

***Illinois Main Street Council
Minutes of the December 6, 2006 Meeting***

(Subject to approval at the next scheduled meeting)

Call to Order and Opening Remarks: Wendy Bell, IMS Coordinator, called the 28th meeting of the Council to order at 2:40 PM in the 15th Floor Conference Room of the James R. Thompson Center and the Stratton Conference Room 414. Lt. Governor joined the group later in the meeting.

Roll Call: Council Members present were: David Bahlman, Tasha Green, and Jason Tyszko for Director Jack Lavin; Director Robert Coomer and Carolyn Oxtoby via Videoconference; and Jim Baum and Mary Blankenbaker via Conference Call.

Others in attendance: Darius Briyka, IMS Architect and Carol Dyson and Anthony Rubano from IHPA.

Bell addressed the issue that the Ethics Training packet needed to be read, signed, and turned in by December 20th.

Minutes: Bell asked for a motion on the minutes of the September 15, 2006 meeting. Bahlman made the motion; Oxtoby seconded the motion. Motion was approved.

Review & Progress Report:

Bell gave a progress report since the last meeting.

Basic training took place in several different locations this year. There were forty-seven people in attendance at the Chicago/Midway location for the basic training. IMS is looking to change the program to be at one location over a two-day period. There may be committee training via videoconference.

Another Wi Fi grant was given to Carbondale. The coverage area is about 30 blocks and includes downtown businesses, City Hall, Civic Center, Library, Hospital, and public areas. The area is adjacent to Southern Illinois University and is a natural extension for wireless availability, which is currently on the SIU campus. The grant was in the amount of \$17,875, which is a little bit less than the usual; the usual amount granted is about \$20,000. Bids are currently in for the network. The city consent contract is set for December 19th. The goal is to have the project done by the end of January.

Dyson presented a summary of what is taking place within Design Services. Dyson gave the report on behalf of Mike Jackson who could not attend the meeting. Jackson's Architecture class is doing a project in a Main Street town. They are working on a vacant 12-story building. The Danville Main Street organization is looking to take over the building. IHPA worked on seven design projects in six different towns since the last advisory meeting; there have been thirty-one individual site inspections in ten towns. IHPA presented nine educational trainings in six different towns.

Mike Jackson spoke recently in St. Charles, focusing on downtowns. He also spoke at Indiana State Preservation Conference. Darius and Anna Margaret spoke at a Main Street conference in Minnesota. IHPA has been asked to speak in Indiana and Wisconsin next year.

Bell then addressed the Retail Trend Reports. Margie Johnson provided a summarized report; she owns Shop Talk and has spoken at Main Street Conferences and has visited a number of Illinois communities. She helped in Utica after the tornado. Bell pointed out certain points in the report, the six economic trends from 2006 to 2010.

Baum commented that smaller retailers are struggling and we need to train people on how survive in smaller towns against the big box stores. Baum's store is located in Morris, Illinois, which has a population of about 18,000 and a total market area of approximately 30,000. Morris is one of the fastest growing areas outside the Chicago land area. Morris is looking to do an economic analysis to see what the big box stores are doing to their community. This will help them make better judgments on sales tax rebates and property taxes. They will also be able to look at the infrastructure. They are proposing to have this study done soon. Jim offered to give some training to business owners to help them survive against the big box stores.

Lt. Governor Quinn joined the meeting at this time.

Bell commented on the Fall Conference. Two Hundred people were in attendance at the fall conference held in Waukegan; 270 people attended the awards dinner.

A survey was taken at the conference and about 15% of the attendees responded. More surveys being sent in to IMS. The majority of those who responded rated the conference as being Excellent or Good.

Changes this year included a folder, which held the PowerPoint handouts, a CD, to share back in their towns, a letter from the Lt. Governor, a copy of the sponsors, and town guide with a map. This folder was given to all attendees instead of the binder.

In looking at the Survey results, Lt. Governor noted that Kennedy Smith was very popular amongst the attendees. In addition, the Lt. Governor mentioned that some people asked for a more central location for the conference. Those comments came from mostly those who were from downstate. At one time, the conference was held in Springfield multiple years, however many asked that the State Conference be moved around to show what is happening all around the state. Hardin County, which traveled the furthest distance, said they enjoyed the time they had in Waukegan.

The Downtown Leader's Connection was positively received. The Mayor of Waukegan hosted a conference for Mayors and other city officials. Thanks to Anthony Rubano for recommending the Mayor of Shelby, North Carolina, Ted Alexander, as a presenter.

Bell then read a letter written by Ted Alexander, who wrote a letter to the editor in Waukegan. He was stunned by the theater and was very impressed by the leadership and participation of the citizens and city officials of Waukegan. He complimented on the hospitality of Waukegan's volunteers as well as the Illinois Main Street towns.

For the first time there was a vendor's area, which went better than anticipated. Some vendors included street lighting specialist and software retailers for Main Street communities. This will continue for next year's conference.

The Lt. Governor then asked if a podcast or video was available of Kennedy Smith's Opening Plenary Session. A video will be available of Ted Alexander and several other presentations. This was done with the intent to put them on the website. Bell also noted that there is more information on awards and performance evaluations on the other sessions in the handouts provided.

Lt. Governor mentioned that the awards moved very slowly and suggested that the dinner and awards should be scheduled differently. The Lt. Governor would like to eat before the awards ceremony. The State Conference will be on November 14th & 15th next year during the same time. Three cities have proposed their site including, St. Charles, Quincy, and Rockford. Bell thanked Tasha Green and David Bahlman for attending the conference.

Facilitation Summary and Program Goals

Bell stated that there was a facilitation session held in August at Lincoln. This was held for Directors. Jean Ann Hutchinson facilitated the session for directors to discuss some issues they are facing. There were six key points made in the meeting:

- The communities are looking for a customized visit to their community. They would like for IMS to tack on something to the annual program reviews. The communities want IMS to visit their community at least once a year. One issue is it takes a great deal of time for the IMS staff for these visits. In general, the staff is out visiting about 25 days out of the year for basic things. IMS staff is out for another 30 to 35 days for annual reviews, not including travel time.

Lt. Governor mentioned that IMS should use technology; in an effort to keep travel costs low. The Lt. Governor suggested videoconferencing. Bell mentioned that IMS is putting together an online educational program. This will take a lot of time to put together, but will be well worth it. IMS has been using videoconference, but would like to start using more Internet to improve the interaction between IMS and the towns.

- Another point the directors made was the using them as resources. IMS has assigned experienced directors to the new executive directors to help mentor them.
- Planning and scheduling workshops earlier was another concern by the directors. Some issues in 2006 were due to scheduling problems. Every 18-24 months Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin have a tri-state Main Street Conference. Illinois hosted the last conference and Wisconsin was supposed to have the conference in 2006, yet the conference had to be postponed. In addition, the National Conference was postponed due to the hurricanes. Main Street Day at the Capitol is also hard to schedule because it revolves around the legislative calendar, which makes it difficult to set an early date for the event. This caused a number scheduling challenges.
- Development and use of technology. Workshops are good, but want towns want videoconferencing and web resources.
- Develop a video of the design slide show to show property and business owners about opportunities in the Main Street program; and train committees.
- The state conference is valuable. Do move it around the state and locate in award-winning communities. They said that the national conference is unfocused. This is due to the transition the program is going through. It may take them a while to recover.

Goals for Illinois Main Street in 2007 include:

- Creating online training
- Expand understanding alternative energy projects; IMS is also looking to get legislation passed.
- IMS is initiating a campaign to market the Illinois Main Street communities. This idea comes from the Louisiana Main to Main program. Louisiana has a calendar of events on their homepage in order to drive tourism to their Main Street Communities. IMS would like to use a similar idea in preparation for Main Street Day. Main Street Day is held on the first Saturday of June each year, this year it is the 2nd of June; it highlights the Illinois Main Street Communities and what they have to offer.
- IMS would like to expand the Wi-Fi throughout the state. It is quite expensive, but very well worth the cost.
- IMS is also working on the neighborhood Main Street programs, like those in Chicago area. These programs require special training. IMS would like to bring one of the speakers from the

National Conference in New Orleans to speak to these communities about some of the issues they may face.

- Consider design educational needs for the future of Main Street – infill, suburban lifestyle, aging populations
- IMS wants to move forward in bringing arts to the downtown area. IMS is looking forward to the 50th Anniversary of the Music Man next year. IMS is getting community bands together, like the one in Orion, to have shows themed around the Music Man.
- Prepare for the Bicentennial of Lincoln's birth in 2009.
- Raise awareness of Main Street to children and young adults.
- Affordable housing is needed in the downtown areas to help those who have a moderate income. This would help utilize the unused upstairs of businesses in downtown areas.
- Preparations for the 2009 National Conference in Chicago will also begin in 2007.

Proposed Calendar

Bell noted that the calendar for the upcoming year is pretty busy. It also doesn't include everything; these are the highlighted events.

The New Executive Director Training will now be a two day training. IMS is also trying to move the training to once every four months; it used to be once every three months. This may help bring in more attendance to these sessions, and encourage more networking between the new Executive Directors. The first one of the year will be January 30th & 31st. Additional trainings will be held in June and September in Springfield.

Main Street Day at the Capitol will be held on February 22nd at the Capitol.

The President's Retreat will be at the Governor's Mansion.

The National Main Street Conference will be in Seattle for the 24th to the 28th of March.

Application workshops will be held in April. There will be one held in the South, North, and Central parts of the state.

There are also two semiannual Director's Workshops on the calendar, one of which will be Tri-State in September.

June activities revolve around Main Street Day. Main Street Day has been designated as the first Saturday in June, in 2007 it will be the 2nd of June.

Basic training will be held in July in Springfield.

Main Street Day will be the first Saturday at the State Fair.

Then the state conference will be in November.

Additionally, there will be Program Reviews and architectural visits that are not listed on this tentative calendar.

Introductory Programs & Premier Programs

A motion was made to renew St. Charles, Crystal Lake, Jacksonville and Quincy as Premier programs was made by Bahlman and seconded by Green. Motion was passed unanimously.

A motion was then made by Oxtoby to make Elgin, Aledo, & Springfield Premier Programs. This was seconded by Green. Motion was passed unanimously.

Bell then discussed to bring in Canton as an introductory Main Street Town.

Other Business

Main to Main was discussed by Bahlman. He thinks that tourism needs to be concentrated on to drive business to the Main Street Towns. Bell then commented that we also need to remember that the celebration of the Bicentennial of Lincoln's Birthday is approaching in 2009. These are some things we need to start planning for.

Date for Next Quarterly Meeting

Date for the next meeting was set attentively for the week of March 19 2007.

Adjournment

Wendy Bell called for a motion for adjournment, motion made by Baum and seconded by Blankenbaker. The motion was passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned.