

MEETING MINUTES
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (DDA) MEETING
Thursday, July 28, 2005
3:00 – 5:00 PM
Fremont City Hall
Council Chambers

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 PM.

Members Present:	Lon Vredeveld	DDA Chairman
	James M. Rynberg	Fremont Mayor
	Marianne Boerigter	Director, Newaygo County Council for the Arts
	Lee Ann Glaser	Head – Downtown Fremont Retailers Association
	Ron Vliem	Executive Director, Fremont Area Chamber of Commerce
	Rob Zeldenrust	Main Street Business Operator

Staff Present:	Chris Yonker	Fremont City Manager
	Todd Blake	Fremont City Clerk/Finance Director
	Michele Ribant	Fremont Neighborhood & Economic Development Director

Members Absent:	Kevin Conley	Downtown Business Owner
	Kim Deur	Downtown Business Owner
	Ryan McNally	Downtown Attorney
	Kristie Van Simaey	Downtown Business Owner
	Ric Zahrt	Fremont Business Owner

Chairman Vredeveld opened the meeting by inviting the committee to share their thoughts on what is going on in the community. Ron Vliem gave a brief update on the National Baby Food Festival. He indicated that overall he was pleased with the outcome of this year's Festival. Lon Vredeveld gave a short synopsis on what took place at the Fremont Neighborhood Design Charrette in June. Michele Ribant invited the DDA to the Charrette follow-up session to be held on Tuesday, August 23, 2005 from 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

II. Oath of Office

The Oath of Office was administered by Todd Blake, the Fremont City Clerk. The following members took the Oath of Office:

- Lon Vredeveld, DDA Chairman
- James A. Rynberg
- Marianne Boerigter
- Lee Ann Glaser
- Ron Vliem
- Rob Zeldenrust

III. Approval of Minutes

Mayor Rynberg made a motion to approve the DDA minutes as presented from the June 23, 2005 DDA meeting; the motion was seconded by Rob Zeldenrust and the motion carried.

IV. Overview of the Fremont DDA Budget for Fiscal Year 2005/2006

Chris Yonker distributed the handout titled "Fremont DDA 2005 Tax Capture Report for the Fiscal Year 2005/2006" and then explained that the DDA is currently only capturing enough tax

increment financing (TIF) dollars to cover the remaining debt on the final bond issue for the Municipal Complex. Mr. Yonker explained that any TIF captures since 1994 (after the adoption of Proposal A) for non-debt expenses can only come from the tax levies of the City, Newaygo County and the District Library. He went on to say that the County and the Library can either opt in or opt out of any additional captures of their revenues beyond the debt capture.

Mr. Yonker indicated that the City looked into a few matters relating to ways the County or Library could “opt out”. He reported that they could opt out if: 1) a new district is formed; or 2) the current district is expanded. For example, if a new business came into the City under a 425 agreement and the boundaries of the DDA were extended, the County and Library could opt out of paying based on the new properties.

Mr. Yonker indicated that currently the City is capturing approximately \$75,000, but the City has the authority to capture more. However, the comment was made that if the City plans to capture more, the DDA better have a rock solid plan as to why we need more. Lon Vredevelde cautioned the DDA that the money that is spent should not be used just for plans but that some tangible, positive results should transpire as a result of capturing more money. Mr. Yonker reminded the DDA that they could only use the money from the DDA budget for projects within the DDA District.

Chairman Vredevelde inquired as to whether DDA funds could be used for promotional activity. Mr. Yonker indicated that staff will look into whether DDA funds can be used for marketing, and if they can, whether there are any limitations.

Mr. Yonker asked whether there were other questions, and seeing there were none, Mr. Yonker gave the floor back to Chairman Vredevelde.

V. Prioritizing the Work of the DDA

Chairman Vredevelde asked the Committee for their thoughts regarding prioritizing the projects outlined in the *Fremont Downtown Blueprint Plan* and the *Amended Development & Tax Increment Financing Plan*. Michele Ribant commented that many of the projects outlined in both plans, especially the ones categorized in the *Blueprint Plan* under “Physical Improvements” will be addressed soon. She indicated that a Request for Proposals (RFP) is being prepared to request the services of a design firm that will develop a Downtown Design Plan, which is to include a signage plan, landscape plan, lighting plan, etc. for the core downtown area.

After some discussion, Rob Zeldenrust moved, seconded by Marianne Boerigter to recommend to the Fremont City Council that a Request for Proposals (RFP) to prepare a Downtown Fremont Design Plan be sent to design firms so that work can begin to make physical improvements downtown Fremont. Motion carried.

Michele Ribant was instructed to e-mail the DDA a copy of the RFP for the preparation of the Downtown Fremont Design Plan when it was completed so that the DDA could comment on it if they wanted to before it was voted on by City Council.

The Committee talked about getting the merchants involved in some of the DDA projects. It was suggested that the DDA should arrange to have consultants who specialize in marketing give presentations to the merchants to help them gain ideas on how they can improve their business through marketing. The comment was made that the consultants should be professionals from outside the City; it was felt that outside consultants would be better received. It was also suggested that in the fall a meeting of the merchants should be called to discuss the ideas in the Blueprint plan that affect them.

Lon Vredevelde indicated that he would be chairing a meeting of the downtown restaurant owners on August 24 at 9:00 AM at the Fremont Area District Library to share ideas with them on how we can improve business downtown Fremont. Mr. Vredevelde thought that in the future there would be at least three groups under the Downtown Fremont Retailers Association:

1. Retailers Group
2. Restaurant Owners Group
3. Professional & Service Group

The comment was made that the DDA needs to market the work it is doing. The Committee concurred that we need to let people in the community know what we are doing through vehicles such as the City Beat newsletter, the City website and news articles in local newspapers. Ron Vliem indicated that he would promote activities through some of the Chamber's communication vehicles, such as the community calendar which is faxed weekly.

VI. Project Updates

• Farmers Market

Rob Zeldenrust stated that the Farmers Market Committee revised its "Wish List" for a Farmers Market pavilion based upon input received from local farmers. He indicated that the "Wish List" was revised to accommodate functional changes more so than aesthetic changes. The new "Wish List" is less stringent (e.g. no audio equipment is needed since live music is preferred.) He indicated that ideally the permanent structure will be built directly behind The ArtsPlace. It was explained that The ArtsPlace would like to have an artisan market in conjunction with the farmers market. Rob Zeldenrust felt that this would be a great collaboration.

• Museum

It was reported that the Fremont Museum Committee was recommending that an RFP for the preparation of an Economic Feasibility Study for a Museum be sent to firms that specialize in conducting such studies for potential museums. Ms. Ribant indicated that the Museum Committee wants to determine whether the Fremont community can financially support a local history museum. She noted that the RFP would be sent out within the month.

• Rental Housing Rehabilitation

Marianne Boerigter stated that she introduced the idea of rehabbing the upper level of The ArtsPlace for residential housing to her Board and she was pleased to say that they were open to the idea. Ms. Ribant reported that on August 8, 2005 at 10:00 AM at the Fremont Area District Library there will be an informational meeting on the proposed Fremont Rental Housing Rehab Program. She stated that all downtown property owners on Main Street who had upper level space were invited to learn more about the resources available for renovation of their space.

• Fremont Polarfest

Ron Vliem indicated that the Fremont Polarfest will take place on Saturday, February 4, 2006. He said that a committee has already formed to start planning the event and that the Chamber would be spearheading the effort. He also informed the DDA that the Chamber is putting on a Fall Harvest Festival, which will take place in Fremont on October 6, 7 & 8.

VII. Discussion on Site Visits to Other Communities

Ms. Ribant was asked to arrange visits by the DDA to other comparable communities (Greenville, Holland, Lowell, Grand Haven, Holland, etc.) so that DDA members can see how other cities have made positive changes in their downtowns. It was suggested that visits be arranged on two days so that DDA members have a choice as to which visit they would like to attend. It was also suggested that we limit the visits to two cities per day to ensure that the DDA had enough time in each city to learn about it from meetings with key downtown leaders. Ms. Ribant is to arrange to have officials from each city speak to the DDA about the positive things the town is doing to improve its business climate. One member suggested the DDA visit one of the cities in the *Blueprints for Michigan Downtowns Program* to learn of the types of changes their city has made thus far.

VIII. Meetings

It was decided that the next meeting would be set up via e-mail, with proper notice given to the public.

IX. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:50 PM.