to have the opportunity to have about 500,000 new visitors coming through their gateway to something like the Branson Landing. He said this is a golden opportunity for the downtown merchants to capitalize on these conservatively 500,000 new visitors that the merchants are not going to have to spend a dime to get here because that will be part of the Branson Landing program, and it wouldn't make good business sense for them not to take advantage of this in any way they can.

At this time, Mayor Pro Tem Huff asked to have a step by step perspective of what has to be done to accomplish their request.

Gayla Roten replied they have been working on this plan since June of last year, and working out funding possibilities, and they were at the step now where they need the City's commitment to invest approximately \$100,000 for two years in order for them to move forward. The next step after that is for them to pull together their teams and develop the comprehensive design for downtown streetscapes. We have a design committee, and an economic development committee that have already reviewed architects, and we have two architects and our Board of Directors have chosen one to work with to develop a comprehensive design. After that we have to obtain affidavits from the property owners, complete the application for CDBG grant funds, and submit the application along with the comprehensive design, the affidavits from the property owners, and the commitment from the City. When approved for the grant, work on the buildings can begin, and the architects can work with Branson Landing to ensure that the downtown design is still working with the Branson Landing design. We don't want to look like the Landing, we have our own unique feel and look, want it to be historic.

Alderman Martin discussed whether they planned to increase special events for the downtown area. Mrs. Roten replied that during the renovation they would not be increased but eventually, festivals and events will be increased.

Mrs. Roten also outlined briefly what the \$100,000 funds contributed by the City would be used for which was training, research, public information campaign, design workshops, hiring the architectural firm, bring in personnel from the National Trust in order to get funding, planning, and educational materials.

Mayor Pro Tem Huff then asked the City Administrator to explain what part the Board plays in this project.

Administrator Dody explained the City's primary role would be to assist in the acquisition of the T-21 monies and the CDBG monies, which are very much a city responsibility.

The city actually has to be the applicant to obtain the grant funds and commits certain funds to the project. It is very important that we be part of that process, and that any expenses associated to the grant funds are appropriately spent.

Alderman Gass inquired if what the downtown association was asking for is up front money for design work, training, etc. in order for them to be able to apply for the grants. Mrs. Roten replied that was right, it is an investment in the downtown, and the City should get back about \$2.7 million in outside funds into the City.

Alderman Purvis said he would like to see the City partner with the downtown association, and would challenge the Board and staff to be creative and find a way to work through this request and still be in compliance with all of the ordinances of the City. He also thanked everyone for coming and for their input as it has been very informative and very beneficial for their organization to provide such input.

Alderman Barker said he thought that any time a community is willing to invest private dollars with the intent to create dollars for the City, and in turn be able to put back in other funds into the community is worthwhile in pursuing. It is a real commitment on the part of the downtown businesses to put up private dollars, and the return on those dollars comes back to the City not back to them.

Alderman Barker then made a motion to direct staff to pursue an RFP Scope of Services in the revitalization of the existing current downtown business area in order to apply for a CDGB Grant. Motion was seconded by Alderman Purvis. Discussion was held regarding holding another work session probably within about two weeks, once the RFP was developed. Mayor Pro Tem Huff called for the vote: Voting aye: Gass, Barker, Martin, Huff, Edie, and Purvis. Nays: none. Motion carried.

ADJOURN:

Mayor Pro Tem Huff then entertained a motion to adjourn. Alderman Barker made the motion, seconded by Alderman Purvis. Voting aye: Gass, Barker, Martin, Huff, Edie, and Purvis. Nays: none. Meeting adjourned at 2:55 p.m.