

MINUTES OF WORKSHOP MEETING

DOWNERS GROVE, ILLINOIS

MAY 6, 2008

Mayor Sandack called the Special Workshop meeting of the Village Council of the Village of Downers Grove to order at 6:04 p.m. in the Committee Room of the Village Hall.

Present: Mayor Ron Sandack; Commissioners Marilyn Schnell, Martin Tully, William Waldack, Sean P. Durkin (6:20 p.m.), Geoff Neustadt, Bruce Beckman; Dave Fieldman, Deputy Village Manager; Mike Baker, Assistant Village Manager; Village Attorney Enza Petrarca; Village Clerk April Holden

Absent: Village Manager Cara Pavlicek

Visitors: **Press:** Cat Leyden, DG Reporter; Eva McKendrick, The Sun
North Star Destination Strategies: Don McEachern, CEO
Staff: Janene Cerulli, Communications Department; Tom Dabareiner, Director, Community Development; Mary Scalzetti, Director, Community Events
Residents: Mark Thoman, 1109 61st Street; Greg Bedalov, Economic Development Corporation, 2001 Butterfield; Cindy Klima, Economic Development Corporation, 2001 Butterfield; Marge Earl, 4720 Florence Avenue; Bill Wrobel, 7800 Queens Court; Laura Crawford, DG Chamber of Commerce, 2001 Butterfield; Linda Kunze, Downtown Management Corporation

Mayor Sandack explained that this is an informal special Workshop meeting to allow for Council discussion regarding the integrated branding and marketing initiative for the Village of Downers Grove.

INTRODUCTION

Doug Kozlowski, Director, Communications, said this matter was discussed as a part of the Strategic Planning sessions in August 2007 and approved as part of the FY08 municipal budget as a one-time expenditure of \$100,000. Staff issued a Request for Proposals/Qualifications (RFPQ) in February 2008 to select a branding and marketing firm to develop and implement a community-wide brand and integrated marketing initiative. Five firms responded to the RFPQ and staff interviewed the three most responsive and qualified firms. Following the interviews, staff recommended that North Star Destination Strategies be selected to provide this service for an amount not to exceed \$95,400.

At the Council Workshop on April 7, 2008, the Village Council requested that staff provide additional information regarding the outcomes and benefits the Village would gain as part of the marketing initiative. In order to supply that additional information and to address subsequent questions posed by the Village Council, staff scheduled this informational session with Don McEachern, CEO, North Star Destination Strategies, to lead the discussion. Village Council members were provided with a DVD on the North Star *BrandPrint* process as well as a binder featuring case studies of branding projects completed by North Star.

Mr. Kozlowski then introduced Mr. McEachern. Mr. Kozlowski said North Star was chosen for their experience in the municipal sector and success in branding throughout the country.

PRESENTATION

Don McEachern, CEO, North Star Destination Strategies, said the branding process includes research, strategy, and deliverables. He discussed three aspects of brand: 1) Brand identity, which is the core concept and includes logos, slogans, and marketing materials. 2) Brand actions “living the brand” and 3) Brand image or reputation. Community branding contributes to promotion as well as economic and social development. The biggest return is if all sectors are connected to a common strategy. Branding imposes creativity, consistency, truthfulness and effectiveness into a wide range of activities. Community branding is 80% innovation, 15% organization, and 5% communication.

Mr. McEachern shared a list of communities his company has worked with over the last 12 years. He noted that every community is unique.

Regarding the process, Mr. McEachern explained that there are three stages: 1) Information gathering; 2) Insights; and 3) Imagination. Information gathering includes consumers, perceptions and competition. Information is obtained through research including a planning audit, a media audit of the community and a familiarization tour. Key elements in the process include situation analyses, key stakeholder interviews, stakeholder focus groups, vision surveys conducted by mail as well as on-line, undercover interviews, and geo-demographic resident profiling.

Research with regard to consumers consists of geo-demographic profiling to include new home buyers, visitors, and retail consumers as well as consumer origin mapping. Perception studies are both qualitative and quantitative. Research with respect to competition includes a competitive positioning review, brand message assessment, an economic opportunity analysis and a Consumer Awareness and Perception (CAP) study.

Stage 2, Insights, includes an internal situation brief, “blue sky” meeting and research review. Stage 3, Imagination, discusses brand identity concepts. Stage 3 includes a brand identity guide – logo, slogan, color palette, strap line. The purpose is to hold ideas together; it is not meant to communicate everything. Results from this stage might include stationery, business cards, a marketing message and packet.

Mr. McEachern explained that a brand map would be considered Stage 4, which would be the implementation of the brand. Stage 5 is the evaluation, including accountability measures, a three-year geo-demographic update, and an annual branding check up for three years.

Council members discussed the definition of competition. Mr. McEachern said it is defined as the top six communities in competition for economic development. Regarding research, Mr. McEachern said it takes eight to ten months to complete the entire process. With respect to involving skeptics, Mr. McEachern said that this process requires investing time. He said there are places for public involvement in the process and places for a smaller number of people to lead. He noted the importance of an educational brochure.

Mr. McEachern discussed the balance between vision and reality. He showed examples of finished work products.

With respect to measurable returns, Mr. McEachern discussed employment growth, tracking perceptions and calling individual communities to discuss their goals.

There was a discussion of the many stakeholders in the community and integration of the new campaign to include these stakeholders. Mr. McEachern emphasized the need for time. He suggested that stakeholders not be forced to use the logo, but rather be flexible and look for agreement on the central thoughts and alignment on the strategy.

The Mayor noted that North Star has no clients in Illinois. Mr. McEachern said North Star has an efficient process and noted that every community is different. He said his company would have no preconceived notions and would bring a fresh perspective.

There was discussion of branding and the strategic plan. There was also a discussion of incorporating work done by private and public bodies including citizen surveys, citizen summits, and strategic planning documents. Mr. McEachern said all work is useful for research purposes as it helps to guide the process. In response to Council, Mr. McEachern said North Star has not had strategies rejected by their clients. It is important to do due diligence and to take ownership of the work before publicly presenting the product. With respect to diverse populations within the community, Mr. McEachern said his company will ask for help in reaching all areas of the community. He further noted that North Star would ask for a central point person at the Village to coordinate work. The Mayor emphasized the desire to be transparent.

Adjournment

There being no further discussion, the Workshop meeting was adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

April K. Holden
Village Clerk