

URBAN COUNTY COUNCIL

Special Inter-Governmental Committee

June 30, 2009

CM James called the meeting to order at 1:00 P.M. All committee members were present.

I. Authority of Downtown Development Committee- James

James told the committee the purpose of today's meeting was to clarify the role of DDA and explore its authority and scope of oversight. David Barberie, Dept. of Law was on-hand to answer questions and explain the Code of Ordinances, section 2-429 which outlines power and duties of DDA. He also presented an opinion dated June 26, 2009 regarding the function of DDA as it relates to LFUCG council.

Discussion:

Beard had a question about wording in a certain section of the ordinance and was told the wording was standard bi-law terminology and phrasing.

James asked Beard for an example referring to wording of bi-laws. He cited the need for council to protect itself by looking closely at terminology of bi laws since existing staff of authorities such as DDA may not always be in charge and insuring terminology is concise avoiding misinterpretation.

Harold Tate, DDA spoke about its role, and involvement in issues.

Lawless asked Tate for specifics on who DDA reports to and its chain of command.

Gray shared a presentation on downtown development strategic/political and tactical activities referring to a past meeting with DDA and issues that were raised at that time. He said the meeting illustrated everyone has a real interest in downtown and are adamant. He has tracked the issues discussed at the time and does not see much progress from DDA over the last three years either systematically or strategically. He said he has not seen a satisfactory outcome and invited Tate to comment.

Tate said many of the projects listed on Gray's presentation DDA can not be completed by themselves and must have help from other entities. He discussed progress made.

Gray said things are being done and is not trying to say they are not. His purpose is to promote planning as a way to inform the direction and not to talk about tactics after the fact. He said we don't have a strategy coming from DDA.

Beard said projects such as Farmers Market, the arena and other projects are continual moving targets and it is important to have communication with the council regarding them.

Blues commented on his observations of DDA.

James talked about being a council member from a district that benefits from DDA. However she is uncomfortable with its level of authority or advisory capacity. She talked about specific projects such as the Lyric and parking adding she did not see DDA presences or even an attempt at combining certain similar projects

Tate said the last council did not have downtown on its radar however; this council seems to be interested and involved. He sees a resurgence of new energy and would like to be allowed to re-think a strategy and look at how downtown projects relate and fit together.

Lawless pointed out there is not a certain point of contact for a strategy and everything is done piecemeal. The community does not have someone at commissioner level to coordinate and lead us to a plan. She wanted to know how priorities of DDA were set. She said it was time to re-group and look at this huge task, adding the city has outgrown the current way we are doing business.

Tate replied priorities are determined by funding and ability to initiate and complete a project. He said the board plays a major role and has significant input.

Myers asked Joe Kelly, Mayor's Office about status of recent issues regarding boards and commissions such as posting info on LFUCG web site. He requested an update on progress being made. He referred to Outside Agency meetings asking DDA board to think "outside the box". Myers asked Tate to report back to the Intergovernmental Committee on recommendations for alternative funding mechanisms, resources, need for language from the state. He asks DDA to look at not only downtown but outside that realm.

Tate responded to geographical areas defined and confirmed DDA has authority to work for example, outside New Circle Rd. He talked about looking at other alternatives and bringing information to the committee.

Beard asked how many directors DDA has. He said by definition DDA's charge is intended to mean only downtown.

Gray said the work of DDA has been pivotal and today's conversation is about achieving success. He added expectations have changed dramatically. He urged looking at not just downtown but the urban fabric. He talked about translating downtown into an economic development project and the need to leverage opportunities available to us.

Henson said Tate was doing a good job and acknowledged there were many other entities involved and the difficulty to compartmentalize DDA's efforts. She suggested a spread sheet of projects, similar to the one supplied by the dept. of environmental quality as a method of providing updates to council.

Lawless talked about Lexington being the first to have an urban service boundary and how for a long time downtown was not a priority. She echoed the need for vision and a person or entity to oversee information in a comprehensive manner, looking at not only what's inside, but outside the urban service boundary.

Myers said he would like to see concrete examples asking Tate to work with Mr. Lear to get a list of items discussed at DDA meetings and information to help the committee understand where the problems are. He would like to see a presentation at the next Intergovernmental Committee some time in August.

Feigel said today's discussions were helpful to put what DDA does in context. She agreed there seemed to be a lack of vision and very broad range and scope of duties. She suggested DDA might be a clearing house for projects and their status. Those are the types of things she is looking for and would like to see DDA make that available to council.

Tate said the board is looking at how to re focus DDA's attention and how it collaborates and interacts.

James asked about involvement and implementation with the small area plan and how that is working with CDC. She summarized today's discussion by saying she agreed, DDA could be the "eyes and ears", a clearing house, providing strategy, alternative funding options, boundaries, clarity, priority, status reports and follow up, etc., such as is 12th district council member serving on the DDA board appropriate?

Martin talked about the need to plan better in Lexington. He asked if this conversation might be more appropriate for the Planning Committee, so the issue might be better coordinated with the Planning Commission. He said by adopting the downtown master plan we as a council continue to be proactive and respond to the leadership of DDA.

Lawless said she could not imagine a clearing house for something of this magnitude would be on the back of a non-profit organization.

Blues added the focus should be on how to develop a strategic plan. He suggested the Economic Development Task Force have a council retreat soon after the summer break to see how DDA and economic development coincide.

Myers said he thought it would be more appropriate until DDA can enlighten council on alternative funding and what it would take to put emphasis on areas outside of downtown, until then perhaps a retreat or workshop is premature.

There was discussion on the best method to have DDA report back and alternative funding might be a matter for Budget & Finance Committee or via a council workshop. Blues added he would still like to see conversations aimed at economic development.

Martin was concerned about purpose of workshop and combining functions such as urban design, downtown development and duties of LFUCG Planning Dept. He talked about the difference between economic development and the role of DDA. Martin said community development and economic development are two different things.

Tate told the committee the economic development side DDA deals with is indirect.

Gray spoke about how he envisioned economic development and downtown development might work together. He said data collected among young people on says there is not enough to do here. He would like to see connecting dots between these issues, adding there are connecting themes.

2. Update on Committee Items

There was no change to the existing list of items referred to the Intergovernmental Committee and no motions coming from today's proceedings.

Motion to adjourn by Beard, seconded by Blues, meeting adjourned at 2:40 pm