

**MINUTES
CITY OF DEKALB
CITIZENS' COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT COMMISSION
March 21, 2022**

The Citizens' Community Enhancement Commission (CCEC) held a regular meeting on March 21, 2022, in the Second Floor Training Room of the DeKalb Police Department, 700 West Lincoln Highway, DeKalb, Illinois.

Chair Brad Hoey called the meeting to order at 4:04 p.m.

A. ROLL CALL

Roll call was recorded by Management Analyst Scott Zak and the following members of the CCEC were present: Chair Brad Hoey, Melissa Beck, Jeanine Holcomb, Aaron Robertson, Helen Umbdenstock and Ellingsworth Webb. Absent were: Kenneth Brown. Also present were Mayor Cohen Barnes and City Council Liaison Scott McAdams.

B. APPROVAL OF AGENDA – ADDITIONS/DELETIONS

MOTION

Ms. Beck motioned to approve the agenda, seconded by Ms. Holcomb.

VOTE

The agenda was approved by unanimous voice vote.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – NOVEMBER 15, 2021

MOTION

Ms. Umbdenstock motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Robertson.

VOTE

The minutes were approved by unanimous voice vote.

D. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No public comments were received.

E. NEW BUSINESS

1. VETERANS MURAL

Chair Hoey said the idea for a Veterans Mural has been discussed in the past, first by former Mayor Jerry Smith. Chair Hoey introduced Michael Embry to discuss the idea further.

Mr. Embry said there have been several recent additions to the City to honor military veterans, including the flags of the five military branches at First and Locust Street, Locust Street between First and Fourth Street being designated as Honorary Veterans Way and light pole banners with the photos of military veterans downtown. To add to the efforts, Mr. Embry said he would like to see a veterans mural painted on the Egyptian Theatre along with benches to view it.

While painting the mural on the west wall has been suggested, Ms. Holcomb said the mural would need to be on the north wall since the Preservation of the Egyptian Theatre (PET) group, the owner of the building, would like to preserve the west wall for their use.

Mr. Embry said he would like to see a local artist selected through a contest led by the Commission so it does not appear the mural is the work of any one veterans organization. Ms. Holcomb asked that the design be approved by the PET group and said she does not see that as a roadblock.

Alderman McAdams said he would like to see benches as part of the project and noted the Realtors Association offers \$5,000 grants for project so long as benches are included. Mr. Webb noted he is part of an organization that is collecting plastic bottle caps to recycle into benches.

Mr. Embry suggested the mural design could be unveiled on Memorial Day when a time capsule is placed in the downtown Memorial Clock. Chair Hoey said that may be premature since the mural design needs to be approved first.

Mayor Barnes suggested working with NIU College of Visual and Performing Arts Dean Paul Kassel may provide a cooperation opportunity. He also shared that John Pappas, owner of the Plaza DeKalb building, has given permission to paint a mural on the rear of the building overlooking Van Buer Plaza.

Chair Hoey said the next step is for Mr. Embry to bring a design to the Commission and the PET and find an artist and funding. Mr. Embry said he would like the design to come from the Commission. Chair Hoey noted grant funding or donations would still be needed. Mr. Robertson estimated the cost of a 20-foot-long mural at \$8,000 to \$10,000.

2. PAINT-A-PLUG/PUBLIC ART WEBSITE

Chair Hoey said NIU 40tude group has started work to create a website with the Paint-A-Plug locations and application, but he believed the Commission felt the site should be more comprehensive with all public arts including murals. The Commission agreed this was their intent and that the site should start with the Paint-A-Plug locations along with the mural policy and application. Later, information on the existing murals can be added. It was suggested there could be a

link to exhibits and performances. Mayor Barnes said he would like to see plaques with QR codes mounted next to the murals that would link to the public art website.

3. PAINT-A-PLUG NEWS RELEASE

Chair Hoey said a news release for the next season of Paint-A-Plug has been prepared. It reflects the increased incentive for artists of \$100 being offered by OC Creative. The Commission agreed the news release should go out in early April.

4. PEDESTRIAN WALK-THROUGH PROJECT

Chair Hoey said he and Mr. Zak had met with Assistant Public Works Director Andy Raih and Brian Oster to discuss Mr. Oster's proposal for a public arts project in the pedestrian passthrough between Van Buer Plaza and Lincoln Highway. For the project, Public Works would create a grid between the two buildings from which items could be hung. Examples presented to the Commission included kites, pinwheels and upside-down fabric sunflowers.

Mayor Barnes noted the grid infrastructure will allow for a variety of items to be hung, and Chair Hoey agreed the idea was to change out the installation from time to time.

Mr. Hoey said he would draft a letter to the two buildings owners requesting their permission to install the grid. After permission is secured, the City Attorney will be asked to write a liability waiver.

Ms. Beck suggested the idea could also be done in the alley from Van Buer Plaza and North Second Street. Chair Hoey said that could be pursued after the pedestrian passthrough is completed.

5. DOWNTOWN PLANTERS PROGRAM

Ms. Beck said a pilot program to improve the in-ground downtown planters will start on Second, Third and Locust Streets and was presented to the Downtown Merchants group. The businesses' commitment is to plant and weed the planters. The city will provide the flowers and water them.

Ms. Beck presented options for a small sign that businesses can purchase and place in the planter they are tending. Prices ranged from \$25 to \$50. Chair Hoey and Ms. Holcomb felt the price should not exceed \$30. Chair Hoey added that since the program is being endorsed by the Committee, the sign should be purchased locally. Ms. Beck will continue to evaluate options.

F. OLD BUSINESS

1. LET'S MOVE TO THE MUSIC

Ms. Umbdenstock said she will be calling each business owner who expressed interest in the program to see if they would like to make a donation to have NIU students perform at their businesses. Egyptian Theatre Executive Director Alex Nerad has given permission for the donations to be received through the theater since it is a 501(c)3. Ms. Umbdenstock said once five people have committed and \$3,000 has been raised, she will promote the program on local radio stations and have students performing when the weather allows. She said the program could become a pilot to share with other universities. Chair Hoey suggested going in front of the Downtown Merchants again to remind them of the opportunity.

2. GRANT UPDATE

Chair Hoey said the City is expecting the announcement of a grant to support the Commission's work; however, the organization providing the grant has embargoed the release of information until March 24. Since the Commission's next regular meeting is in May, it was agreed that a special meeting should be held to begin implementing the grant. Mr. Zak will check if April 4 at four p.m. would be acceptable for a meeting.

G. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION

Mr. Webb motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. Holcomb.

VOTE

The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote, and the meeting was adjourned at 5:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott Zak
Management Analyst

Minutes approved by the Citizens' Community Enhancement Commission on April 11, 2022.