

DDA looks at ways to spend 'extra' money

Projects selected for further discussion

By Pam Fleming • STAFF WRITER • September 16, 2010

Because of a \$685,880 grant, the Northville Downtown Development Authority has the enviable job of deciding how to spend some leftover bond funding.

On Sept. 9, DDA board members had a special meeting to decide what projects they would like to recommend to the City Council.

The board asked Lori Ward, DDA director, to obtain more information before its next meeting on Sept. 21, with the hopes of being able to present their recommendations to council members at their Oct. 4 meeting.

Because the \$685,000 is a reimbursable federal grant from the Department of Transportation, administered by the state, the money for the extra projects will actually come from money left over from the sale of \$2 million worth of bonds.

FULL \$2 MILLION REQUESTED

City staff requested the full \$2 million for the sidewalk and streetscape improvement project because in January when the bonds were sold, city staff did not know yet if the transportation grant would be approved.

The DDA received notice in May that Northville would receive the grant mainly because many other cities in the running for the money couldn't provide the matching funds required and had to withdraw their application.

Funds from the sale of bonds should be used within three years, according to a legal opinion from Miller Canfield in Detroit.

If the city lets the money sit and collect interest, the city would have to pay tax on that interest. Using the proceeds of the bonds to pay off the bonds early would mean severe financial penalties and costs for the city, according to Pat McGow of Miller Canfield.

PROJECTS REVIEWED

The following projects were selected as possible ways to use the left over bond money: Purchase \$20,000 worth of trees, spend \$30,000 on landscaping the Hutton Street curve and Mary Alexander Court, spend \$60,000 to mill and resurface Center Street from Cady Street north to Dunlap Street, spend \$60,000-\$80,000 to mill and resurface Mary Alexander Court, spend \$25,000 on a sound system for Town Square; enhancing the surface of other major intersections besides Main and Center streets at a cost of about \$200,000, purchase \$50,000 worth of historic markers, spend about \$165,000 on additional induction lighting in streetlights, spend about \$100,000 on directional signs, improve the alleyways by Rebecca's Restaurant and Orin Jewelers at a cost of \$38,000 and come up with a design to enhance Ford Field for about \$100,000.

"We can attempt to get some better quotes," Ward said.

"Let's see if we can tighten the numbers and do as much as we can (with the leftover bond money)," said Greg Presley, DDA chair.

PUBLIC RESTROOMS DISCUSSED

There was some discussion about the possibility of building a downtown public rest room, as Bob and Margene Buckhave will close the rest room in Old

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Church Square to the public on Dec. 31.

Ward said even if improvements aren't made to the two alleyways mentioned that it is important for the city to at least acquire easements for these two areas.

Mayor Chris Johnson thinks it's important to have all the streetlights the same to provide a more uniform look to the downtown area.

LARSEN LEAVING BOARD

It was mentioned at the end of the meeting that attorney David Larsen will be leaving the DDA board after many years of service. His last meeting will be on Sept. 21. Longtime members Lou LaChance and Jim DeHaan left the board a few months ago.

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