



**DAHLONEGA DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT  
AUTHORITY/ MAIN STREET BOARD**

**Meeting Minutes**

**March 5, 2020, 8:45 AM**

Board Members Present: Mike Miller, Chair; Hal Williams, Vice Chair; Eddie Wayne, Treasurer; Tony Owens, Ryan Puckett, and DeEnna Walters.

Members Absent: Donna Logan

Staff Present: Shannon Ferguson, Executive Director and Cari McDuffie, Main Street Coordinator

Others Present: Sam Norton, Mayor; Kevin Herrit, Community Development Director; Sam McDuffie, Tourism Director; Bobbi Larson, UNG

Call to Order: Chairman Mike Miller opened the meeting at 8:53 a.m.

Executive Director Shannon Ferguson requested to amend the agenda as follows: defer February 2020 financials to the April 7, 2020 meeting and remove the Parking Leases/Management item, as listed on the agenda, for further development and possible review during the regularly scheduled April board meeting.

Motion and Vote: Hal Williams motioned to accept the amended agenda as requested by Ferguson, and Eddie Wayne seconded the motion with unanimous approval by the board.

- I. Old Business
  - a. Review and approve February 6, 2020 minutes – Staff indicated a spelling error with the word “Reservoir” was noted and would be corrected.  
**Motion and Vote: DeEnna Walters motioned to approve the February 6, 2020 minutes with staff spelling correction. Eddie Wayne seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.**
  - b. Review preliminary February 2020 financials – Item deferred to April 2020 meeting as part of amended agenda unanimously approved at the opening of the meeting.
- II. Continuing Business
  - a. Head House (159 Choice Avenue) – Ferguson noted the signed contract with Kirby Glaze and consultants with 4PM (Public-Private Partnership Project Management). Consultants to hold kick off meeting the week of

March 9, 2020. Chairman Mike Miller offered that he and Ferguson have worked to layout to the DDA office space upstairs and in the coming weeks, Ferguson would be working with consultants to identify possible architects and potential contractors, understanding that an initial report from the consultants would help guide those next steps. Ferguson added that in the short-term DDA/Main Street staff would be focused on the annual reaccreditation state site visit with the Department of Community Affairs on March 23, 2020. Chairman Miller inquired about any new prospects for the first floor; Ferguson advised that the three original prospects remain, but no new first floor tenant prospects have been cultivated at this time.

- b. Old School Property (147 N. Park Street) – Conceptual design has been submitted by a prospect for the old school that will be covered under New Business. Discussions with additional prospects previously noted continue.

### III. New Business

- a. Parking Leases/Management – Deferred to a future board meeting as part of the amended agenda unanimously approved at the onset of the meeting.
- b. Conceptual Design Submission (Prospect B) – Ferguson advised regarding recusal guidance provided to DDA Board Member Ryan Puckett as it relates to this potential prospect/developer. Puckett, a local business owner, advised Ferguson that he has had preliminary discussions with Prospect B regarding the relocation of his personal retail business to the old school property as part of Prospect B’s proposed project. Ferguson advised the board that Puckett cannot talk about the retail elements of Prospect B’s proposal, and would need to recuse himself of any votes associated with the proposal, but is free to offer his comments as part of the discussion as it relates to the overall development of the property. Chairman Miller walked the board through the renderings, detailing the adaptive reuse of the old school for a microbrewery, a few retail shops, and rooftop dining. The board conducted extensive discussions as it relates to this particular property as well as the board’s vision for and the community elements needed for this property. DeEnna Walters inquired about rooftop dining and any difficulties the City has with the proposed rooftop dining. Community Development Director Kevin Herrit was in attendance and provided clarifications to the board regarding city

ordinances. Rooftop dining is an option, but the process for requesting approval depends upon whether the property is located inside or outside the historic district. Vice Chairman Hal Williams offered that this property is not within the historic district. Ferguson reminded the board that it was previously rezoned PUD (planned unit development) for a potential hotel development project at this location, but that any new project would require the Council's approval and affirmation of the PUD designation for the proposed project. Ferguson also noted Prospect B's desire for an on-site well, specific to the microbrewing needs, noting that the Prospect had been advised that this would require a separate approval process via the City and that there are no guarantees for approval of a well in lieu of city water. Ferguson also noted the distribution element of the proposed project, and the potential higher impact to the surrounding streets and neighbors for larger trucks moving in and out of the site. However, the Prospect has not been able to offer specific distribution numbers currently. Ferguson added that Prospect B, at this time, does not have an interest in fully developing the property into a larger mixed-use development—the Prospect is primarily interested in the redevelopment of the school building, using some of the outdoor space for both outdoor consumption for customers and community events such as the Farmers Market, and using the remaining acreage for surface parking. Ferguson advised the board that she is not looking for a vote today regarding Prospect B's proposal, but generally needs more specific input from the board regarding what elements should be included on this site as part of any future developments. These elements would then be used to formulate future discussions with any potential developer but would also provide Prospect B with critical guidance on how and if he/she were to move forward with more refined designs. Ferguson emphasized the need for consolidated public discussion by the board to document the board's intended vision for this redevelopment project. The general consensus of the board for Prospect B's conceptual design is that the board is not opposed to the idea of a microbrewery at this location, but board members do have some concerns specific to large-scale distribution on this site and mitigating downtown and neighborhood impacts associated with traffic and truck-size. Following detailed discussion, the board concluded that their vision for this parcel/site is as follows:

- i. Prefer to see a fully utilized and developed parcel as opposed to just a prospect focused solely on an adaptive reuse of the school building.
- ii. The inclusion of a microbrewery on this site is desirable, but the level and scale must align with the parcel size and integrate with adjacent downtown/neighborhood character.
- iii. Outdoor dining and/or rooftop dining is desired for development on this site.
- iv. Additional retail should be included at this site to expand downtown footprint, grow city's economy, and provide new features for visitors.
- v. Community elements for this site need to include a small multi-purpose outdoor space and an indoor large group conference/event space (200-250) to help drive revenue and support Tourism Committee's efforts to bring medium to large conferences/groups to Dahlongega.
- vi. Parking must all be self-contained to the site but could present opportunities to expand public downtown parking options.

Board discussed the possible inclusion of an amphitheater on this site due to topography but concluded that noise concerns and small parcel size make this location less desirable for this element. Williams noted the opportunity costs for retaining the building may be too high. Tony Owens noted high costs associated with asbestos abatement. Ferguson committed to ensuring the board and the Council had sufficient quantitative and qualitative facts to make a final decision on the development project for this site.

*Note: During this discussion item, Mayor Sam Norton, in attendance but leaving early for another meeting, offered comments as he was leaving, stating that he appreciated the deliberation, noting it was time well-spent, and reassuring the board that the board has the full confidence of the Council to make these tough decisions. Thanked the board for their efforts and all the board input, and that the Council looked forward to seeing the outcome of these discussions.*

#### IV. Main Street / DDA Monthly Report

Main Street Project Coordinator Cari McDuffie updated on upcoming events and administrative procedures underway for special event applications. Board had no questions for McDuffie regarding her monthly report. Ferguson

offered to answer any questions regarding her report as specific details had been covered under New Business. Ferguson further updated the board regarding previous action taken by the board to support the federal grant application by the Holly Theater. Additional details have developed specific to the DDA's involvement and role: 1) As the entity eligible to apply for these federal dollars, the DDA would be responsible for federal grant reporting, and 2) the DDA, in partnership with the City of Dahlonega, would be responsible for executing the procurement of the general contractor for this construction project using federal grant funds. Ferguson advised the board that the City Manager Bill Schmid was in support of this role, provided that the grant administration could be performed by the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC) and any administration costs were covered by the grant and/or the Holly Theater with no additional expense to the City or the DDA. Schmid was also willing to support the procurement process with Executive Director Ferguson working with the City's procurement team to execute. Ferguson also advised that the grant application would be led by the Holly Theater with direct support from the GMRC, and the DDA Executive Director would support the overall application efforts and conduct final review and approval with the DDA Executive Board. Chairman Miller inquired about the funding and asked Ferguson to further detail any DDA incurred expense(s). Ferguson advised that the DDA was a conduit for federal matching grant funds to be distributed via a SAMs account to the Holly Theater. The Holly Theater is responsible for those matching funds not the DDA. Walters inquired about how the funding is distributed, specifically before or after work is completed. Ferguson explained that the release of funds is on a scheduled timeline and in concert with the federal grant administrator, GMRC, that the DDA is contracting with for administration.

**Motion and Vote: Tony Owens motioned that the DDA move forward with the agreement with the GMRC to serve as the grant administrator for the Holly Theater project with no cost to the DDA. Eddie Wayne seconded the motion. Vice Chair Hal Williams, also a member of the Holly Theater board, abstained. The motion carried unanimously.**

- V. Announcements from partner agencies
  - a. City of Dahlonega – City Manager Bill Schmid had a county meeting and was unable to attend.
  - b. University of North Georgia – Economic Development and Community Engagement Director Bobbi Larson noted the state site visit on March 31

for the Georgia Department of Economic Development. The visit will focus on showcasing Dahlonega and Lumpkin County to state officials and featuring specific properties and potential industry interests. DDA Board Member and UNG director DeEnna Walters noted the Radar Ridge development and ongoing discussions with city officials and the Georgia Department of Transportation (DOT) regarding a potential HAWK signal to ensure safe crossing from that site across Morrison-Moore Parkway.

- c. Chamber of Commerce/Tourism Office – Sam McDuffie updated meeting attendees on the “Travel Blazers” award received for the Dahlonega AVA/Plateau designation, an ongoing rebranding effort for tourism that includes a new logo and a new website, and the potential for Dahlonega to be the next community assisted by the Explore Georgia tourism product development team, evaluating Dahlonega and Lumpkin County tourism efforts sometime in 2021. Board member Tony Owens asked McDuffie to also detail David Zelski commercials underway. McDuffie shared that two Dahlonega segments will be airing in April on Fox Sports South as part of the show “The Excursion with David Zelski.” One episode focuses on outdoor recreation in Dahlonega and Lumpkin County, while the other centers on the wine/dine/culture of Dahlonega. McDuffie advised that the Tourism board will also be utilizing B-roll from that filming in other ways to promote tourism.
- d. Historic Preservation Commission – Staff liaison and Community Development Director Kevin Herrit advised that three COAs (Certificates of Appropriateness) would be going before the Commission this month—two are for 40 Public Square South and one is for 36 Public Square South. Ferguson inquired about any planned rezonings; Herrit said nothing within DDA footprint but advised regarding short-term rental legislation at the state level. Herrit also noted a project with 80 accessory dwelling units targeting graduate student housing needs. Owens mentioned a specific residential concern for his neighborhood, regarding a house with multiple occupants, generating parking and other concerns, and multiple code enforcement contacts. Herrit asked Owens to connect with him directly. Further discussion occurred between the board and Herrit regarding short-term rentals, the intent of the state legislation, and payment of associated taxes for this type rental.
- e. Dahlonega Downtown Business Association (DDBA) – No representatives were in attendance but Chairman Miller attended the last meeting as a

member and reported the DDBA's installation of new officers and their intent to present again to the DDA and Council regarding Old Fashioned Christmas. Board Member DeEnna Walters mentioned outreach to DDBA member Jane O'Gorman regarding UNG's desire to partner with the DDBA and others on move-in day in August to better engage parents downtown and get them off-campus while students focus on their activities that day. Both Miller and McDuffie noted that this had been presented at the most recent meeting and both the DDBA and Tourism staff were engaging in this effort to support UNG.

- f. Lumpkin County Development Authority – (no attendees)

Adjourn: Hal Williams motioned to adjourn at 9:58 a.m. DeEnna Walters seconded with the motion passing unanimously.