

Illinois Main Street Council Minutes of the March 26, 2003 Meeting

Call to Order: Lt. Governor Pat Quinn, Chair, called the 13th meeting of the Council to order at 2:30 p.m. in his Springfield office.

Roll Call: Members present were: IHPA Director Maynard Crossland, DCEO Director Jack Lavin, Carolyn Oxtoby, Dr. John Guyon, Mary Blankenbaker, Mayor Sue Klinkhamer.

Other attendees: Wendy Bell (LTG/IMS Staff), Mike Jackson (IHPA Staff), Kristi Lafleur (DCEO Chief of Staff, at Director Lavin's request), Brenda Jacob (Director of Government Affairs, Illinois Hotel & Lodging Association, substituting for Marc Gordon), Pat Harrison (LTG Staff), Gayle Kaiser (Galesburg, Invited guest of Lt. Governor Quinn).

Those absent: Jim Baum, Marc Gordon and Mary Blankenbaker

Call to Order and Opening Remarks:

Lt. Governor Quinn opened the Council meeting by asking everyone to introduce himself. He expressed his commitment and that of Governor Blagojevich to the Illinois Main Street program. Roll was called and taken by Wendy Bell. Lt. Governor Quinn asked for a motion on the minutes of the November 4, 2002 meeting. Carolyn Oxtoby made the motion to accept the minutes as written, Mayor Sue Klinkhamer seconded the motion and approval was made by acclamation.

Program Update:

Lt. Governor Quinn asked staff member Wendy Bell to update the Council on the program. Bell talked about her activities since November, beginning with attendance at the Tri-State Conference held in Dubuque, Iowa. She noted the conference is in partnership with Iowa and Wisconsin and held about every 18 months. Host duties are rotated and it is Illinois' turn to host next. Budget for the Conference is small with most costs covered by the registration fees. Panels are made up of local volunteers and managers. Lt. Governor Quinn instructed Bell to offer the "conference location" to all northern and western Illinois Main Street communities after a date was finalized.

Director Lavin asked about the Illinois Main Street State Conference. Bell reported that previously the Conference was held in the spring as well as a number of other activities. She suggested we consider moving the State Conference opposite the National Town Meeting, and hold it in the fall. A question was raised if there was money in the budget for the Conference. Bell said she was uncertain about the budget but previously the Conference has run about \$30,000 to produce, depending on the location and sponsorships.

Continuing with activities, Bell reported that Illinois State University had held an Economic Development Policy Conference in December. She attended as well as Mike Jackson and Anthony Rubano from the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. They assisted in the preparation of a briefing paper concerning the Illinois Main Street program that was included in the final conference report to Governor Blagojevich. A copy of the paper was included in the Council packets.

Bell noted she personally had been on the road an average of 1-2 days per week providing training in various communities as needed.

Currently all 56 towns are still active, however she is concerned about nine communities that are having various difficulties. They are: Batavia, Belvidere, Frankfort, Genoa, Golconda, Mundelein, Murhysboro, O'Fallon,

Plainfield. Bell detailed the issues involved, including the perception of there being no state program and how it has hurt local program credibility and jeopardized local funding.

In addition, there are 16 Managers that have been with their program a year or less that have not had access to the full range of training. Lt. Governor Quinn noted they would need additional mentoring. Bell explained a Manager Mentoring program that had been developed last spring but had not been put in place with the budget and staff cuts. Depending on the circumstances, this program could be instituted in fiscal year '04.

Bell noted another impact of the budget cut was that four newly designated towns did not receive their Field Team Visits. The towns affected were Waukegan, Taylorville, Aledo and Marion. Bell expressed her concerns that we complete these visits for the credibility of the program. Mike Jackson expounded on how the Field Team visits are structured and their purpose. Discussion concerning costs and personnel needed ensued, as well as the differences between a Field Team Visit and Annual Program Reviews. Bell explained the Annual Program Review process also indicated which programs received National Main Street Community status, a "pat on the back award" given for exceptional work. She said this year nominations for the award were done by an alternative method, with communities submitting requested information. She then submitted the following towns for National Main Street Community Status: Alton, Blue Island, Carbondale, Collinsville, Crystal Lake, Danville, Dixon, Fairfield, Jacksonville, Libertyville, Marion, Marshall, Monticello, Orion, Paris, Prophetstown, Quincy, St. Charles, Vandalia, Westmont. She also announced that Westmont is one of ten semi-finalists for the Great American Main Street Award. Libertyville and St. Charles have been previous winners. This year's winners will be announced at the National Town Meeting to be held in Cincinnati May 18-21st. Mayor Klinkhamer expressed the need for Illinois state staff to attend the Town Meeting.

Bell reported on the reinvestment statistics sent to the National Main Street Center for inclusion in their Annual Report. In calendar year 2003, in Illinois Main Street communities, 203 new jobs have been created, 55 new businesses, 410 building rehabilitations, 75 public improvements, \$34,758,124 in private investment, \$6,694,797 in public investment. She also noted that since the budget cut, fewer towns were making an effort to report on a regular basis, so the actual numbers were higher.

A Summer Manager's Meeting has been scheduled in Jacksonville for June 16th and 17th. The National Main Street Center is sending Sheri Stuart, and Lt. Governor Quinn will also attend the later half of the 17th.

Mike Jackson gave an update on architectural services through the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. He reported on the amount of Membership Initiative money that was pledged vs. how much was actually received. Jackson noted that the money covered services through the end of December. One staff member has moved out of state, one has moved to DNR and one on contract has been eliminated. Services promised prior to July 31st have been completed. One former staff member is still employed at IHPA, and has been primarily assigned to other projects but is providing limited follow up work including an extensive project in Vandalia. A copy of the rendering and a service status memo was included in the Council Packet. Lt. Governor Quinn asked the size of the budget for architectural services at IHPA. Jackson said in the last full year, it amounted to about \$275,000 and that provided 4½ staff members. He expounded on the services and the number of projects they had previously provided. Lt. Governor Quinn asked how the architects were hired, the pay scale, and the timeline. Jackson noted previously staff had come from recent graduates who had specific skills in historic preservation. The former contract employee (Borntrager) was still in Springfield and would be willing to come back to join the architect that had been assigned to other projects (Rubano).

Jackson and Bell explained how important this service is, since most smaller communities do not have architects, especially qualified ones within their towns. In addition, the cost for these services would be prohibitive even if they were available. Director Lavin asked for further explanation on renderings. Jackson used Vandalia as an example with not only a whole city block being renovated, but also the entire downtown currently undergoing a streetscape project. Bell noted Vandalia's link to the Looking for Lincoln Heritage

Tourism program. Lt. Governor Quinn noted with the Bicentennial of Lincoln's birth approaching, there is potential to build on the connection. The Lt. Governor asked how many Main Streets had a Lincoln connection. Bell counted 8, as well as several other towns involved in other Heritage Tourism programs.

Other issues discussed in relation to the Design element were number of potential requests, upper story housing, and vacancy rates.

Lt. Governor Quinn asked about Main Street towns located on Rivers. Jackson noted the river is an asset to the community that can be played upon. Dixon and St. Charles are both currently working on Riverfront plans. The Lt. Governor counted 10 Main Street communities located on rivers.

Strategy for Future of Illinois Main Street

Lt. Governor Quinn asked for thoughts.

Carolyn Oxtoby requested more information on the Economic Revitalization impact that Main Streets are making. She also expressed concern that property owners are receiving information on tax credits and that they are being followed up with on implementation. Bell noted that this could potentially be handled through the monthly report process as long as property owners are willing to share their financial investment information with the local managers. Some owners have been secretive in the past. Another possibility would be to have the request go directly to the property owner and returned to the state program.

Dr. Guyon expressed his happiness that Illinois Main Street was back and his high hopes for the future.

Mayor Klinkhamer noted the importance of keeping the relationship with the National Main Street Center and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Gayle Kaiser said she had talked to Roger Callahan, Program Manager at Galesburg and others. Callahan noted though reports were still required to the State program and e-mails and other information is sent indicating the existence of Illinois Main Street, without the budget the services previously provided are not available. Kaiser asked Callahan if he would be willing to lobby for the program, and he replied, "absolutely", and his "Board is supportive as well". Kaiser therefore felt there is support we may not have thought of or cultivated for the program.

Based on the information presented, Lt. Governor Quinn noted the following items to be included as an "Action Plan": Field Team Visits, Annual Program Review, State Conference, Tri-State Conference, Contract with the National Main Street Center, Design Staff. Jackson noted the Illinois Main Street program wasn't just about architectural services, that Design is only one of four elements, and there is a need for program staff as well. Mayor Klinkhamer asked about the status of previous staff members. Bell noted they had gone on to other positions but some may be interested in returning to the program. Director Lavin asked for a list of "Alumni Staff", which Bell said she would send to him.

Date for Next Quarterly Meeting

The next meeting was set for May 22nd in order to work around the National Town Meeting and to keep the meeting from falling in December.

Adjournment

Lt. Governor Quinn called for a motion for adjournment. Carolyn Oxtoby made the motion.