

**CITY COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS**  
**BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA**  
**Regular Meeting/Work Session – November 13, 2007**

Pursuant to due call and notice, a regular meeting/work session of the City Council of the City of Bemidji, Beltrami County, Minnesota, was held on Tuesday, November 13, 2007, at 5:15 p.m. in the Conference Room of City Hall, Mayor Lehmann presiding.

Upon roll call, the following Councilmembers were declared present: Lehmann, Markeson, Hellquist, Johnson, Erickson, Meuers. Absent: Downs.

Staff Present: John Chattin, Craig Gray, Curt Oakes, Alan Felix, Brian Freeberg, Kay Murphy

Mayor Lehmann requested that travel authorization be added to the agenda for him to travel to St. Paul on November 14 and 15 for a press conference. **Motion by Hellquist, second by Johnson, authorizing travel for Mayor Lehmann on November 14 and 15 to St. Paul. Motion carried unanimously.**

Mayor Lehmann stated that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the redevelopment of downtown with representatives of the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) and the Chamber. He noted that several people were in attendance in this regard representing the DDA and Chamber. He stated that the City is committed to discussing the redevelopment of downtown.

City Manager Chattin stated that the discussion should be focused primarily on the outcomes for the development of downtown.

Councilor Johnson stated that the City has already completed some of the engineering in the railroad corridor. He suggested that the City contract with the HRDC regarding a developing a concept for the railroad property.

Mayor Lehmann stated to get a master plan and go out for RFP's. This is an opportunity and a challenge and will not come without growing pains.

Jay Backstrom, DDA, thanked the Council for bringing them to the meeting to discuss possibilities for redevelopment of downtown. He stated that they have formed the Bemidji Community Alliance consists of the DDA, Headwaters Redevelopment Authority, Chamber and Bemidji Leads. Their concern is the revitalization of the downtown and their common goal is for a strategic plan. Their hope is for a strong and vital downtown community and recognize that this is a goal of the City Council. He asked what the Council's commitment to economic revitalization for the downtown area.

Mayor Lehmann stated that the events center is just a concept as it is uncertain what the Legislation will approve. The Council is committed to redevelopment and a strategic plan.

Councilor Erickson commented that the downtown is supported by the entire community. She would like to see public meetings so the public can speak to the use of the property. She noted that the City has committed a holding place for the Science Center.

Discussion continued regarding a recent marketing study completed by Park Rapids. Jim Ekstrom, DDA, will forward that study to the City Manager.

Mr. Ekstrom stated that the group has identified three key points: 1) doing a marketing study, 2) what can they do now, and 3) what will they do or an action plan. Mr. Ekstrom suggested that the City explore: 1) creating a transportation corridor between events center and downtown, 2) parking downtown, 3) zoning of SE Lake Bemidji, and 4) tax increment financing for developing the downtown corridor to entice developers.

Councilor Johnson stated that perhaps the next phase done by the parks sales tax money could be the waterfront. Discussion continued regarding the parks sales tax money.

Mr. Backstrom stated that the DDA is asking for commitment from the City Council for the marketing study. He requested that funding for the study be increased from \$25,000 to \$50,000. A market study will examine what downtown Bemidji is, where it is going, what it has to work with and what it can become.

Councilor Hellquist stated that the Council needs to move on this as this is the benchmark of the strengths of Bemidji and where we want to go with it. He felt there was immediacy for the market study.

Mike Smith, President of the DDA, commented that a study was necessary to draw developers' interest.

Mayor Lehmann stated that the Council has committed \$25,000; however, he did not feel that another \$25,000 should come from the City.

Councilor Erickson stated she was not in favor of committing another \$25,000 and felt it should come from the downtown businesses.

Rita Albrecht, HRDC, commented that everyone is in agreement on revitalization of the downtown and suggested that a study be based on an outcome. She further suggested that a group of approximately six people layout what the outcomes would be for the study which could give a better sense of the cost of a study.

**Motion by Johnson, second by Meuers, to appoint Hellquist and Markeson to a committee to explore the redevelopment of the downtown. Motion carried unanimously.**

Mr. Chattin asked who the City will work with on this committee. Council Hellquist commented that he will be meeting with the DDA and find out who will serve on the committee.

**ADJOURN**

There being no further business, motion by Hellquist, second by Meuers, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 6:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Kay M. Murphy  
City Clerk