

Illinois Main Street Council

Minutes of the December 18, 2003 Meeting

Call to Order: Lt. Governor Pat Quinn, Chair, called the 16th meeting of the Council to order at 2:39 p.m. in his Chicago office.

Roll Call: Per roll call taken by Wendy Bell, members present were: Carolyn Oxtoby and Mike Jackson for Director Crossland in Springfield, with Mayor Sue Klinkhamer and Brendan Moore for Director Lavin in Chicago and Mary Blankenbaker via conference call.

Other attendees: Elizabeth Norden (LTG/IMS Staff), Wendy Bell (LTG/IMS Staff), Darius Bryjka (LTG/IMS Staff), Dan Persky (LTG/IMS Staff), and Pat Harrison (LTG Staff).

Those absent: Jim Baum, Marc Gordon

Call to Order and Opening Remarks:

Lt. Governor Quinn opened the Council meeting with words of welcome, introductions, and roll call. Lt. Governor Quinn asked for a motion on the minutes of the September 18, 2003 meeting. Mayor Klinkhamer made the motion to accept the minutes as written, Mary Blankenbaker seconded the motion and approval was made by acclamation.

Review & Progress Report Report:

Lt. Governor Quinn saluted everyone involved in the State Conference for their efforts in making it a success. He informed the Council he had recently spent a day visiting Bloomington, Galesburg and Dixon, and has plans to visit Lake County in February. Quinn also visited Orion, and saluted their Premiere Project of the Year, bandshell restoration. He suggested we do all we can to promote our Main Street towns, and since we are in the midst of prime eagle-watching time, this would also be a good tie-in for communities near eagle nesting locations. He noted that a meeting with Ted Eubanks, an expert on Nature Based Tourism, has been arranged, so we can assess ways we can promote programs within our office in this market.

Dan Persky reported on the Clean Energy Community Foundation, and how our Main Street communities can benefit from their program.

Elizabeth Norden reported that since September, the Lt. Governor has visited Elgin, Orion, Bloomington, Dixon, Galesburg and Belleville. Dan Persky has been working on an electronic newsletter distributed on a monthly basis. We also have our website, www.illinoismainstreet.org, up and running, and it includes a Calendar of Events for each community. Completed our Annual Conference and Awards presentation. Darius has been busy in the field, completing several projects with more in the mix. We've also contracted with the National Main Street Center for the basic Coordinator's Package.

Wendy Bell reported she would be attending Certification Institute in Washington, D.C. the first week of February. She noted the amount of press coverage Main Street had been receiving and the number of inquiries about the program she had been taking, especially after the Lt. Governor's visits to communities. The number of interested communities has now surpassed the 80 mark.

We've received exceptional positive feedback concerning the Conference. In the summary of evaluations, 55% felt the Conference exceeded their expectations, and 37% felt it met their expectations. Further, 43% felt the Conference was better than the previous year and 36% felt it was as good. 70% felt the overall organization of the Conference was excellent or very good and the same percentage felt the value of information presented was excellent or very good. Financially, the costs were close to the estimate, with speaker expenses less than \$12,000. The contributions or in-kind services from Elgin amounted to \$26,000, which made a definite impact on the costs of the Conference.

Dan Persky reported about the new electronic newsletter, "Word on the Street". Two issues have been completed so far. It provides a variety of information that may be of interest to Main Street programs. Lt. Governor suggested we also archive these issues on our website.

Lt. Governor Quinn asked Brendan Moore if he had anything to report from the Dept. of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. Brendan noted that Mark Harris had been working with us on several items. Elizabeth informed everyone that Mark was working with us on the transfer of the Main Street equipment and use of the remainder of the 023 Fund.

The Lt. Governor inquired about how we could work with the Rt. 66 Association. Wendy related her experiences from Rt. 66 events at Main Street Lincoln and some of what the other communities are doing. Mike Jackson talked about the National Rt. 66 event that has been in Springfield for the last few years – it will go to Tulsa this year. Lt. Governor Quinn suggested we link with the group for any possible cross-promotions.

Design Services:

Mike Jackson apologized for Director Crossland's absence, as he was at a dental appointment. He also noted another IHPA staff member, Anthony Rubano's assistance in the design program and oversight of Darius' work.

Darius Bryjka reported that he had visited 14 towns so far, and has completed 6 projects. A completed project consists of a drawing that includes colors, a detailed technical letter, and other information that would be helpful to the property owner. He has attended several workshops and conferences, including the Restoration and Renovation Conference in Chicago.

Mike announced that they would be sending out a package to all the communities at the end of the year with an update on design services and new technical information. He also noted that several projects were on-going in Momence; that new towns often have great enthusiasm and need for design projects, and they have hit the ground running. Wendy added that she had visited Momence recently and had the opportunity to visit with the Mayor. He expressed his concerns about the program but by the end of the conversation was willing to concede that "Main Street might work". Considering the circumstances, this was a victory.

Lt. Governor Quinn said he felt it was good that we had visited both new communities so soon. He commended Darius for his work, and noted that he will probably be busy in the next few months. The Lt. Governor also observed that as the Governor has visited the various Opportunity Returns regions that the Main Street program has come up, so we need to position it as an economic development tool. Darius expressed that interest is continuing to grow in the services, as he has visited 7 towns in 2 days this week, and as a result he has 6 new projects.

Quinn noted that the deadline for legislation is January 16th, and any initiatives that would be helpful to the Main Street program should be explored.

Conferences Overview:

Wendy updated the group on plans for the Tri-State Conference scheduled for June 24 & 25, with our Manager's Meeting the day before. She noted that we had previously planned to hold this in Dixon, but staff from Iowa and Wisconsin have travel issues, and therefore Dixon is too far from the border. She suggested that we hold the Conference in Galena. Even though they are not a Main Street community, they have been practicing the program for years and are a good example. Further, the National Trust is considering Galena as a Top Ten Heritage Tourism destination, and we can hold the Conference in the DeSoto House, the oldest hotel in Illinois.

Lt. Governor Quinn informed the group about the Grand Excursion, which also partners with Iowa and Wisconsin, as well as Minnesota. It includes a train trip from Chicago to the Quad Cities and then up the Mississippi by steamship. He suggested we see if we can tie-in to this event. Mary Blankenbaker gave an overview of the events that will take place in Galena and Dubuque at this time.

Wendy reported that the National Main Street Center has made an inquiry concerning Illinois, specifically Chicago, hosting the National Main Street Conference in 2007. There would be approximately 1,500 people in attendance over a 5 day period. Each year the Conference is in a different city. This year it is in Albuquerque, next year in Baltimore, and it's expected to be in Seattle in 2006. As the host, we have some responsibilities, including obtaining a \$50,000 sponsorship, which may be apportioned between several groups. She expressed her pleasure at Illinois being considered as a site and Lt. Governor Quinn said he felt we should pursue the possibility. He also said he felt we could partner with several tourism groups in Chicago and DCEO/Tourism. The other Council Members concurred with Lt. Governor Quinn.

Other Business

Noting the number of communities that have expressed an interest in the Main Street program, Wendy explained the suggested Tier System. The Tier System would have four levels, that would include our current two levels as well as a foundation level to address the needs of interested towns, and a top level that recognizes communities that have done exceptional work. Wendy noted that several other states have moved to a Tier System and that this would be different than the segmented structure that had been tried previously. Lt. Governor Quinn asked how many potential towns we could have in the first tier and Wendy noted that if we opened it up, she felt we could easily have 50 towns apply. Elizabeth expressed her feelings that this was a good approach to take. Lt. Governor Quinn noted that the Governor's regional economic development policy was based on that one size doesn't fit well, and we are applying that same concept. The general consensus was we should move forward with the Tier program.

Wendy also noted that of the towns that are interested, probably about 6 of them would be ready to apply to move up this fall. Mike Jackson concurred with this view, noting that we have some that have been working along, and because of the status of the program have not geared up to apply but probably would now.

Wendy briefly explained the suggested Calendar of services, and Lt. Governor Quinn suggested working to put that together and get it out to the communities, so they may plan for it. Lt. Governor Quinn asked about the Main Street Day included on the Calendar, and asked if we should work on passing a bill to designate a day. Wendy said she thought it would bring more exposure to the program. Elizabeth asked if there was a day that would be good based on when we joined the program. Discussion ensued concerning what day would be best, with a general consensus concluding a Saturday in June might be best.

Date for Next Quarterly Meeting

Date for the next meeting was for March 25 at 2:30 pm.

Adjournment

Lt. Governor Quinn called for a motion for adjournment. Made by Mary Blankenbaker, seconded by Carolyn Oxtoby. Meeting adjourned.