



VILLAGE OF SUTTONS BAY  
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
MEETING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 12, 2020

Present: Peterson, Wierzba, Bahle, Lambdin, Lutke and Pontius

Absent: Popke

Staff present: Petroskey and Larrea

Guest: Karen Pontius

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by President Peterson.

Agenda: Pontius moved, Lutke seconded, CARRIED to approve the Agenda as presented.

Ayes: 6, No: 0

Minutes: Pontius moved, Bahle seconded, CARRIED to approve the minutes of October 9, 2019 as presented. Ayes: 6, No: 0

Public Comment: Karen Pontius addressed the Board regarding the Visitor center and Public restrooms. A copy of her comment is attached to these minutes.

Discussion regarding the Visitor Center will be placed on next month's agenda.

Steve Lutke asked that the subject of the Public Restrooms be placed on the next General Service Committee agenda.

Election of Officers: Bahle moved, Lambdin seconded, CARRIED to approve the slate of officers as follows: President: Amy Peterson, Vice President Nick Wierzba. Ayes: 6, No: 0

Old Business:

Harbor Master Ferry Assessment/Ideas/Elk Rapids Update

Harbor Master Aylsworth assessment was presented. Kim Pontius and Manager Larrea attended the Elk Rapids DDA. Pontius also attended the Elk Rapids council meeting on

February 3. Pontius indicated that Elk Rapids is ready to move forward with a feasibility study. Pontius indicated the next step is to identify a firm to complete the feasibility study to determine the cost and then to identify possible funding sources.

Pontius indicated that he was looking to confirm that there is collaboration between the entities which will help with grant dollars. If a partnership or memorandum of understanding could be secured between the entities to seek a feasibility study, then we would seek funding sources.

DDA Members voiced concerns regarding funding as the DDA has not captured any TIF dollars and essentially relies on funds from the general fund, which the Village council allocates. In addition, the dollars spent for the Ferry Feasibility could be put towards a visitor center, 365 bathroom, Park Improvements and smaller projects.

After discussion, the DDA recommended that Manager Larrea contact Elk Rapids and work together to develop a RFP/RFQ for a feasibility study and then bring the cost back to the DDA.

2020 Budget: Moved by Pontius seconded by Bahle to adopt the 2020 budget as presented.  
Ayes: 6, No: 0

2020 Meeting Schedule: Peterson asked if the meeting time could be moved up to 9:00 a.m.  
Moved by Bahle seconded by Lambdin to set the meeting time for 9:00 a.m. Ayes: 6, No: 0

Pontius moved, Bahle seconded to adopt the 2020 meeting dates as presented with the time changed to 9:00 a.m. Ayes: 6, No: 0

#### Manager Update

Report as presented. Larrea added that the Village will be purchasing a new vehicle and the TAP project is scheduled to begin in April. In addition, the Village has been awarded a grant from Michigan Par Plan for a Risk Reduction Grant in the amount of \$2500 for security cameras at the lift station.

Board Comments: Comment received regarding Blight in the Village.

The meeting adjourned at 10:39 a.m.

Next Meeting: March 11, 2020 at 9:00 a.m.

Minutes Submitted by Dorothy Petroskey, Office Assistant

(For the record)

My name is Karen Pontius and my address is 310 N. St Joseph Ave. Suttons Bay. I am also the President of the Suttons Bay Chamber of Commerce and as such I am representing myself not only in this capacity but also as a business and property owner.

I am here today to comment on two critical items for the DDA's consideration.

First there is the Suttons Bay Visitors Center, a function of the Chamber and an important element of our public and visitor engagement with our Village and its many businesses and amenities.

Essentially the Visitors Center current status is effectively homeless for 2020 and the foreseeable future. For many years it was located in the lower level of the Millside Building and for the last few years the Visitors Center was co-located in the Inland Seas Education Association building. The Inland Seas collaboration has ended due to the lack of enough Visitor Center volunteers and the fact that Inland Seas personnel were being interrupted from their work by visitors seeking tourist information. We were very grateful for the symbiotic relationship we had at Inland Seas, and we fully understand the extra burden that the Visitors Center placed on their operations and restrooms.

An informal survey of the Village landscape and the business community has indicated that there is virtually no space for this function anywhere in the Village. As the Chamber has relied on the kindness of various landlords for its nominal rent or rent-free existence, and as commercial real estate inventory is for the most part non-existent, and as the Chamber itself does not have a formal business location, our organization is at a crossroad.

Frankly speaking the Visitors Center service, which has greeted and served thousands of visitors to our village may have to be terminated due to dwindling volunteers and a reliable location.

One of the key attributes of the Visitors Center has been the access to restroom facilities for the public and this brings me to the second issue.

Access to public restrooms need to be year-round and not just during the boating season. The Chamber constantly promotes that unlike other communities in Leelanau County, Suttons Bay and its business community is open year-round. Yet for essentially half of the year there are no public restrooms available and it is unfair that private businesses are expected to fulfill this need. Any business owner will tell you that the Village water and sewer rates we pay are among the highest in our region. When our bathroom facilities become the de facto public restrooms for our visitors it places an unfair burden on the commercial sector to absorb the additional cost not only in water and sewer but also wear and tear on our in-house facilities.

I acknowledge that we are blessed with a number of restaurants and bars that are required to provide facilities to their patrons, but we have all seen non-patrons use these facilities because they are accessible. Some businesses have offered their facilities for public use and we acknowledge their generosity BUT at some point, the DDA and the Village need to address this issue. Let me dispel the myth that a visitor coming in to use your restroom facilities does not convert to increased sales.

For several decades the Chamber has heard plans for new, year-round public restrooms and other improvements that other county villages like Glen Arbor and Northport have developed.

I'm here today to ask the DDA, an entity that is funded in part by a successful commercial real estate and business community through the taxes we pay, to help get something done. Decades of talking and planning have delivered nothing in the way of tangible improvements that serve our visitors. The time has come to stop relying on local businesses to be the stop gap for what

should be well designed and executed public projects intended to accommodate an ever-increasing number of locals and visitors who enjoy our village and its diverse merchant, food, entertainment, marina, service industry and business community.

The volunteer-driven Suttons Bay Chamber of Commerce is here to assist but we do not have the capacity to go it alone in solving these two key issues. The time has finally come for us to work together to make plans become reality and not continue to kick the can down the road for another decade or more.

Thank you,