

**Village of Bellaire And  
Village of Bellaire Downtown Development Authority  
BELLAIRE COMMUNITY UNIFIED ACTION PLAN STEERING  
COMMITTEE**

- Louise Wenzel, DDA Member • Joe Short, DDA Member • Mark Irwin, DDA Member •  
• Dave Ciganick, Village Council • Trish Drollinger, Village Council • Eldon McPherson, Village Council •  
• Nicole Essad, Village Clerk • Terry VanAlstine, District 5 County Commissioner •  
• Robert Joyce, Chamber of Commerce Representative •

**COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

**Monday, February 22, 2021  
5:00 PM**

**I. Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 5:00 PM.

**II. Roll Call - Attendance:**

**Present:** Dave Ciganick, Tricia Drollinger, Nicole Essad, Mark Irwin, Robert Joyce, Eldon McPherson, Joe Short, Terry VanAlstine, and Louise Wenzel  
**Absent:** None  
**Staff Present:** Elise Craft, facilitator, Jennifer Hodges, engineer  
**Public Present:** Doreen McGuire, and Brenda Fink

**III. Approval of Agenda:** The agenda was approved as presented.

**Motion by McPherson, seconded by VanAlstine to approve the agenda as presented. Motion Passed by unanimous voice vote.**

**IV. Approval of Minutes – January 25, 2021:** The minutes of the January 25, 2021 were approved as amended to reflect the correct meeting date at the top.

**Motion by VanAlstine, seconded by McPherson to approve the minutes of the January 25, 2021 as amended. Motion Passed by unanimous voice vote.**

**V. Conflict of Interest:** None presented.

**VI. Public Comment:** None presented.

**VII. Old Business:** None.

**VIII. New Business**

- a. Action Plan—Funding Sources & Prioritization:** Elise Craft summarized what happened at the last meeting and explained that a lot of the next steps for the projects were to find funding. She also stated that there was a draft action included in the packet. She asked for any questions about the draft. There were none. Jennifer Hodges explained that there were certain grants available for each project. She stated that with the pandemic a lot of typical grants have been designated for that. She explained that the spreadsheet in the packet was a snapshot of the grants that are available for each project. She stated that there is one grant for the RRC for technical assistance. She also stressed that the Village does not qualify for a lot of other grants

through the MEDC because the median household income for the Village is too high. She also stated that there are some exceptions: for example, if the project would benefit an area within the Village with low income. She also stated that the Village could do an income survey to see if the Village's income can be changed to the low -mod income range. She did not think that the Village would change. General discussion was held about the median household income, RRC, and other resources. Ms. Essad explained that the RRC is transitioning to the RRC 2.0 and the amount of the grant will change. Ms. Hodges reiterated that in her opinion the Village's income is where it is. She then went on to explain grants related to the Downtown WIFI project. These include: State of Michigan DTMB and MDARD Rural Development. Mr. Irwin asked if the match for any grant could come from anywhere. Ms. Hodges stated that yes, it could come from anywhere. Mr. Short asked about the County working to get Broadband in the county. Mr. VanAlstine stated that the County Administrator is working with NELA for that. General discussion was held about if the County is working on broadband to the residents, then should this Committee work on it as well. Mr. Irwin stated that there is a difference between getting broadband to residents and having public WIFI downtown. General discussion was held on what the cost for public WIFI downtown would be, and if people have reached out to carriers. Ms. Hodges also asked if this Committee would like information about loans for projects. Mr. Irwin stated that that may be good information to have in the future. Ms. Hodges stated that the grants for project 3 (Downtown Bathrooms) were MDARD Rural Development and DNR Trust Fund/Passport. She explained when they were due, and the match required. She stated that there is a need to submit an updated Parks and Rec Plan which is a requirement for the DNR Trust fund /passport grants. Mr. Short stated that Shorts could purchase the vacant lot in town and that money could be used towards public bathrooms. He also stated that he believes that the Community Hall is the best location for public bathrooms. He stated that Shorts could contribute money to bathrooms downtown via Community Hall restoration. Ms. Hodges further explained that for project 4 (Richardi Park Improvements) the grants were Rotary Charities, MDARD Rural Development, DNR Trust Fund/Passport, and MSHDA Neighborhood Enhancement Program. She also stated that there are also local grants for some projects, but a lot of those are tighten up because of the pandemic. She also stated that she can add the loan component. Mr. Irwin stated that there were private donations, crowdfunding, etc. for funding as well.

Mr. Irwin asked based upon the funding discussion are the same four projects 1. RRC, 2. WIFI, 3. Downtown Bathrooms, and 4. Richardi Park still good, and should they be ranked or attacked all at once. Mr. Short stated that he thought the RRC would be working on continuously. He stated that it is a priority, but not necessarily a project. Mr. Short also stated that he thought the bathrooms could be achieved through something larger not a stand-alone building. He stated that he is really interested in the Richardi Park and the Community Hall restoration. Mr. McPherson stated that the downtown businesses should be polled to see what gets then excited. General discussion was held about the RRC, and what projects should be listed. Ms. Wenzel asked about looking at the timing of the grants to determine which ones move up on the priority list. She also asked would there be smaller groups working on the projects. Mr. Irwin stated that there is more research to be done on which projects will be first. He also stated that this Committee wants to go forward with all four projects. Mr. Short stated that these projects are important, but they are not groundbreaking. He asked if the current path is to deliver four projects to work on or have more projects over many years. He asked what the end goal is. Mr. McPherson stated that the four projects were determined from the surveys. Ms. Essad stated this group came up with these projects and the surveys wanted these projects, but if there are new projects then this is the time to bring that up. She stated that the Action Plan is to say these are projects we can go forward with now, but there are projects on the back burner as well. Mr. Irwin stated that the first couple of meetings of this Committee was to

bring projects to the table, and ask the community, which was how it came to these four. Mr. Irwin asked if this Committee wanted to keep the projects at four or pair it down. Mr. McPherson stated that the RRC be put on the background. He stated to keep the projects that the surveys identified as priorities, but the grant period would determine which one would be first. Ms. Craft stated that the purpose of this group is to organize how the Village, DDA and other partners can work together. She stated that what this group can do is identify how the Village, DDA, and partners can achieve progress in those areas. General discussion was held about how this group makes entities work together, and there can be multiple projects come out of this Committee. Ms. Craft stated that RRC is ongoing, but not be a project, then Richardi Park, then Downtown WIFI, and then Downtown Bathrooms. Mr. Short stated that RRC is ongoing, but he suggests, as a heavy third, Downtown Bathrooms via Community Hall Restoration. Ms. Wenzel stated that the Community Hall Restoration would be a show piece for downtown. She stated that the Community Hall would provide a resource for the downtown. She thought the RRC as ongoing, not a project, but then go with the Parks, WIFI, and bathrooms/Community Hall. Mr. Ciganick stated that the survey that was conducted noted that the downtown bathrooms were a priority. He stated that that project should not be pushed down the list, and the bathrooms should be more accessible. Mr. McPherson stated that he likes the Community Hall Restoration but there are many obstacles for that. He stated that we need to act on what the survey states. Mr. Irwin asked how much project viability plays into the plan. Mr. VanAlstine asked if there were plans for the bathrooms. Ms. Essad stated that there were plans with cost estimates have been started. Mr. Short stated that in his opinion the redundancy of standalone bathrooms in addition to what is already there is not an efficient way to move forward with community development. He wants everyone to agree to keep the conversation going so that we are not duplicating restrooms downtown, but actually work on something a little bit bigger and more robust and has a broader positive impact. He would like to pull bathrooms off the table and focus on Richardi Park and WIFI. Mr. Irwin stated that he would like to see projects that can be done quickly, to keep the momentum going. He stated that the WIFI and Richardi Park are two top priorities and create a process to talk about bathrooms. Ms. Wenzel stated that Richardi Park has more funding options. Mr. VanAlstine stated that the Parks and Rec plan needs to be updated first before grants can be applied for. General discussion was held about the Parks and Rec plan update, which will take time, and one of the projects identified for the Parks and Rec plan is to reconfigure Richardi Park. Ms. Craft stated that there was a lot of discussion about bathrooms, but there are a lot of questions as well. She suggested that this Committee ask the community about what types of bathrooms they want. Mr. Irwin summarized that RRC is ongoing, but not a project, and then the projects would be WIFI, Park, Bathroom – in no particular order. This was the consensus of the Committee.

- b. Community Partner Survey #2:** Ms. Craft explained the five-question survey that would be sent to the community partners. General discussion was held about changing the survey to reflect the discussion just held. Ms. Craft stated that the second question asks the partners how they want to be involved. She also stated that the third question was to have them ask this Committee questions and the fourth question was to ask how this Committee can support the partner. Mr. Ciganick stated that he had concerns about members going to other meetings because each member would have a different take on this Committee. He stated that these are public meeting and if they have interest then they can be here. Mr. McPherson stated if people want the minutes of the meeting, they can be emailed to them. Ms. Drollinger likes the idea of asking what type of bathrooms they want. Mr. Irwin note that there was support for that idea. He also stated that there should be individual responses from downtown business owners, and only one from the entities that are partners. He stated that the second question should also ask what that project means to them. Ms. Essad stated that she likes having people explain what

the project means to them. Ms. Wenzel stated that getting into the specific improvements of the park would come later. Ms. Craft stated that she will adjust first question to ask what improvements for each project the partner wants to see. Mr. Irwin stated that the second question does not give us tangible data to get the project done. Ms. Essad stated that asking the community partners if they want to help is a good idea, but maybe limit it to: “yes, I want to help with a specific project; yes, I want to be informed of general planning; or no, I don’t want to be involved.” Ms. Craft asked about the third and fourth questions. General discussion was held about those two questions. Mr. Irwin summarized that there would be three questions, where the partners would be asked to rank and define the projects; how they would be involved; and what questions do you have of this Committee. Ms. Craft asked if there should be a question about the bathrooms. Ms. Essad stated that that question could be done in the first question. Mr. Irwin stated that sounds good. Ms. Craft stated she was not sure if she could do that in survey monkey, and if she cannot then it would immediately follow the first question. It was the consensus of the Committee to do that.

- c. **Committee Timeline & Next Steps:** Mr. Irwin outlined the timeline as doing the survey, getting the results in March meet to discuss; then in April/May there would be a rough final draft of the plan, and present in May/June to the Council and DDA.

**IX. Correspondence/Reports:** Ms. Wenzel stated that there was a conference for Michigan Small Rural Community Development Conference and wondered who wanted to go. She stated it is virtual. Mr. Ciganick stated that if he can then he will. Ms. Wenzel stated that Rotary would pay for the registration.

Mr. Short stated that Housing North has an advocacy program coming up and it is important.

Mr. Irwin stated that the next meeting is March 29<sup>th</sup> but that is spring break. He asked if this should be rescheduled. It was the consensus of the Committee to reschedule it. Mr. Irwin stated that he would email dates.

**X. Member/Public Comment:**

**Brenda Fink:** Thanked this Committee for staying with the bathrooms. She stated that Buy Local is trying to attend more meetings. She stated that there is probably nothing that means more to downtown than the downtown bathrooms. She stated that she cares deeply about the town and want to help. She stated that this is a good step to building trust with the Council and helping the businesses. The Buy Local Group wants to participate. She stated that Mr. Short’s point about short term vs long term goals is valid point, the most urgent need to get people downtown to help the businesses and there needs to be practical things like bathrooms and WIFI. She stated that the Community Hall is a mixed bag for the downtown. She stated that the DDA was not successful in the first round with the Community Hall. She stated that to drop bathrooms and go back to the Community Hall when there was money returned to money to stakeholders who contributed to the Community Hall restoration, is a bad timing. She stated that everyone wants a viable dynamic Community Hall, but parking is a huge problem downtown. Buy Local wants to be a part of the discussion. She thanked the Committee again for not taking the bathrooms off the list. She stated that it is hard to take part in discussion when the public can only talk twice per meeting. She also stated that the DDA needs to take special attention to the downtown businesses because they are the DDA.

**XI. Adjourn:** Meeting was adjourned at 7:00 PM to the call of the Chair.

Minutes compiled by:  
Nicole E. Essad, Secretary

**Minutes are subject to approval.**

**Approved:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_