

D o w n t o w n
PLYMOUTH



Not Just a Walk in the Park

Plymouth Downtown Development Authority

**(734) 455-1453 dda@ci.plymouth.mi.us
831 Penniman Plymouth, MI 48170**

The Plymouth Downtown Development Authority did not hold its regular meeting on Thursday, September 14, 2017.

In lieu of a meeting, DDA Chairman Oliver Wolcott emailed DDA Board members with an update on the City of Plymouth's 150th Celebration, the Kellogg Park fountain and Kellogg Park renovations.

The following is for information only.

Memo: DDA Board of Directors

From: City Commissioners Deal, Wolcott and Wright

Re: Reimbursement of DDA for expenditures related to Wilcox Fountain, Kellogg Park and Plymouth 150

It is our understanding that concerns exist regarding confidence that the DDA will be reimbursed for the funds advanced to facilitate the above projects. We are providing this summary since we have accepted responsibility for assisting in efforts to raise the private and foundation funds necessary to achieve this reimbursement.

THE DDA's COMMITMENT

In early 2015 the DDA took responsibility for the replacement of the Kellogg Park Fountain and improvement of Kellogg Park. The Fountain, in particular, had become a drain on City resources because of its severely deteriorated condition. Due to productive discussions between the City Administration and the Wilcox Foundation a commitment was made by the Foundation to contribute \$700,000 to the Fountain effort.

Armed with this substantial contribution, the DDA, in coordination with the City Commission and City Administration, concluded that it would be worthwhile to combine the Fountain effort with improvements to the entire Park as well. However, it was accepted that Park improvements would have to be funded through an independent fundraising effort targeting the private sector as no funds were available in either the DDA or City budget.

To advance the plan the DDA formed a Committee to oversee work on the Kellogg Park and Fountain Improvement Project. By mid-year Marc Russell Design won the contract for design of the Kellogg Park improvements and selected Westco Fountain to design the Fountain. By year end 2015 preliminary designs were completed.

In preparation for a review of the designs a representative group of City leadership and Kellogg Park users was assembled. The group included City Commissioners, Planning, Zoning, Historic District and DDA members and Park users such as Local Service Clubs, event sponsors, the Chamber of Commerce and others. In February the designs were presented. A substantial majority of the group approved of the design prompting the DDA to advance the project for implementation.

CITY COMMISSION SUPPORT

At the same time and in an effort to support this important DDA initiative the City Commission embraced the project as one of its goals for 2016. Commissioner's Deal, Wolcott and Wright volunteered to coordinate the City Commission's efforts on the project. The same three Commissioners volunteered to coordinate efforts on a second 2016 goal to develop activities to celebrate the City's 150th birth date.

FUND RAISING TEAM

In initial meetings this Work Group affirmed that raising the private sector funds for the project would be a challenge. It was further agreed that it would make sense to combine fund raising efforts for both goals as the prospects for both are identical.

Additionally, the Work Group also decided to propose to the DDA that it agree to hire a fund raising / corporate sponsorship firm to professionalize the effort with the commitment to reimburse the DDA for all funds used to underwrite this expense. The DDA subsequently agreed to engage Street Marketing, Inc.

FUND RAISING STRATEGY

Following the February decision to proceed with the Fountain and Park improvements, fund raising efforts began. It was determined that various aspects of the new Park design were ideally suited for Corporate, Foundation, family or individual resident sponsorship. Elements such as plazas, wall plaques, benches, play areas, trees and brick pavers would be packaged as assets with graduated pricing on a spectrum from low to very high providing a variety of opportunities for participation. Additionally, participants would also be able to contribute to activities focused on the 150 birthday celebration as an add on. The lead offers would be Park sponsorships with adjunct offers for the Birthday celebration.

At the direction of the City Commission Work Group, Street Marketing began developing sales and marketing materials and making preliminary sales calls to corporate prospects describing the project while probing for depth of interest. Scott Buie, Street Marketing's owner reported significant interest in the project with excitement for specifics on opportunities to participate. Mr. Buie compiled a list of the corporate representatives with whom he met.

RESIDENT CONCERNS

By mid-March the project became more public. Exposure on the City's web site, local publicity in community papers and word of mouth resulted in the emergence of a passionate resident group that opposed the proposed Fountain and Park designs. This strong resident sentiment organized grass roots effort forced serious reconsideration of the project.

At a well-attended public session in early October 2016, the proposed changes to the layout of Kellogg Park were rejected by the attendees. The attendees stated their desire to maintain the existing character and feel of the Park.

In mid-October 2016, with strong encouragement from the Wilcox Foundation Board, the decision was made to separate the Fountain and Park improvement efforts. It was agreed that immediate attention should be focused on the Fountain and that all efforts on the Park improvements would be postponed.

In another public meeting held in early December 2016, attended by approximately 150 people, a traditional tiered bowl design was favored over the originally proposed Fountain design. Westco Fountain then went to work on the new design to reflect a more traditional design. After a number of iterations and meetings, a traditional tiered fountain design was ultimately selected by the Wilcox Foundation Board and the citizen representatives in April 2017.

FINAL FOUNTAIN DESIGN APPROVAL

In August 2017 the new Fountain design was presented for final approval in the first of two meetings with the Historic District Commission. The Historic District Commission ultimately approved the fountain design at their September 6th meeting.

Now that the HDC approved the design, work will begin in earnest to secure bids from contractors for the construction of the Fountain, all underground utility elements and landscaping immediately adjacent to the Fountain site. Costing out of this work, along with all costs for development of the first proposed Fountain and Park design and the final Fountain design will affirm whether the \$700,000 Wilcox Foundation pledge will be sufficient. If it falls short, the overage will have to be added to the total fund raising goal.

FUND RAISING COMPLICATIONS

The decision to postpone all work on the Park improvement phase of the project had a devastating effect on the fund-raising efforts. It meant that the asset based sponsorship element of the sales strategy had to be aborted. Sales efforts shifted to only the 150 celebration element which was limited in size and scope and could not be linked to the asset sales effort. The plan included three events - Family Fun Run, Outdoor movie in Kellogg Park, and an Ice Cream Social following the 4th of July parade. The Family Fun Run was ultimately cancelled due to lack of interest.

Sufficient funds were raised to cover the costs of the events. However, full reimbursement of the DDA for the monthly stipend for Street Marketing's early sales efforts and preliminary marketing materials will not occur until the Park improvement phase (Phase II) of the total Kellogg Park update is relaunched. That current shortfall is \$14,000. This amount must be added to the total fund raising goal.

PARK IMPROVEMENTS

Yet to be determined is a date to relaunch the Park improvement effort. The plan presently assumes that a public session will be held to invite input of residents about what improvements should be made. The resident group that advocated for a new Fountain design has publicly stated a preference for a modest "refresh" of the Park. Others are interested in a grander upgrade. No decision has been made on the format for a public session or the way in which resident ideas will be compiled. What is clear is that the funds needed to pay for any Park improvements will have to be added to the total fund-raising goal.

ELEMENTS OF THE FINAL FUND-RAISING GOAL

All costs of items 1 through 4 (once totaled) that exceed the \$700,000 Wilcox Pledge

1. All original Fountain and Park design costs
2. All final Fountain design costs
3. All underground utility, mechanical and power costs
4. All landscaping cost for the area immediately adjacent to the Fountain site

The \$14,000 shortfall resulting from Street Marketing's contract

All costs for Kellogg Park improvements ultimately chosen

The first step in relaunching the fund-raising effort will be contacts with each of the prospects expressing strong interest in the Park improvement plan.