

MINUTES
Community Improvement Action Team
Tuesday, October 18, 2011 – 3:00 p.m.
City Hall – Lower Level Conference Room

Members Present: Gary Wieskamp, Gary Carlson, Bill Phelan, Sarah Lande, Ann Meeker, Brenda Christensen, John Beckey, Rochelle Conway, Mayor Dick O'Brien, Gregg Mandsager, Steve Boka, Richard Klimes, and Dyann Roby.

Members Absent: Holly Thomas

Guests Present: Andrew Fangman, Dianna Stelzner, Jeff Boldt, and Sue Koehrsen

Gary Carlson called the meeting to order at 3:04 p.m.

Speaking in reference to the minutes for the September 20, 2011 meeting, Gary Carlson stated that Mary Odell's name should be added to the guest list.

Bill Phelan moved to approve the minutes as amended. Seconded by Sarah Lande. All ayes; motion carried.

There were no comments from citizens.

Mayor O'Brien reminded everyone of the candidate's forum to be held later in the evening. The event is sponsored by the Iowa League of Women Voters. He then encouraged everyone to get out and vote at the November 8, 2011 election.

The meeting began with an update on the Healthiest State in the Nation Initiative, particularly the Blue Zone Project.

Mr. Carlson stated that at the September meeting Mary Odell talked about the Blue Zone Project and the health initiative. He stated that recently a meeting was held in Cedar Rapids and that approximately 10 to 12 people from Muscatine were in attendance. He stated that as a reminder, Gary Wieskamp was chosen to serve as the CIAT representative on the Steering Committee.

Mr. Carlson stated the Steering Committee will go through the first step of the application process which is essentially a Statement of Intent. He stated that Ms. Odell is the Chair of the Committee, and she has a full-time intern assisting her in this process.

Mr. Carlson stated including himself, others serving on the Steering Committee include Rosemary Boesen of the United Way, Jeff Canfield of Hy-Vee, Bill Decker from the Muscatine School District, City Planner Andrew Fangman, Jim Hayes of Trinity, Ms. Odell, Brett Olsen of the YMCA, Bill Phelan of GMCCI, Councilmember Dyann Roby, and Gary Wieskamp of the CIAT. He stated there are folks still being considered, including Bob Allbee of Muscatine Community College.

Mr. Carlson stated the Statement of Intent must be submitted by October 28, 2011. He said the actual application, which is very descriptive, must be submitted by January 4, 2012. He stated the Statement of Intent will be used to determine those cities eligible to submit an application.

Mr. Carlson then passed out questions that are part of the application process. He suggested the group start brainstorming for answers to Questions 3-10. He stated the information that is compiled will be given to Ms. Odell.

Mr. Carlson stated that at a meeting held recently, there was a lot of time spent discussing blood pressure. He pointed out that the city has been part of a longstanding heart study. He stated it would be very easy to educate people about low blood pressure, and it is something that can be measured in the community. He stated there are many things that could be done to get the community to focus on lowering blood pressure.

Mr. Phelan stated that everyone can relate to controlling blood pressure.

Mr. Carlson stated it would be an easy message to get out to the community, and the city has all the amenities that could be used to make Iowa the “lowest blood pressure state”.

Dyann Roby stated the quality of life is the pull for our community.

Mr. Carlson stated that Question #3 on the application asks for a description of the business environment of our community. He asked for suggestions on things that have been done in the community, small or large, to make a difference. Some of the items suggested include the following:

- Riverfront and the Pearl of the Mississippi Project
- Kent Stein Ballpark
- Soccer Complex
- Heinz Field
- YMCA
- Pearl of the Mississippi II Project
- Park System (includes the Pearl Project, trails, equipment, and lighting)
- Leadership Muscatine projects
- Private/Public Partnerships (Ag Learning Center)
- Muscatine Community College
- HON and its various health-related activities
- Great River Days
- Boat Show
- Community events (approximately 25) held on city property
- Joffrey Ballet/Patri-Art Week
- Discovery Center (part of Pearl II Project)
- Arboretum
- Millennium Plaza
- Zoo Garden
- RAGBRAI
- Crossing point of two national trails
- Bowling tournaments and soccer events
- Rugby
- Latino Conference
- Center for Non-Profits
- MCSA (dental facility)
- Community Foundation

Mr. Carlson then moved on to Question #4 which asks for a description of the priorities of the Mayor/City Council. Suggestions included the following:

- Public safety
- Infrastructure improvements
- Airport
- National Guard Armory
- MUSCOM
- MAGIC
- Highway 61 Corridor Study
- Refuse Collection/Recycling
- Colorado Street improvements
- Safe Street Initiative

Mr. Carlson stated the question asks for the top three priorities which he feels are public safety, infrastructure, and education.

Mr. Carlson stated that Muscatine Power & Water will be doing things to improve the quality of life in Muscatine.

Ann Meeker stated that GPC currently has a project underway that will improve the quality of life in Muscatine.

Mr. Carlson stated another idea is economic development.

Mr. Boka reminded everyone the need to stay at the three priorities being asked for in the application.

City Administrator Gregg Mandsager pointed out the new grant recently received that will fund officers for the school and street crime unit.

Mr. Carlson stated that Question #5 asks for a description of our local communication outlets.

There was discussion on the numerous communication outlets available in the community and how they could be linked together to sustain the visibility of this initiative.

Jeff Boldt stated that a key element is getting people to show their support by signing up on the Initiative's website.

There was discussion on the need for a massive enrollment process.

Mr. Phelan pointed out the Blue Zone Project is looking for communities with one Mayor, one City Council, and one educator.

Mr. Carlson stated he feels the borders for the Muscatine School District should be used for the application process rather than the city's borders.

Mr. Carlson stated that Question #6 asks for a description of the vision for the community and the plan for achieving this vision.

Mr. Fangman stated he could make the determined values of the community part of the Comprehensive Plan when it is updated.

Mr. Carlson asked for other ideas from the group. Some of the ideas included restaurants, smoking, having an upbeat and positive attitude, and housing/building appearances in the community.

Mr. Phelan stated that a phrase that is part of the Blue Zone endeavor is “conveniently putting exercise in your way”.

Mr. Boldt stated the City of Muscatine’s commitment to trails is key because we are not working on our trails as part of the Blue Zone Project. It is something the city has been committed to for many years. He suggested the phrase “the most walkingest city in Iowa”. He stated that walking clubs could be created to get people out.

Ms. Meeker referenced an article she had concerning San Luis Obispo. She highlighted pieces of the article on the steps being taken to make it a healthier community.

Mr. Carlson mentioned the bike racks in the downtown area that were donated to the city.

Mr. Fangman stated a goal for the city would be to create safe ways to get to all of the trails.

Ms. Meeker mentioned the fact the City of Davenport rents bicycles out. She stated that perhaps the city could do something like that on a smaller scale.

John Beckey stated bicycles are good but he feels people should be encouraged to get out and walk places whenever possible. He stated there are sidewalks all over town. He stated there are also miles of trails available.

Mr. Carlson asked how the trails and sidewalks could be linked as part of the city’s vision.

Mr. Phelan suggested the phrase “Veinstreet of Blood Pressure”.

Mr. Carlson stated the walking trails and sidewalks fit into the city’s Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Carlson talked about landscaping and gateway projects.

City Administrator Mandsager stated he likes the walkability idea and asked what it was going to take to make our story stand out.

Mr. Carlson also stated we could leverage our public spaces. He stated that a lot of the projects the city has undertaken in the past were geared toward kids and public spaces.

Mr. Beckey stated the Blue Zone Project needs to start in communities where it can be managed. He stated he felt it would be difficult for large communities to do so.

Mr. Carlson stated that at the next CIAT meeting discussion could be held concerning Questions 7-10.

Mr. Beckey asked if suggestions could be made by e-mail, and Mr. Carlson stated he would get Ms. Odell’s e-mail address and have it included as part of the minutes. He then encouraged everyone to get the community effort going.

Mr. Carlson then left the meeting.

Mr. Wieskamp asked Mr. Boka to give an update on the Mississippi Drive Corridor.

Mr. Boka stated a meeting was held on October 12, 2011. He had on display various options that are being considered for the project. He then talked about the options available at the Carver Corner. They include two variations of the roundabout, two options on the extension of Green Street, and a no-build option.

He stated he does have a power point presentation that he could send out to everyone; however, he stated it was very large. He suggested the possibility of setting it up at a remote location so those interested could view it.

City Administrator Mandsager suggested placing it on the city's website under Community Development.

Mr. Boka then presented the proposed options for Mississippi Drive. He stated it could continue as a five-lane configuration or it could be reduced to one through lane and protected turn lanes. He stated if the second option is chosen, it would allow for more green space and create a corridor feel. He stated it would also be further away from the railroad tracks.

Mr. Boka stated he wasn't looking for feedback tonight. He stated members would have until October 26, 2011 to offer their input. He stated he would like to come to a point where a recommendation can be made as a group.

There was discussion concerning the elimination of the on-street parking on the north side of Mississippi Drive as well as the effect the one-lane configuration would have on our community. Discussion also centered around the need to make it safer to cross Mississippi Drive as well as a possible walkway over the roadway.

Mr. Boka, speaking in reference to the walkway, stated there is not enough space to allow for a walkway. Speaking in reference to the parking issue, people feel it is not safe to cross Mississippi Drive to utilize parking on the riverfront. He stated this is a complaint he hears repeatedly and that he feels the situation on Mississippi Drive is not desirable as it is.

Ms. Meeker stated there is an agreement in place with Miller Harrison to install a parking deck over their parking lot.

Mr. Boka stated that would not be a problem but there is the money issue.

Mr. Boka asked everyone to think about the options for Carver Corner and let him know what they collectively favor.

Mr. Beckey asked if there is a cost breakdown.

Mr. Boka stated we cannot let cost float the boat. He stated the project will receive 80% funding at the state and federal levels. He stated he feels the city should not settle for anything less.

There was more discussion on a walkway.

Under action team reports there was nothing to discuss concerning community landscape.

Sarah Lande presented an update on the trails activity to date. She stated City Council will be approving the work completed on the Weed Park to Wildcat Den Project at Thursday night's meeting.

Ms. Meeker stated the downtown group is currently looking for board members and preparations are underway for the Downtown Open House and Holiday Stroll.

There was nothing to discuss for the community art and cultural activities.

Under other business, Mr. Boka stated Public Works Director Randy Hill had some information he wanted relayed to the CIAT. He stated the proposed Hershey Avenue/41st Street trail route will be approximately 3.37 miles long. He stated that plans are underway to move the design plan forward. He also gave an update on plans for the Weed Park to Wildcat Den trail.

Ms. Lande stated it is a great trail.

Mr. Boka stated the city has many assets that are undersold. He suggested the possibility of developing a way to get people out on family events to utilize what is available to them.

Mr. Boka stated the planned opening date for Hershey Avenue is Thanksgiving. He stated that Colorado Street did receive category exclusions which means the city can begin efforts to obtain the easements and acquisitions for improvements that are scheduled to begin in 2012 or 2013.

Mr. Boka stated that the culvert work on Cedar Street will be completed by December 31, 2011. He stated that utility work will be done in 2012 and paving in 2013.

Mr. Boka stated bids will be received over the winter months for the West Hill Sewer Separation Project. He stated this project will take approximately 10 years to complete at a cost of approximately \$40 to \$60 million.

Mr. Boka stated work for Mad Creek II is underway.

There was discussion concerning attendance of the Mississippi Corridor meeting that was held on October 12, 2011.

There was more discussion on the trail systems.

Mr. Beckey questioned how the current trails and those being proposed will be maintained.

There was further discussion on the trail maintenance issue.

Mr. Boka invited everyone to the grand opening of the new Armory located at the airport. He stated it would take place at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, October 19, 2011.

Mr. Wieskamp stated the next meeting will be held on November 15, 2011. He stated discussion will continue on the questions for the Blue Zone Project application as well as the Mississippi Corridor project.

The meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Fran Donelson
Administrative Secretary