



CITY COUNCIL

Nominations & Appointments Committee

**Monday, March 2, 2015
Meeting Report**

Attendance: D. Sterner, S. Marmarou, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz

Others Attending: S. Katzenmoyer, F. Denbowski

The meeting was called to order at 4:14 pm by Mr. Marmarou.

I. Interviews

Richard McDougall (reappointment – DID Authority)

Mr. Marmarou questioned if Mr. McDougall was able to attend the meetings. Mr. McDougall stated that he has only missed one meeting to date.

Mr. Marmarou questioned what DID does well and what it needs to improve. Mr. McDougall expressed the belief that DID does an excellent job with clean and safe. He stated that there are currently eleven ambassadors on routine patrols. He stated that DID is moving into marketing and special events.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that she recently visited the Quebec Winter Carnival and has some ideas.

Mr. McDougall stated that the Berks County Community Foundation provided \$50,000 for the Fire and Ice Fest. He noted his hope that they will become more involved in Reading's downtown. He stated that sponsors are difficult to find. He suggested that Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz relay her ideas to Mr. Broad.

Mr. McDougall stated that his philosophy is that you must increase the number of people who visit the downtown to increase economic development downtown. He stated that these people will support the existing businesses and encourage others to open businesses downtown. He

expressed the belief that if more “good” people visit downtown, the “bad” people will relocate. He noted his hope for a dedicated downtown police presence.

Mr. Sterner noted that DID has lost a large assessment. He questioned if existing businesses are engaged. Mr. McDougall stated that the ambassadors have a routine pattern of checking with all businesses. He stated that there is also communication with business owners. He noted that it is important for the ambassadors to be seen.

Mr. McDougall stated that DID performs trash and leaf removal and paints public structures. He stated that they have recently restarted the newsletter and are trying to organize the businesses into associations. He noted the need for people to be comfortable walking downtown and his goal of getting more people on the streets.

Mr. Sterner expressed the belief that the Fire and Ice Fest was a great step forward. He stated that he was listening to Feedback and a caller listed other events that occurred in the past – Easter Parade, car shows, etc. He noted the need for events to bring people downtown. Mr. McDougall stated that DID is currently working with Maple Grove Raceway to bring an event downtown. He expressed the belief that moving the farmer’s market to 5th & Penn Sts will be great and he noted the need for more vendors on the sidewalks.

Mr. Sterner expressed the belief that DID needs to be forward thinking. Mr. McDougall stated that the DID reauthorization is approaching. He noted the need to work cooperatively with the Main Street Board. He stated that DID is also working on events with the arena. He stated that the Holiday Parade remains an excellent event. He described the Fire and Ice photo contest and stated that half of the entries were from those who live outside Reading. He noted the need to bring everyone downtown.

Mr. Marmarou stated that he visits the Pagoda weekly. He stated that, in his estimation, 75% of those visiting are not City residents. Mr. McDougall stated that Reading needs to get people downtown.

Mr. Sterner stated that on his last show on BCTV he discussed bringing the cable car back and running it from the Pagoda to downtown. Mr. Marmarou stated that this would be a big project. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that the trail is still there. She stated that many people visit the mountain. Mr. McDougall stated that the study done by the Visitor Center stated that the focus should be on outdoor recreational opportunities.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned how Mr. McDougall envisions interaction with the Main Street Board. Mr. McDougall stated that DID is working to understand this relationship. He explained that Greater Reading Economic Partnership was working on Main Street designation in the past. A former Mayor wanted the City to take over designation so that it would be awarded the Main Street funding. He stated that the Main Street program requires a full-time dedicated employee and the only way to achieve that was to name Mr. Broad as the Main Street manager.

He stated that the Main Street Board is comprised different people and it must be determined how to work together. He stated that DID handles all Main Street funding.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that she reads both sets of minutes and noted the need for synergy. Mr. McDougall suggested that the DID Authority and the Main Street Board be merged or to increase the number of DID members.

Mr. Sterner stated that separate meetings are held but that communication needs to be open and frequent. Mr. McDougall agreed.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the addition of the hotel to the downtown. Mr. McDougall stated that the hotel was built with a LERTA and that LERTA is assessment based. He stated that he appreciates the addition of the hotel but that the funding will be incremental over time.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned what Mr. McDougall would tell Council about reauthorizing DID. Mr. McDougall stated that he would request Council's continued support of its downtown engine. He stated that DID's assessment is approximately \$300,000 annually for downtown specific expenses. He stated that without DID the downtown would deteriorate. He noted the need to find a way to link businesses from 2nd through 11th Sts.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz expressed the belief that downtown workers feel safer knowing the ambassadors are in the area. She stated that no one goes out for lunch or stays downtown after work.

Mr. Marmarou expressed the belief that the businesses downtown must offer something for these people so they do go out for lunch or stay after work.

Mr. Sterner expressed the belief that special events downtown are important. Mr. McDougall agreed and noted his hope for weekly events.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned if Mr. McDougall was aware of the new Reading Eagle initiative. Mr. McDougall stated that he is but noted that he is unsure how it will affect DID.

Mr. Marmarou stated that his church used to hold many events. He stated that they had to decrease the number of events held as many of the same people were active and they could no longer keep that pace. Mr. McDougall stated that this happens with many organizations.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned how the City can assist DID. Mr. McDougall noted his appreciation for the assistance of Public Works. He noted his hope for a dedicated police patrol and the City's continued support with events.

Mr. McDougall stated that he is available to speak with Council at any time. The Committee thanked Mr. McDougall for his service and dedication.

The Nominations and Appointments Committee recommends the reappointment of Richard McDougall to the DID Authority.

II. Minority Business Procurement Board/Equal Business Opportunity Board

Ms. Katzenmoyer stated that she has not yet been able to meet with Mr. Denbowski to discuss this issue. Mr. Denbowski stated that the meeting is scheduled for tomorrow. He stated that he will be sharing information he received regarding the potential for a third party review. He stated that the Reading School District uses an Equity Specialist in compliance with an agreement with the PA Human Relations Commission.

Mr. Denbowski stated that Mr. Bemberick's departure will also affect this issue as he would have been the liaison to this Board.

Mr. Denbowski stated that people are using social media platforms to spread untruths about City operations. He noted the need to debunk these posts.

Ms. Katzenmoyer stated that there will be a more detailed update at the next meeting.

The Nominations and Appointments Committee adjourned at 4:53 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by,
Shelly Katzenmoyer, CMC
Deputy City Clerk