

SPECIAL MEETING – HOUGHTON CITY COUNCIL
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2007 – 5:30 p.m.
CITY CENTER COUNCIL CHAMBERS

PRESENT: Mayor Pro Tem Robert Backon, Councilors, Robert Megowen, Rachel Lankton and Gernot Joachim.

ABSENT: Mayor Eric Peterson, Councilors Craig Kurtz, and Lee Hauswirth.

ALSO

PRESENT: City Manager MacInnes, Clerk-Treasurer Kurt Kuure, and Director of Public Works Mark Zenner.

Representatives of the Daily Mining Gazette, WMPL, WOLV, Diane Karkau of MSHDA, Bill Fink, Pat Coleman, Adam Yeoman, Joe Schwenk, and Kristine Bradof.

SPECIAL

MEETING: Mayor Pro Tem Backon called to order a Special Meeting of the Houghton City Council and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

PUBLIC

HEARING: Mayor Pro Tem Backon called to order a Public Hearing of the Houghton City Council to discuss the Vibrant Small Cities Initiative Grant Application.

City Manager MacInnes explained that one of the requirements for the Vibrant Cities Grant is to hold a public hearing to discuss the proposed projects. The grant is for \$1,000,000 which requires a \$1,000,000 local match.

The following is a list of proposed projects in order of priority:

1. Downtown Historic Streetscape Restoration:

- Shelden Avenue (Franklin Square to the Bridge)
- New water line, sanitary and storm sewer
- New sidewalk and curb
- New brick street
- New historic street lights
- Cost \$4.5 million
- \$500,000 from Vibrant Cities will be used for this project

2. Downtown Façade Improvements:

- We have about 12 building owners that are interested in a 50% grant to fix up their building facades
- Cost \$700,500
- 50% from building owners
- 50% from Vibrant Cities Grant

3. Skywalk Removal

- We propose to remove the two skywalks on Shelden Avenue and one on Isle Royale
- Cost \$117,000
- 50% from DDA
- 50% from Vibrant Cities Grant

4. Downtown Market Plan

- Create a foundation for evaluating and evolving the Houghton “Brand”.
- Identify opportunities to improve Houghton’s image and subsequently consumer and business appeal
- Cost \$20,000
- 50% from DDA
- 50% from Vibrant Cities Grant

5. Purchase Carnegie Building:

- Continue and expand the Museum and Cultural Center displays
- Cost \$152,500
- 50% land Contract with Houghton Schools
- 50% Vibrant Cities Grant

6. Administrative Cost

- Total \$10,000
- 50% DDA
- 50% Vibrant Cities Grant

City Manager MacInnes said he may add a 7th priority of a Wayfinding Sign Plan and some signage. This can be done if the City does not have enough façade projects to use the money allocated to them. The City will use DDA money for the match for the Wayfinding Sign Plan.

Pat Coleman said there is a lot of excitement downtown because of the façade projects and Signature Building. He reported that the following businesses have expressed interest in façade grants:

- California Connection Building
- Old Print Shop
- Superior Cabinetry
- Armandos
- Library Bar
- Subway/Cellular One
- Former Webber's Sporting Goods
- Tea Room
- Brockway Photography
- UP Engineering
- Lunch Bag

Bill Fink, President of the Keweenaw Peninsula Chamber of Commerce and small business owner, said the Chamber is very supportive of the City of Houghton to secure the grants. The Chamber recognizes the wonderful things that have been going on downtown for the last few years. The changes have also been noticed by visitors in town for the Professional Walleye Trail Championships, National Junior Cross Country Ski Championships, and National U.S. Senior Cross Country Ski Championships. There have been very positive reactions from people about the downtown and has increased the perceived quality of life in the area which attracts new business and helps hold businesses in the area. This also makes our area a more desirable place to live, work, and enjoy.

The City will also host that U.P. Firefighters' Tournament and the BMW Riders Association next summer.

Diane Karkau of MSHDA said she toured the facades presently being worked on and the buildings that are planned for facades. She said that City Manager MacInnes is doing a wonderful job and the community is looking great.

Pat Coleman said that none of the projects in the downtown would be possible without MSHDA funds. The ultimate goal is to generate more business downtown and more demand for rental space.

Adam Yeoman, owner of the Rhythm Shop, said that the downtown has changed a lot since his store has opened. There is increased business and more people willing to come downtown.

A motion to adjourn the Public Hearing was made by Lankton and seconded by Megowen.

Yes: All

No: None

A motion to adjourn the Special Meeting was made by Joachim and seconded by Lankton.

Yes: All

No: None

Motion carried.
Adjourned 5:51 p.m.

Kurt Kuure, Clerk