

**CITY OF MONROE**  
**DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**  
**MARCH 23, 2023 – 8:00 A.M.**

The Downtown Development Authority met for their regular meeting.

Those Present:	Lisa Reynolds Anderson	Chairman
	Meredith Malcom	Vice-Chairman
	Andrea Gray	Secretary
	Whit Holder	Board Member
	Ross Bradley	Board Member
	Chris Collins	Board Member
	Myoshia Crawford	City Council Representative
	Lee Malcom	City Council Representative

Those Absent:	Wesley Sisk	Board Member
---------------	-------------	--------------

Staff Present:	Leigh Ann Aldridge, Logan Propes, Beth Thompson, Beverly Harrison, Kaitlyn Stubbs, Sara Shropshire, John Howard
----------------	--

Visitors:	Tyler Gregory, Julie Treadwell, Kim Mulkey-Smith, Steve Brown
-----------	---

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

**1. Roll Call**

Chairman Anderson noted that all Committee Members were present except Wesley Sisk; Committee Member Whit Holder would be arriving a little late. There was a quorum.

**2. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

**a. February 9, 2023 Minutes**

To approve the minutes as presented.

*Motion by Collin, seconded by Gray.  
Passed Unanimously*

**3. Approval of Financial Statements**

**a. December Financials**

To approve the December 2022 Financials.

*Motion by Bradley, seconded by Crawford.  
Passed Unanimously*

**b. January Financials**

Finance Director Beth Thompson explained that she will start including the Trial Balance in with the Financial Report each month.

To approve the January 2023 Financials.

*Motion by Bradley, seconded by Malcom.  
Passed Unanimously*

*Committee Member Whit Holder arrived at 8:18 am.*

**II. PUBLIC FORUM**

**1. Monroe Museum – QR Code Project**

Ms. Kim Smith presented the Quick Response Code Project. She discussed the connection between preservation and sustainability, and strategically managing that link to produce local economic growth. She explained the Around Town Gallery Proposal, which will digitally open their collection of artifacts. The project will take the QR Code technology to buildings, and the content will tell the story behind the buildings. The categories will include the physical building, the site location, and it will differentiate between City and County. She handed out a QR Code Prototype, which would be displayed on the buildings.

Mr. Steve Brown discussed different historical locations in Downtown that help to make the historical footprint of Monroe.

Committee Member Chris Collin stated it is an inexpensive way to share history, using technology to connect with history. He suggested they include a link to receive donations for the museum.

The Committee, Ms. Smith, Mr. Brown, and Ms. Aldridge discussed the project and the museum.

Ms. Smith questioned whether the Committee would be interested in collaborating with them to collect and connect information.

Vice-Chairman Meredith Malcom suggested that the Committee discuss the project at the Planning Retreat in April.

**2. More than Murals Report**

Ms. Sara Shropshire stated that Monroe was chosen as one of the twelve Cities allowed to participate at the More Than Murals Conference.

Mr. Tyler Gregory stated the conference had some of the top place makers in the State, which included Sadie Krawczyk. They learned that economic development and placemaking go hand in hand. An inactive spot can be made very active by incorporating placemaking, such as pocket parks. The workshop gave them step by step tools on how to make these types of places with a small budget and support from the community. He discussed the process of shaping a place, identifying the space, getting public input, and identifying the needs of the community.

Ms. Julie Treadwell thanked the Committee for their support and gave some examples of projects. She discussed putting more energy into the Sculpture Garden at the Art Center. It

would give people another place to sit, eat lunch, read a book, and interact with their kids. The garden has a great foundation, but needs some updates for safety. She presented a vision board, which is not a formal presentation. One of their ideas is to bring in rocks; the rocks can be painted and kids can climb on them. The project could be taken further year after year. She requested ideas for possible partners, vendors, and donations.

Committee Member Chris Collin questioned whether donations could have signs saying where the donation came from.

Ms. Treadwell answered that there could be signs.

Ms. Shropshire explained they still have to get input from the public; the workshop stresses the idea that the art must be guided by the community. The City has gotten an \$8,000 Grant from the Georgia Council for the Arts, which requires the project to be completed by the end of December. The public engagement will be starting soon.

Ms. Treadwell stated the community still has to be gaged to figure out what they want to see. There will be lighting for safety, but the type of lighting will depend on donations and their budget. There is still a lot of work that must happen but wanted to let the Committee know about the grant, the deadline, and their ideas.

The Committee, Ms. Shropshire, Ms. Treadwell, and Mr. Gregory further discussed placemaking, grant funding, partnerships, donations, and possible areas.

Ms. Lee Malcom stated the City owns a pocket park on Walton Street, and she feels the neighbors would join in on a project.

City Administrator Logan Propes stated that he received a landscape plan a couple of weeks ago; the City will just need to find the right partners.

### **III. CITY UPDATE**

City Administrator Logan Propes explained the substantial completion for the Town Green has been moved to August. He explained the City started discussing the project five years ago this month, and there is approximately five months left until completion.

### **IV. COUNTY UPDATE**

Ms. Leigh Ann Aldridge stated that John Ward has indicated that he would like to be involved and will start attending the meetings.

### **V. COMMUNITY WORK PLAN & REPORTS**

#### **1. Downtown Design**

Chairman Anderson stated she will get the planters done when she is sure there is not going to be any more frost.

Committee Member Chris Collin stated that he wants to discuss about on street parking at the Retreat. He would like to have signs put in the Downtown area saying to help support small businesses by reserving these spaces for customers and two-hour parking.

City Administrator Logan Propes stated that the Parking Study will be discussed at the Retreat.

## **2. Redevelopment Projects**

Chairman Anderson stated that the DDA now owns the Gwinnett Appliance lot. The tenant will still be there until May.

City Administrator Logan Propes stated Public Works will be ready to start the demolition.

The Committee and Ms. Aldridge discussed the corner building that was the original fire house.

## **3. Entertainment Draws**

Ms. Leigh Ann Aldridge stated there was 501 cars and about 19,000 people at the Car Show. She will have the totals next month.

The Committee and Ms. Aldridge discussed people wanting the cars to be grouped by year. They also discussed issues with parking at events and possible solutions.

Ms. Aldridge stated that Unicorn Day will be by April 15.

## **VI. PROGRAMS**

### **1. Farmers Market**

Ms. Leigh Ann Aldridge stated that applications have been closed for the market; there was a good response, with some new people. She explained that Ms. Malcom is not going to be able to do the season this year, but she will still come as much as she can.

## **VII. FUNDING**

### **1. Sponsorship**

#### **a. 2023 Sponsorship Update**

Ms. Leigh Ann Aldridge discussed the sponsorships for the year so far. As of now, there is \$63,750.00 in committed sponsorship funds and \$42,750.00 has already been collected.

Chairman Anderson explained they sent a letter to the Chamber of Commerce Members, and a lot of the sponsorship funds came in from that letter.

Ms. Aldridge stated that Snellville Heating & Air wants first right as the concert presenter for next year. She recommended having four presenting sponsors for the next Car Show.

### **2. Façade Grants**

#### **a. Cottontails Façade Grant Application**

Ms. Leigh Ann Aldridge stated the requested grant is for the installation of an exterior awning; they are requesting the full grant amount of \$1,500.00.

To approve the grant request for Cottontails.

*Motion by Gray, seconded by Collin.  
Passed Unanimously*

### **3. Community Event Grants**

There were no community event grants.

## **VIII. NEW BUSINESS**

### **1. Review of Monroe Museum Lease**

Chairman Anderson stated that she discussed the new lease and the increase with the President of the Museum but was told there was no way that they could afford it right now. They had a big sponsor that did not renew their sponsorship at the end of the year. The Museum is currently working on a \$50,000.00 Project, which the Felker Foundation is funding. The Museum requested for the lease to be left as is, through the end of the year and reevaluate it then.

The Committee discussed the leases and the history of the Museum.

Vice-Chairman Meredith Malcom stated the Museum is a non-profit, and it is an attraction to the town. She would like to discuss the possibility of supplementing their rent at the Retreat.

The Committee discussed becoming a sponsor for both the Museum and the Monroe Art Center.

To keep the rent amount for the Museum the same through the end of the year and revisit it in 2024.

*Motion by Collin, seconded by Bradley.  
Passed Unanimously*

### **2. Concerns from City Council Meeting**

Committee Member Chris Collin discussed the City Council Meeting from March 14. He stated that he is extremely concerned about Council Member Bradley wanting to revisit the open container ordinance for downtown. He explained that Mr. Bradley felt strongly that it is putting the community in a negative light and setting a bad example for children. There was an advertising post on social media that had some verbiage that was a little offensive. He can understand that point, but alcohol is legal and there are licenses for serving it. He explained about five percent of the sales at LR Burger and Strange Taco are for alcohol. Mr. Collin discussed walking around with drinks in downtown. Grouping everybody in a category of irresponsibility is offensive; people are using the ordinance responsibly. Reversing the ordinance would severely impact downtown businesses. He feels Council's job is to represent the community, not to make decisions based on their personal beliefs. He respects personal beliefs, but everyone has a choice. He wants the Committee to speak openly about their opinions on the issue, and he would like the Committee to create a statement for someone to read at the Council Meeting. He will be speaking on behalf of the restaurant owners; there will be an extremely large group coming in support of the ordinance.

Chairman Anderson discussed the time and money that the City put into creating the new ordinance. She would like for the Committee to write a letter in support of the ordinance. She wants all of the Committee to be at the next City Council Meeting and for Ms. Crawford to read the letter in representation of the Committee.

The Committee discussed being in support of the Ordinance and the possibility of changing the cups.

Mr. Collin stated it is a standard cup that used in approved communities. They are trying to make sure that the tax dollars are working for downtown. Those tax dollars go towards funding the Police Department, and there will be less officers in downtown if those tax dollars are lost.

The Committee and Ms. Aldridge discussed social media ads and ads attached to the newsletter.

City Administrator Logan Propes stated that the City can't really regulate the content of advertisements. He suggested asking the downtown businesses to be more respectful on those types of advertisements.

Chairman Anderson stated the Alcohol Ordinance does not need to be changed due to advertising; that can be corrected easily.

Ms. Leigh Ann Aldridge discussed researching how other communities within the State handle their Ordinances, prior to using the cups. Almost all of the communities have their downtown logos on their cups. Disposable cups are used to encourage people to repurchase cups, which helps support downtown businesses. People are using the cups instead of bringing their alcohol from home. The goal is to bring revenue into downtown. She discussed the businesses that the City has gained since the Alcohol Ordinance passed, and the millions those businesses have invested in downtown.

Chairman Anderson stated the cups keep people from bringing their coolers full of alcohol to the concerts, which has helped the businesses and tax dollars.

Mr. Collin stated they looked at the Alcohol Ordinance in great detail prior to buying LR Burger; they were extremely impressed with how progressive Monroe was with it being so far out of Atlanta. Monroe had the open container Ordinance before Lawrenceville, and they went and got it approved in Lawrenceville. He stated that Mr. Bradley also commented on posts about Craft Beer Week. He explained that Craft Beer is a huge economic driver for the State of Georgia; it is an industry of small family-owned businesses. LR Burger only serves Craft Beer; they do not carry major brands.

Vice-Chairman Malcom stated that Monroe is not a traditional party town and most businesses close early. Monroe has a reputation of being a festival and shopping town, with a relaxed environment.

Mr. Propes discussed keeping the branding intact, because it helps with enforcement. He stated that there have not been any issues with people carrying their cups around, and the cups are easily identified. The only alcohol related issues from pedestrians have come from people walking around brown bagging their alcohol.

The Committee discussed the cups promoting walkability and supporting multiple businesses. They discussed the importance of coming to the next City Council Meeting, who should speak, and comments that have been received from citizens.

Mr. Propes explained that there will be an item on the agenda for Council Members to discuss the Alcohol Ordinance, but anyone that wants to speak should sign in under Public Comments.

The Committee discussed not running every ad that comes through and holding ads to some standards.

**IX. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- 1. Next Meeting – April 13, 2023 at 8:00 am at City Hall**
- 2. Spring Retreat – April 17, 2023 from 8:00 to 12:00 at Synovus Bank**

**X. ADJOURN**

*Motion by Bradley, seconded by Collin.  
Passed Unanimously*