

MINUTES
Community Improvement Action Team
Tuesday, September 20, 2011 – 3:00 p.m.
City Hall – Lower Level Conference Room

Members Present: Gary Carlson, Bill Phelan, Laura Liegois, Sarah Lande, Ann Meeker, Brenda Christensen, John Beckey, Rochelle Conway, and Mayor Dick O'Brien.

Members Absent: Steve Boka, Gary Wieskamp, Richard Klimes, Gregg Mandsager, and Holly Thomas

Guests Present: Andrew Fangman, Barb Christensen, Terry Curry, and Dianna Stelzner

Gary Carlson called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m.

Bill Phelan moved to approve the minutes of the August 16, 2011 regular meeting. Seconded by Sarah Lande. All ayes; motion carried.

There were no comments from citizens or from Mayor O'Brien.

Mr. Carlson stated the purpose of today's meeting is to discuss "The Healthiest State Initiative" that was recently announced by Governor Terry Branstad. He presented a short video of the "The Healthiest State Initiative" which was also viewed by the Iowa Business Council. He then passed out information providing more detail of the Initiative.

He stated that what the information does not show is the "Blue Zones Project" which is one of the centerpieces of the Initiative. He stated that Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield is collaborating with Healthways to ignite a movement to improve the well-being of Iowa communities. He then explained what a Blue Zone is. He stated that if Muscatine is among the 10 communities selected for this project, it will open the door to possible grant funding from Wellmark. He then introduced Mary Odell.

Ms. Odell stated that every five years the Muscatine County Board of Health is required to do a needs assessment. She stated the most recent assessment will be completed in February 2012. She stated that health wise, Iowa is ranked the worst nationally and that Muscatine County is the worst in the State of Iowa. She outlined what has been identified in the assessment, focusing on the health aspect.

Dyann Roby arrived at 3:20 p.m.

Bill Phelan stated the GMCCI is working with its 350 business members to get them involved in the Initiative. He stated he felt it was important to step up to the plate because it helps not only the businesses but also their employees and their families.

Mr. Carlson pointed out that the GMCCI newsletter will be a helpful tool in getting information out to its members and the public. He stated many of the larger organizations are expressing an interest in the Initiative. He listed HNI, Muscatine Foods, Hy-Vee, and Fareway as some of the organizations that have become involved.

Barb Christensen talked about an initiative called "Let's Move" for museum and gardens which is geared toward young people. She will be providing information to Leadership Muscatine concerning a possible project which could be the development of a trail between the Art Center and Trinity.

Mayor O'Brien asked if an actual plan has been developed.

Mr. Carlson stated an application for the Blue Zones Project will be coming out soon. He suggested the possibility of creating a Steering Committee that would reach out to all groups allowing the submission of an application representing the entire community.

Mr. Carlson stated a lot of companies in Muscatine currently have wellness programs. He explained what HNI is doing with its wellness program. He stated it is HNI's goal to attain a healthier workforce and to get the message home to the families of its employees. He stated wellness becomes a cost issue for those companies offering health insurance.

Dick O'Brien asked how Muscatine's success would be measured. There was discussion concerning the various ways this could be accomplished. In addition, there was also discussion about the rise in obesity, heart problems, diabetes, and other illnesses associated with obesity.

The need for a Steering Committee was suggested once again by Mr. Carlson.

Barb Christensen stated that she felt Muscatine Community College should be part of the proposed Steering Committee.

Mr. Carlson stated a determination needs to be made about who should be contacted to serve on the committee.

Mr. Carlson stated he felt the city's Parks Department should be part of the committee.

There was discussion concerning the criteria that would need to be met to be a winner in the Blue Zones Project.

Mr. Carlson suggested that the CIAT be part of that Steering Committee.

Ms. Meeker asked if the application has been received.

Mr. Carlson stated the application is on the website. He stated the purpose of today's meeting was to stimulate discussion.

Ms. Odell stated the initial deadline is October 28, 2011 for the submission of a "statement of intent". She stated this statement is not huge and would contain basic information about the community.

Ms. Odell stated that even if the city does not win, it will have won in community effort.

Mr. Carlson suggested different ways to draw the community's attention to this endeavor.

Ms. Odell stated that Mike Ferguson from the Journal is ready to go with coverage.

Mr. Carlson asked if those members present supported the CIAT's involvement in the Steering Committee.

Ms. Meeker moved to approve the involvement of the CIAT in the Steering Committee. Seconded by Ms. Lande. All ayes; motion carried.

Mr. Carlson then asked if anyone present would be interested in serving on the committee as a CIAT delegate.

It was suggested that Gary Wieskamp, who was not present, be asked to serve as the CIAT's delegate. Mr. Carlson stated he would contact Mr. Wieskamp to see if he would be willing to serve.

Ms. Odell also recommended Bill Phelan, a representative from the school district, and Jim Hayes from Trinity as people to be asked to serve on the committee.

Ms. Meeker suggested contacting MCSA to see if someone there might be interested.

Ms. Meeker asked what the next step would be.

Mr. Carlson stated that first it will be necessary to finalize the creation of the Steering Committee.

Mr. Phelan stated that right now only the "Statement of Intent" is due. He stated the application for the Blue Zones Project is not due yet.

Barb Christensen stated she would be going to the Leadership Muscatine group with the trail project.

Mr. Phelan stated it is important that we have a strong community message.

Ms. Roby suggested contacting Brett Olsen.

Mr. Carlson stated that he is already on board. He stated that Jeff Canfield of Hy-Vee would probably be willing to serve on the committee.

Under Action Team Reports, Sarah Lande, briefly discussed what was happening with the Hershey/Houser Streetscape Project. She then stated that efforts are underway to improve the look of the Mark Twain Overlook.

Ms. Lande then stated that the Weed Park to Wild Can Den Trail Project is nearing completion and will be presented to City Council at its October 6, 2011 City Council meeting. She then talked about the connection to Kent Stein Park. She stated steps are underway to prepare an application to extend the trail further south. She stated the federal government will be asked to hold the earmarked funds. She stated the trails will soon be on the MAGIC system. She ended by stating the trail group still meets regularly.

Mr. Carlson stated the trails are part of the story of Muscatine as it pertains to the Initiative and Blue Zones Project. He stated they are another way to market Muscatine.

Ms. Lande stated the group is trying to put "Stay Right" markings on the riverfront trail. She ended by saying that a lot of good things are happening in Muscatine.

Ms. Meeker, speaking in reference to the downtown area, stated the Downtown Action Alliance has morphed into a promotional group. She stated they are currently working on the upcoming Scarecrow Weekend.

Ms. Meeker stated that plans are underway for bringing a hotel to the downtown area. She stated the plans include replacing the metal building next to the Hotel Muscatine.

Ms. Meeker then talked about the housing proposal that was in the newspaper recently. She stated that programs such as this need to target those who do not have transportation. She stated she feels space in the downtown area should be utilized for this purpose. She stated an example would be the old Sun Mart store property. She stated it is critical to have a walkable community.

Under Community Art, Barb Christensen stated she has been talking with Kent Sissel about the possibility of doing some type of plaque on a granite slab recognizing Alexander Clark for placement across from the Clark House. She stated this could also be a Leadership Muscatine project. She stated it is important that Alexander Clark be recognized in the city. She stated that someone will be coming to Muscatine to look at the preservation of the Clark gravesite.

There was no cultural report.

Under other business, Brenda Christensen of Keep Muscatine Beautiful stated that the basketball court on the riverfront will be a skating rink this winter. She stated that KMB paid the money up front (\$6,000) and now will begin the fundraising to cover the money spent for the skating rink.

Mr. Carlson stated this would also be a good Leadership Muscatine project.

She then thanked the city who will be maintaining the rink.

Mr. Carlson thanked City Council for supporting the repairs to the bridge lighting.

Ms. Lande stated efforts are being made to get a dog water fountain on the riverfront trail. She stated the Arboretum group will be fundraising in an effort to connect the trail to the Veterans memorial.

Ms. Meeker stated the paddlewheel boat will be out of the water this fall. She explained that it is in its fifth year of operation, and the Coast Guard is required to inspect it.

Mr. Carlson stated that CIAT will continue to meet monthly during the Healthy State Initiative.

Mr. Carlson stated that on October 12, 2011 from 4:30 to 7 p.m. the second meeting on the Mississippi Drive Corridor Study will be held. He stated the actual presentation will take place at 5:30 p.m.

Andrew Fangman, the City Planner, stated this meeting should prove to be more interesting because there will actually be drawings on display.

John Beckey asked how people are made aware of the meeting.

Mr. Fangman stated the Journal usually does newspaper article closer to the event.

Mr. Beckey stated he would personally be willing to pay for a ¼ or ½ page ad to make people aware of this event. He stated that most people will not see the newspaper article.

Ms. Roby stated it will be announced on the city's website and Facebook page.

Brenda Christensen suggested the posting of fliers in public places.

Mr. Fangman stated the public notice needs to include graphics that will grab peoples' attention.

Mr. Carlson stated that Holly Thomas of Trinity is involved in the Healthy State Initiative.

Ms. Meeker stated that another possible Leadership Muscatine project would be lighted kiosks in the downtown area.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 4:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Fran Donelson
Administrative Secretary