

MEETING MINUTES
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (DDA) MEETING

Wednesday, September 28, 2005

7:30 – 9:00 AM

Fremont City Hall
Council Chambers

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 AM.

Members Present:	Lon Vredeveld	DDA Chair
	Marianne Boerigter	Director, Newaygo County Council for the Arts
	Kevin Conley	Downtown Business Owner
	Ryan McNally	Downtown Attorney
	Ron Vliem	Executive Director, Fremont Area Chamber of Commerce
	Ric Zahrt	Fremont Business Owner
Staff Present:	Todd Blake	Fremont City Clerk/Finance Director
	Michele Ribant	Fremont Neighborhood & Economic Development Director
Staff Absent:	Chris Yonker	Fremont City Manager
Members Absent:	Kim Deur	Downtown Business Owner
	Lee Ann Glaser	Head - Fremont Retailers Association
	James M. Rynberg	Fremont Mayor
	Kristie Van Simaey	Downtown Business Owner
	Rob Zeldenrust	Main Street Business Operator

II. Oath of Office

The Oath of Office was administered by City Clerk Todd Blake to the following members:

- Kevin Conley
- Ryan McNally
- Ric Zahrt

III. Approval of Minutes

Marianne Boerigter made a motion to approve the DDA minutes as presented from the July 28, 2005 meeting; the motion was seconded by Ryan McNally and carried.

IV. Update on Use of DDA Funds for Promotional Activities

Todd Blake reported that DDA funds are not to be used for promotional activities. He indicated that once the DDA identifies a project it would like to undertake, staff would research the best way to fund the project.

V. Update on DDA Site Visits to Other Communities

Chair Vredeveld reported that a group of DDA members went on a site visit to Grand Haven and Holland on September 14, 2005. He said they met with City and other officials who explained the status of their City's downtown planning process and that each City was unique in its development.

Mr. Vredeveld asked whether the DDA would be interested in going on another site visit. He recommended that the next visit be to cities more along the same size as Fremont in terms of population. The Committee indicated they would like staff to arrange another site visit but that it

would prefer not to visit towns that are bedroom communities to Grand Rapids. The DDA identified Ionia as one City they would like to visit. The DDA suggested that staff contact Fleis & Vandenbrink Engineering, Inc., the firm the City plans to work with on the Downtown Fremont Design Plan, to see if they have recommendations of possible cities that would be worth visiting.

VI. Discussion on Selection of Design Firm – Downtown Fremont Design Plan

Chair Vredevelde explained that a Selection Committee, of which he was a part, is recommending Fleis & Vandenbrink Engineering, Inc. as the firm the City will contract with to create the Downtown Fremont Design Plan. Mr. Vredevelde outlined the firm's qualifications and indicated that the firm received glowing reviews during their reference checks.

Michele Ribant indicated that there was an addendum to the Request for Proposals for the Downtown Fremont Design Plan project. She said the addendum outlined the City's desire to have two small projects in the Fremont Industrial Park completed as part of the project. Ms. Ribant pointed out that the addendum dated August 26, 2005 had been provided to the firms.

A motion was made by Ryan McNally to recommend to the City Council that Fleis & Vandenbrink Engineering, Inc. be the firm who will work with the City to create the Downtown Fremont Design Plan; the motion was seconded by Marianne Boerigter; and the motion carried.

VII. Discussion on Downtown Fremont Parking Program

It was reported that at one time Fremont had a parking assessment program where merchants paid 2/3 and the City paid 1/3 for parking improvements downtown. It was suggested that some time in the near future the City will most likely be establishing a new parking assessment program. Todd Blake indicated that the way the parking assessment program will be assessed in the future will most likely be different than how it was assessed in the past, but it will be equitable.

Michele Ribant indicated that in order to accommodate renters who will occupy downtown housing units through the newly proposed rental rehab program, the City needs to decide on a downtown parking policy. She summarized the proposed policy as outlined in the handout entitled "Downtown Parking". No one expressed an objection to the proposed parking policy. Ms. Ribant asked for feedback as to how parking for downtown tenants should be handled during busy times, such as the National Baby Food Festival. The members felt that parking would have to be on first-come, first-served basis.

VIII. Update on the Downtown Fremont Rental Housing Rehabilitation Program

Michele Ribant reported that eight (8) downtown property owners expressed an interest in the Fremont Rental Rehab Program. A grant application will be submitted to the Michigan State Housing Development Authority by the October 7, 2005 deadline requesting \$250,000 for the rehab of 10 units, subject to authorization by the Fremont City Council.

IX. Discussion on Façade Program

Michele Ribant reported that on Monday, October 3, 2005 she will meet with Bob Christensen, the State National Register Coordinator from the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office. She said they will tour downtown Fremont to determine if it qualifies as an historic district. She stated she would report the results of his visit at the next meeting.

She also noted that she has been researching various ways the City could structure a Fremont Façade Improvement Program, which would dovetail nicely with the Rental Rehab Program. She asked the DDA to comment on whether they wanted the program to allow for routine maintenance, such as the painting of facades. The DDA responded that they did indeed want to allow for maintenance as part of the program.

X. Update on Business Retention Visits

Lon Vredeveld reported that City staff is starting to make business retention visits to downtown businesses. He indicated the strategy is to make the first visits with property owners who have vacant storefronts to learn how the City can assist in bringing in tenants.

XI. Discussion on Selection of Museum Consultants – Fremont Museum Economic Feasibility Study

Ms. Ribant explained that the Museum Consultant Selection Committee met on Thursday, September 22, 2005 to select a consultant qualified to work with the community to create a Fremont Museum Economic Feasibility Study. She indicated that the Selection Committee is recommending Germann & Associates, Museum Consultants out of Dayton, Ohio. She also said that reference checks were conducted on Steve Germann and that he received high marks.

Ron Vliem motioned to recommend to the Fremont City Council that Germann & Associates be the firm to work with the Fremont community to create a Fremont Museum Economic Feasibility Study; motion was seconded by Ryan McNally and carried.

XII. Community Updates

Mr. Vliem reported on the recommendations of the Fremont Public School Citizen Advisory Committee. He indicated the Committee is recommending that the current high school be expanded in its present location. As part of that recommendation, the oldest section of the school to the north would likely be demolished. The new educational wing would be constructed off the southwest side of the existing building, likely necessitating the closure of Darling Avenue between Sheridan and Maple Streets. The existing cafeteria, offices and gymnasium would be retained.

Mr. Vliem also reminded members that the 1st Annual Fall Harvest Festival would take place on October 6-8, 2005.

XIII. Next Meeting

The DDA members expressed that they preferred having morning meetings. Lon Vredeveld indicated that the next meeting will be set after a timeline with Fleis & Vandenbrink is established for the Fremont Downtown Design Project.

IX. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:07 AM.