

## MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

March 19, 2024

### CALL TO ORDER

Jeff Angelo called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Present:        Jeff Angelo – President  
                  Arnette Easily – Vice President  
                  Carol Langley – Treasurer  
                  Wade Nelson – Board Member  
                  Casey Olson – Board Member  
                  Dan Walker – Board Member

Absent:         Ryan Londeen – Board Member

Also Present:  Dave McCorquodale, Planning & Development Director  
                  Diana Titus, Deputy City Secretary

### CALL TO ORDER

### OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT

First Speaker: Mrs. Sara Countryman addressed item 5 on the agenda under the discussion portion of the agenda. She said the agenda reads “Casey Olson requested a non-street parking concept for McCown to be discussed at possible action.” Under the “analysis piece” the Assistant City Administrator wrote this item is new to staff and the first step for MEDC is to consider whether the Board can move forward. Mrs. Countryman said she is confused as to why staff is stating this is a new item. She said she has a timeline on the subject of McCown and since 2018 the City has been discussing these improvements. She included meeting dates whether it was a City Council meeting or an MEDC meeting, item numbers and highlights of discussions which included drainage, water sewer improvements, parking concepts, traffic flow, traffic pattern ideas, all of these things to consider.

Mrs. Countryman stated on August 21, 2023 was the last time McCown was on an agenda and that was an MEDC agenda. In this meeting McCown streetscape parking design was put on hold by MEDC. If this subject is “new” for the analysis on your agenda she is concerned staff is lost and needs reminding that Council and MEDC have been working on this for years and spent several hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars already. This is not a new subject nor a new idea.

Mrs. Countryman said as a resident and taxpayer she is asking MEDC to stay on course of where they are and the ground they have already covered. McCown needs help and taxpayers, downtown businesses, and visitors alike all agree. Now that the waterlines have been upgraded she hopes the Board moves forward and builds on ideas already presented to ensure success in the near future. She said she is happy to share what she has in hand.

Mrs. Countryman said there is a potential new buyer for the Joe Shockley property. She thinks they should take the feedback from that potential new buyer too because that will be most of the eastern side of that. She stated she is asking MEDC to table it this evening.

Second Speaker: Mrs. Cheryl Fox said her concern is with item 5 on the agenda as well. She knows they discussed this for a long time but right now because there is so much going on and because there is a potential buyer for the Shockley property there is a potential for other areas there too. She said just the fact of making it a one way street from Caroline to College which is right in front of the steakhouse is an issue.

Mrs. Fox said she does not think they should disband it but she would certainly like to see it put on hold for now.

Jeff Angelo asked what the Shockley property is.

Mrs. Fox said it is the one strip that is from the Garrett House all the way to Yo' Mama's Bar-B-Que.

Jeff Angelo asked if it has been for sale for a while.

Mrs. Fox said almost two and a half years.

Jeff Angelo asked if there is a potential buyer possibly.

Mrs. Fox said potentially.

Third Speaker: Ms. Shannan Reid, Executive Director, Montgomery Area Chamber of Commerce said she noticed in last month's minutes there were some questions and thought it would be a good time to give an update. She apologized that she did not have her paperwork in for this meeting for Freedom Fest but they will be having Freedom Fest. She said one of the things MEDC has graciously partnered with them on is helping them with ample police. At that event it is not a money maker for the Chamber but it is a great partnership for the City and they are still interested in that partnership. She said she will submit that paperwork as soon as possible.

Ms. Reid said if she were to ask anyone what the role of the Chamber is in a community she would get many different answers. In the chamber industry they have a saying if you have seen one chamber you have seen one chamber.

(Wade Nelson arrived at the meeting at 6:06 p.m.)

She said that is really to say that every chamber or should be is serving its community for the needs of that particular community. She thinks it is a very beautiful description of a chamber but it does touch the heart of the business community.

Ms. Reid said when they became a chamber in 2015 they really did not see where the trajectory of how the businesses and community would develop. As they have moved along they have had a lot of residential growth but not necessarily in that primary jobs category. When you look at the funding structure for how a chamber operates, typically those larger corporation donors are the sustainability track for chambers so they can then turn around and help the smaller businesses because a startup business, a young business, a small mom and pop business do not have those extra funds especially when a year gets tight like we are in right now to really be able to support an organization besides themselves, but we want to be able to serve the community. She said the challenges economically certainly caught their attention to consider all of these things as they are looking at where they are today.

Ms. Reid said back in December they sent out a poll to all of their member businesses and currently the Chamber is 240 members strong. She is very proud of the work they have done to support the business community in the Montgomery area. They received some really incredible feedback from all of their businesses about what is right in front of them, the challenges they face, what are they anticipating going forward, and what are their needs. They received three distinct answers. The first one is everyone across the board says they are doing more with less. We can all agree that is the condition we live in. The discretionary spending is less, their consumers have less to spend with them, their profit margins are less,

the workers are less. They are having to shoulder more, which is taking away their ability to support things like the Chamber. Secondly, they are needing to increase their client base and exposure. That in turn says to them they need the Chamber to provide more opportunity for them but they have less to share with the Chamber. She said that dynamic is playing out in the Chamber as well. Finally, they really have a desire to create a great culture in their workplace so they can recruit and retain a quality workforce. She said that is a challenge in our community. In hearing from them, one of the hallmarks of the Chamber that she is very proud of is that people see them as customer centered, value based, and relationship driven and thinks that reflects the hospitality of Montgomery and the culture they want to put forward.

When they are looking at providing value the first thing their Board wanted to do going into 2024 is to answer those top three issues that are facing their business community. They are looking to leverage partnerships and how they can work with existing neighbors and partners. At the end of it all, however, it was not enough to fill the gaps.

Ms. Reid said on the minutes from last month you were asking about Wine Fest. She said Wine Fest had become the mechanism to fill the gap but their Chamber's model has always been more leaning on the event revenue for sustainability. They did not have M&O covered by membership dues and probably no chamber in the world does as they do lean on extra revenue. Every time they have to shoulder another event it takes their time and resources away from providing the real value that their businesses need in the advocacy, education and helping with training or even to support with engagement with one another connecting their businesses together. It was taking them farther and farther away from their mission is what was happening.

The Board asked the hardest question of all and that was what if they fully partnered with their neighbors and took some of the operational duplication out of this equation. Their friends in Conroe operate the same software and have a whole team of staff that do duplicate things. Between rent, insurance, software, and all of those other things. If they could combine forces what would that mean to their members for value. They are doing more with less and if they combine as they already share 30 percent of their members and 50 percent of those from the top end because as you see we do not have those primary jobs at the Chamber. They borrow those resources from down the road and they are even strategically shrinking some of their investments as well. This could be a savings. Instead of duplicating just membership dues they can deepen their investments in both communities. This would also increase exposure to a bigger client base which makes sense because here while they do have a network pool they are creating, when it comes to business our businesses cannot survive on just the client base of Montgomery alone. They are already partnering and networking to get their clients all around this region so that makes sense to broaden their client base. Finally, it would be having more resources they can tap into.

Ms. Reid said most importantly, one of the things that has always limited her is being a one man show. This would give them more resources that would leverage their time and talents better so instead of duplicating all of their operations they can then be more strategic on the things that matter most for the community. For building the community, helping the businesses, and advocacy. It is those kinds of things she was really out of time to be able to help and do things that really bring value. Ms. Reid said at the end of that whole list it made a lot of sense but there was still a bit of reserve and you will know exactly what I mean as everyone in here believes the same thing, yes but we are Montgomery.

One of the things she goes back to is if you have seen one chamber you have seen one chamber. She said she bets everyone here would have a different opinion of what a chamber should be doing. When she thinks back to the thing that Montgomery would love the most is it comes back to a welcome center. A place where they can collect visitors, new residents, new businesses, some point of contact where you can buy a flag and a point where they can direct people. A physical and maybe a virtual landing page where they could send people in various directions.

As they started these discussions, that opportunity actually became available. When their Board started looking at all of the things Montgomery wants, needs, and desires, a welcome center has always been one of those things they have dreamed of and wanted to get to and were not getting to any time soon. As she was looking ahead to her next 10-15 years of work life she was not seeing them getting there any quicker. Conroe has graciously stepped up to the plate and said they would like to partner to bring that to life. She thinks that could be a huge star in the crown for Montgomery physically here, a place that would bring

people where they could then host and hub all of those little activities that they have been trying to do as a chamber as well. She does not think anyone is going to miss the operational piece coming out of Conroe rather than a Montgomery address. Here is why. She said I bet three of you have been in my office ever. Most do not even know where it is located. She has been pretty virtual anyway. They do their events in town and that is how that will continue. All of the signature events will not happen in a chamber office and will not happen in Conroe. They will continue to have all of their presence here. In addition to that, they hope to bring a focus group together of stakeholders so they can even create not a Montgomery Area Chamber logo brand, not a City brand, but this welcome center will have all of the reflection of the character of Montgomery and that will be the stamp that gets put on things. It will not read Conroe on their things that they do. The operational side housed out of Conroe will take a load of work off her plate and make her more available for Montgomery and the whole area. Ms. Reid says she thinks this is a very exciting moment in their Chamber's development because she thinks it will leverage the things they need to be able to move this idea forward.

Ms. Reid said the merge has already taken place. They had this discussion with their membership and they graciously voted 100 percent in favor. It was an amazing day. It did not have to go that way but she is so blessed that it did and that they could see that their hearts were for the benefit of the businesses. They wanted to put their needs first and not their own because we are not here to serve ourselves but here to serve them. She is excited about the opportunities.

She said they will keep their signature events and she does not think anyone will miss that the bills for the businesses come out of the Conroe location as opposed to a Montgomery address. She said their events staying here is very important on both sides.

Ms. Reid continued they are looking forward to a bigger regional footprint and impact because the lines between Montgomery and Conroe continue to disappear and those people that are coming over here to partner with our businesses, our community and residents are fabulous. She enjoys getting to know each and every one of them.

Ms. Reid said she just wanted to share this exciting news and as they have been looking forward to locations of the welcome center there might be an opportunity for the City to come together and partner with them. Maybe it is to help contribute some kind of funds toward the space and then perhaps they host information that is city-wide. Typically you think of a chamber as a member based organization which it is but this partnership will support the entire City in addition to so they definitely want to keep that whole community mindset not just a member base only so they can support that. She said she is sure many of you have experienced on your travels a sweet small town that has a welcome center that is funded and operated by the chamber in a partnership with the city. She said she thinks it has great potential and there are lots of great examples out there they can pull from.

Arnette Easily asked if it will be a stand-alone center.

Ms. Reid responded for right now as quickly as possible they want a foot in the door and they are talking downtown, they are not talking at Kroger or out of the city limits but are talking in town. They are looking at various properties that have vacancies right now but it is a foot in the door. Once things begin to unfold like the plans you are talking about with different pieces to downtown, they would love to be a part of the conversation because that is going to be that gateway to like a hallmark version of downtown.

Wade Nelson asked is there anything that obligates Conroe to do any of this.

Ms. Reid asked what do you mean obligates.

Wade Nelson said a welcome center. He said if he is Conroe he does not really care what Montgomery does. Is there anything that obligates them. They are going to tell you everything you want to hear, but will they actually say yes they are going to provide a welcome center.

Ms. Reid said it is in the contract signed by both and is contractually obligated.

Wade Nelson asked what kind of motivation is there to make them do that.

Ms. Reid replied they have already been doing all of it so she thinks they are motivated.

Wade Nelson asked if there is a timeline on it. He said if he is Conroe he does not really care if you get what you want. Conroe is focused on Conroe. How do we motivate them to show interest in Montgomery.

Ms. Reid said so far they already have and they brought the welcome center to the table for them. They did not bring it to them as it was their motivation to begin with. She said she thinks one of their goals is not to have another split off of the chambers so by keeping the welcome center's presence they can make the chamber side of things which is the business support side to be regional. They are looking to be a regional support center. They have already done one in Willis. It is small but it is on its way to where it is going. They already placed that model in place when they brought this up on their end as well. It is in the contract. They are done with their space March 31<sup>st</sup> and by April 1<sup>st</sup> they should be in their new location.

Wade Nelson said he can see where the businesses that are Chamber members benefit because they get a much larger spectrum. He is trying to figure out from locally why Conroe would care about anything that happens here because historically their commissioners do not care and historically Conroe does not care.

Ms. Reid said that is understandable but they are working with the Chamber not those government entities and the Chamber has a bit of a different motivation from the aspect of the regional look of a business community. A lot of the people who have businesses in Conroe do live in Montgomery so there is some synergy already there. They are putting out an olive branch to bring them all together. It is an instant boost for our members joining their roster. There is certainly that and it is a benefit to them. This is a way they can come together as a region instead of being three divided communities around the lake.

Wade Nelson asked if the events that they would want to present and go forward with, they are totally on board with continuing.

Ms. Reid said all of their signature events are already on the books and will remain for 2024.

Wade Nelson said what he can see from a budget standpoint is them saying well they are not part of us so cut this and cut that.

Ms. Reid responded there is always that risk. She said they could have hobbled along in the pace they are going but they were looking at the landscape of businesses going forward not being able to sustain a chamber in the model that it is designed to do and the Chamber may have lost her. She said 2023 was rough. She said this is a much better version and they also get her in the equation. She is well connected in the community and they needed that connection as well and also all of the skill set she brings for advocacy, education, engagement, and economic development.

Casey Olson said his concern is they have an issue with Conroe being pushed up against them and now their Chamber of Commerce is not even in Montgomery it is a Conroe Chamber of Commerce. From a third party looking in our own Chamber is now going to support the Conroe ETJ and we already have a hard time and we are going to have a hard time pushing back on Conroe to push them back away from us and now with just the public opinion of now we do not even have our own chamber let us use Conroe and go ahead and let Conroe push harder on us. He said even though it is not governmental it is still the public opinion or the view that it gives them and it is not a good view. It makes it much more difficult for us as a City to push back on Conroe who has in the past and still are very parasitic in reaching as far as they can reach.

Ms. Reid said they cannot take any of Montgomery's ETJ.

Casey Olson said no but they cannot push back. Even though they pushed all the way up to our city limits where we are supposed to have a certain amount of space, they have pushed us right up to our side.

Wade Nelson said he thinks he is talking about distinction as we are no longer separate.

Casey Olson said as we grow we would be able to push back but it is not the same. This is common over reach again.

Ms. Reid said she understands his perspective. There is a distinction between the Chamber and the City government but she understands where he is coming from and his concern. She asked if he had felt this already in a month's time.

Casey Olson said it is not the month it is the view that it gives them over time. As a City as we grow and we need to be able to push back we will not have that leverage of we have our own business identity, we have our own Montgomery identity, well no, you are part of Conroe, but we are not part of Conroe and he does not want to be part of Conroe.

Ms. Reid said one of the things they can take advantage of from the economic development side is a stronger relationship for the economic development office for things that could land in Montgomery that may not make sense in Conroe proper so maybe they can flip that conversation and make it a more positive opportunity to attract businesses here. Since she has not been with this board since 2018 she does not see what comes down from the governor's office, nor is she privy to any of the opportunities that they could have landed but having the opportunity and more time on her hands from not doing all of the things to keep a business operational, now she will have more opportunity on the economic development side to even be supportive to this Board even though she is not part of this Board, you still have her as an advocate.

Arnette Easley said you have said you are an advocate for the City of Montgomery and the current members, but you want to be a part of the Conroe Chamber to be exposed to some of the tools they have to grow the Chamber because right now our Chamber is at a small crawl. This will help you are far as reaching the businesses here.

Ms. Reid said absolutely. She thinks the welcome center will go a long way for their presence and have a name to identify with and a point of contact that will not have the name Conroe written across it. She thinks that identity and that presence will really be a help.

Jeff Angelo said it is almost like Amazon. You start out as a prime member and you get two day shipping and think that is great. Then all the sudden they add video and games because they have a footprint that is rather large. He said he does not disagree with Casey Olson's perspective but he does not think that is reality. The reality is that our Chamber in Montgomery did not have the bandwidth to pull in the level of resources they needed to be able to adequately serve this community. He said he thought it was a very positive move to say we are going to join forces and use the backbone resources of the Chamber in Conroe. We are going to keep Shannan and Shannan is the Chamber of Montgomery and her team and the outreach and networking she does will give her more bandwidth to focus on the possibilities along with having this big Chamber behind them that has lots of resources. It might bring additional businesses from the Conroe area now that we are all part of one team. He said he thinks it is a good thing and does not see it as being negative.

Jeff Angelo asked if Wine Fest was profitable and is it something they should consider.

Ms. Reid said the Wine Fest made it through 16 years. Having large events in the historic downtown is beyond logistically challenging, not to mention when you add in regulation. The last time they were downtown was 2021 and sadly that was the perfect storm year to destroy that event. It really was a challenging year regulation wise. Obviously, they want security and she noticed in the minutes from last month you were asking if police security was too extensive. She said it is not about that. All of the regulation on top of everything was more expensive but it was not having a fence at their event. She reminded them in 2013-2014 they did ask the question of should they fence the event. At the request of Mr. McCorquodale, who was on City Council at the time said to get 100 percent buy in from downtown and they could fence the entire downtown. She said it was 100 percent no. They did not want to be in or out and both ways was not acceptable. They honored that. They just continued to reorganize the event so they could continue to keep it going. Without having a gate or pass of some sort it was always going to get upside down at some point.

Jeff Angelo asked if the wrist band thing did not work as good.

Ms. Reid said that was to purchase alcohol but they were finding that the percentage of people that were actually spending money on alcohol compared to those who were coming in for a free concert. They

continue to want to do things with excellence and step up their game because of consumer trend and expectation, it just continued with expenses and they could never recover those costs.

Jeff Angelo asked what about vendors and how did they do.

Ms. Reid said of course gypsy vendors are going to do great, but here is the thing. Their heart has always been that people discover the businesses downtown. It breaks her heart when the businesses can say to her that it is not a good day for them or things do not go well on a high traffic day like that, or when people are stealing from them or vandalizing their property. Gypsy vendors are fine but they do not keep the lights on in the City. They are here one day so they are not our priority.

Jeff Angelo said that is a good point.

Wade Nelson said Conroe has it figured out. They do these events year in and year out. The people that occupy space here today that should be their high moment because that is giving them focus and attention they normally would not have. It should not be our sales are beyond the roof because of that one event, it should be that it is giving them exposure.

Jeff Angelo said it is a marketing tool.

Wade Nelson agreed and continued to say for the business tenants to say no you are not having an event in our downtown is ridiculous. The City is then catering to them saying we are not going to do anything here because three or four business tenants screamed and yelled. The ones that are most negative are the ones everyone hears and those are the ones everyone gives attention to and cowards down to and says we will do whatever you say to do. Tomball has it figured out, Magnolia has it figured out, Conroe has it figured out and we are still saying we will do whatever you say to do. That is just not how you do it.

Wade Nelson said there is no reason why Wine Fest should have gone north of town ever. Wine Fest should have been downtown the entire time. Every event we do should be in downtown Montgomery. It should not be at a baseball park or a YMCA.

Jeff Angelo said he would like to know if Wine Fest is something worth continuing because he always thought it was a phenomenal event and it is who are town is. We should get some of the wine makers around the area to come together and create a real wine fest with real Texas wines.

Wade Nelson said the last one he attended there were 3,000 people in downtown and that is the kind of event you want. It is not listening to two or three people scream and yell because they were blocked off.

Jeff Angelo asked if this is something that the Montgomery Chamber/Conroe Chamber might be willing to help them coordinate with their expertise so that if they were to put something together they could make it a success because it is a great event.

Ms. Reid said she does not think anything is off the table, but she will say they need to have a better discussion than this forum. The challenges are legitimate and they have not even been tapped into today. As a consumer you may have one opinion but until you are walking a mile in the shoes of putting on that event then you will see the challenges she is talking about. It is not about people yelling. You have to have permission for property and you have to have all kinds of layers of participation. Volunteerism has fallen way off. If you get a bad star rating that reflects on the town and she takes that very seriously. It was tipping all the way down and they were not able to offer that experience that you expect. If we can tackle those challenges then absolutely they can come back with some ideas. Does it need to be 10,000 people in the historic district, perhaps not and it can still be wonderful.

Dan Walker said he thinks as soon as you get a brick and mortar welcome center in that area the presence will start defining you as the Montgomery Chamber again but it will also interact with the people down there too to see this is a good thing and they have people stopping by that want a brochure or a map.

Jeff Angelo said it is all about relationships. He thinks the welcome center is a great idea and that the collaboration is going to be beneficial to all of them. He totally gets the optics of what Casey is saying but the Chamber has much less power than the political side of things and the power grabbers and the property

grabbers. He said they need to focus on trying to find a better way for the businesses in the area which is what their call is. The only way they can do that is to get some collaboration and right now it sounds like Ms. Reid has made the beginnings of a start to get some collaboration and he is excited about that.

**CONSIDERATION AND POSSIBLE ACTION:**

1. Consideration and possible action on the February 20, 2024 Regular and Annual Meeting Minutes.

Motion to accept the minutes of February 20, 2024 as presented was made by Casey Olson and seconded by Wade Nelson. All in favor. (6-0)

2. Consideration and possible action on approval of a \$500.00 sponsorship for the 2024 March 4 Our Military.

Casey Olson asked with the sponsorship are there banners or anything that represents the City for our donation.

Mr. Travis Wilson, owner of Alpha Elite Performance Outdoors said yes they will have the logo they used last year on the banner at Ransom's Steakhouse and it might be on the t-shirts as well.

Jeff Angelo asked if Mr. Wilson could explain the event and asked if they have done this in the past.

Mr. Wilson said yes this will be their third year for March 4 Our Military. He is a retired Green Beret having served 21 years and originally from Wichita Falls. He found Montgomery and brought his business here which is a nationally known brand supplement nutrition company where they sell to other stores throughout the nation. They started doing really well and wanted to start a nonprofit AEP Outdoors and take primarily special operations veterans because it is a smaller footprint on adrenaline outdoor adventure trips. Mental health and outdoors is a gap he is trying to fill from other nonprofits that he also works with. He is also the Director of Mission Program Delivery at the Green Beret Foundation. He said last year they took two local veterans that were not special operations to Cabo which they do in June. They get two days of sport fishing with a day in the middle for fellowship so veterans can spend time together and talk about things they cannot talk about around their spouses or people that just do not know that did not serve. They also do monthly hog hunts out in Temple, Texas and also help out the farms there that request those services to eradicate the pigs and coyotes from their farms. For their big event they chose one veteran to go to Africa. Last year they chose a female one of the first few females chosen into Delta Force called CAG, Combat Action Group. She was one of the first few females recruited into their G-squadron into their intelligence squadron. They took her back to this continent where she had a traumatic experience so she could release some of that and get healing. He said sitting around a campfire with a bunch of other guys having campfire therapy he found to be wonderful and some of the best therapy he has ever had.

Jeff Angelo said he thinks that is awesome and what Mr. Wilson does is remarkable. Those of us who have not served do not really know people who have in the light that Mr. Wilson has and certainly will never understand the type of things you have had to deal with. We are grateful for that and hope we can be a part of your continued service and recovery. Thank you.

Jeff Angelo asked how many people participated in the event.



Mr. Wilson responded the first year was around 100 and last year was 130. He said this year he is not sure but thinks by the end of the week it will be 100 people.

Wade Nelson asked where does the event take place.

Mr. Wilson said they start at Ransom's Steakhouse, an easy 5K through historic downtown Montgomery.

Motion to approve the \$500.00 sponsorship for the 2024 March 4 Our Military was made by Arnette Easley and seconded by Dan Walker. All in favor. (6-0)

3. Consideration and possible action on an Economic Development Grant Application for a proposed outdoor wall mural at the North Houston Art Gallery located at 14259 Liberty Street in the historic downtown.

Casey Olson asked if the picture that is in their packet is a representation of the actual artwork or is it just a rough draft.

Ms. Rebecca Noriega, owner of the North Houston Art Gallery and business spaces at 1429 Libert Street said that is a representation of the artwork that was done by Amy McCain who is a well-known mural artist here in the City. She is from Montgomery and has done several murals in Conroe, however she did allow some contingency in her estimate in the event the City requests any modifications to the mural. This is their proposal which depicts very similar an element of what they were told of that property many years ago.

They have included an Exhibit A in the package which gives a background with regards to why they thought the mural would be a good addition for the City of Montgomery. They have in their possession three tokens that were given to them by the prior owners of the building, Kirt and Emily Jones, who were given the tokens from the prior owner. These were tokens that Mr. Donald Duncan and his brother found on that property. The history they received on the token was that property used to be a station where citizens would come in, leave their horses, were given a token, and those tokens were residue from our prior history.

With many people including their selves who have been living in the City for the past eight years, they never knew about that portion of history. The museum for the historical city found out those tokens were given to them and approached them asking if they would give the tokens to the museum which they have scheduled to do on April 20<sup>th</sup>. In conjunction with that, they thought it would be a great opportunity for them, current owners of the building to invest in creating this mural as part of the history for the downtown area. They are asking the Board if they would contribute as they know that throughout the curriculum for high schools there are a lot of activities that go on in terms of educating our youth about our history. She thinks they do not want that history to be lost about the building so they will collaborate with Amy, with the Board, and with the City to get this mural up which depicts a carriage coming in with an exchange of a token. The fact that it was told to be a livery token and have that on the building to indicate it was activities along with being a stable, along with the horse, and making sure to have the Texas flag included.

She continued that any other changes the Board would like done to this mural, Amy will incorporate those changes to make it happen.

Carol Langley asked if the mural would have any lights on it.

Ms. Noriega said they were not planning on installing lights, but if that is something the City will approve they will be happy to do that. Again, they as owners are taking part in the cost to create this memory.

Arnette Easley said that is wonderful when you can display history.

Dan Walker said it also ties it more to downtown.

Wade Nelson asked how the mural gets applied.

Ms. Noriega said Amy McCain is a professional mural artist who has been doing this for many years. She grew up in the City so she is very familiar with the City requirements. She has several murals in downtown Conroe and that is one of the reasons they chose her and because of the fact she is local, grew up and went to school here, owns a business, and this is part of what she does professionally.

Wade Nelson said he thinks the worry was it was an application like a sticker.

Ms. Noriega said no, it is going to be painted.

Dan Walker asked if the painting is actually going to be on the building or is there a canvas that goes in front of it.

Ms. Noriega responded it will be painted onto the building.

Wade Nelson said he wants to make sure it does not look cartoonish.

Ms. Noriega said that was their concern too because they certainly do not want that to be the appearance and based on Amy's work in the downtown Conroe area it is absolutely stunning.

Jeff Angelo asked if she could share with them some of the artwork Amy has done.

Ms. Noriega said she would happy to send pictures of some of the artwork in the downtown area to Mr. McCorquodale.

Jeff Angelo said he loves anything that brings attention to their history and thinks it is such a fun place.

Dan Walker said it could be part of the QR code with Wayfinder.

Arnette Easley asked Ms. Noriega to explain more about the artifacts that were found.

Ms. Noriega said it is in the package as Exhibit A. Ms. Bessie Price Owen who is a noted Montgomery, Texas history teacher and historian confirmed the tokens found by Donald and Billy Ray Duncan are engraved with the numbers 18, 19, and 4 and are actual Livery Stable Tokens used on the lot of 14259 Liberty Street, Montgomery, Texas. These claimed tokens were found and given to the Gains family who build the current structure on this lot, then it was given to Kirt and Emily and then to them. It will be presented to the museum on April 20<sup>th</sup>.

Jeff Angelo said the Texas flag should have some color to it.

Wade Nelson said very subtle and muted color on the flag with black and white for everything else.

Mr. McCorquodale said if the Board chooses to fund the mural the next step would be to go to the Planning and Zoning Commission and they will have the final say.

Jeff Angelo said he thinks it is a great idea.

Motion to approve the resolution for the grant in the amount of \$1,300.00 for a proposed outdoor wall mural at the North Houston Art Gallery located at 14259 Liberty Street was made by Carol Langley and seconded by Arnette Easley. All in favor. (6-0)

4. Consideration and possible action on a McCown Street Improvements Project update.

Casey Olson said based on the public comments earlier #4 and #5 are two separate items and do not have anything to do with each other. Cherly Fox had asked about the one way and that is actually item #4 and item #5 does not change the flow of traffic.

Mr. McCorquodale said this is narrowly limited to the McCown Street Improvement Project. On page 28 of the packet it shows the original project area. Back in August 21<sup>st</sup> of last year at an MEDC meeting the Board wanted to pause the project to sort out the question of access through the Old Montgomery Steakhouse parking lot. If they are going to put a plaza in the middle of the street and either totally block or partially block cars that are moving up and down McCown they have to put it somewhere. Right after the Fall Festival that year he had a meeting with Wayne from the steakhouse. At the time Wayne had no issue with the idea and said he could not get it through the City for free but was sure they could come to an agreement. Fast forward several months later there was some feedback from someone either on Council or the Board who said they talked with Wayne and he is no longer interested. Mr. Palmer and he then met with Wayne and he is no longer interested in doing anything with the City outside of he would be willing to sell the City the restaurant which the City does not need.

Mr. McCorquodale said that leaves them with two options. The most palpable solution is to rethink the plaza in the middle of McCown Street.

Jeff Angelo asked if regarding item #4 they were going to get a response or some kind of feedback from the design group as to what the best practices may end up looking like.

Mr. McCorquodale said they told the design group to pause the project to see if they could work out internally whether or not they could get access through the steakhouse parking lot.

Jeff Angelo asked if that is off the table now.

Mr. McCorquodale said correct, they are not going through the steakhouse parking lot anymore. They need to look at what are they going to do about the plaza the downtown design master plan had in the middle of McCown Street which leads to the traffic flow and circulation on McCown Street. They can keep it the way it is today with cars going north and south with possible room for three foot sidewalks on both sides or a 50-foot right-of-way in there. The other option, Option A what he is recommending to the Board is to consider making from College to Caroline one way north from McCown Street. We are talking about the width of the right-of-way and whatever you have to put it in. If you put two 12 foot wide lanes in there you have chewed up a good portion in the road with less space to devote to pedestrian space.

Jeff Angelo asked how the tenants in that area feel about a one way street.

Mr. McCorquodale said he does not know. All the parking on the street is angled north and you would have to come from the south to get in the parking.

Casey Olson said his suggestion is do not angle park. They could block off the driveway into the steakhouse so no one can drive through and you make perpendicular parking and push it all the way to the edge of both properties on both sides that the City can take and you have perpendicular parking where they can come in and go out the same way.

Dan Walker said on the original concept they looked at years ago, it was primarily going to be walkable space but still have traffic and be able to block it off with some type of a system when they had events.

Mr. McCorquodale said they can still treat the pavement differently where the cars go in the middle of the lot. If you wanted to you could close it off with a traffic table which is like a speed bump that is a really long flat speed bump. You can still treat the design of the pavement and the materials and that way it would allow them to periodically as they do now close McCown and have a nice pedestrian friendly area or appealing pavement as opposed just to asphalt or concrete.

Jeff Angelo said you could quadruple the parking down there if you had a one way street. He said he knows it is not popular but is something to consider because you are only going one way. He said he was in Dallas recently at their farmers market and this is exactly what they did. They just had one way streets with angled parking and it was really easy to get in and out of that area because you knew which way people were coming from. They could get a lot of cars in a small amount of space on one road. It looks like that is the way for these types of things. He asked what is our number one concern in downtown. Parking.

Carol Langley said they have plenty of parking downtown.

Jeff Angelo asked if they do.

Casey Olson said absolutely.

Carol Langley said unless it is an event then you tell people where to park, otherwise there is plenty of parking. She said they need to table item #4 until they are sure what is happening with that property that is around and connects to McCown Street.

Dan Walker said get a design or some type or an artist rendition of what they are talking about and talk with the tenants.

Jeff Angelo said somehow they need to get these guys back on track again.

Carol Langley said she is not for a one way street tonight and she will vote against it.

Mr. McCorquodale said to keep in mind that this Board will not make a decision whether it is one way or not. You are effecting the design and direction of the team. The City Council will make the final call.

Casey Olson asked what if they blocked McCown off at Caroline.

Carol Langley asked what is the benefit of that.

Casey Olson said if you want your walking and you do not want one way or traffic problems you would not have any.

Carol Langley said the only time she walks that street is on a Thursday night with cars coming and going and she can still get down that street.

Casey Olson said that street is not designed for walking. The whole point of the concept is to have more businesses instead of a business with the backdoor that looks like an alley way, you will have a business on one end and a business on the other. You are optimizing the square footage.

Jeff Angelo asked Casey Olson what he is suggesting.

Casey Olson said if the business owners do not want them to drive through the parking lot that is fine. They will block the parking lot. There are still two ways for getting in and out. They are not doing anything except wanting to make it safe for people to walk, but if that does not work then you block the entire street and say do what you want.

Jeff Angelo said if you block the street he thinks there could be a mild revolt. He does not think that is a good business move. He said he has seen this in action with the one way street and it works great. He mentioned he would like to hear Carol Langley's reasoning on why she does not like the one way street.

Carol Langley said Montgomery is too little and why do you need a one way street for downtown Montgomery, Texas.

Jeff Angelo said even the smallest of towns have one way streets and smallest areas have one way streets. He said it is just more of a safety thing than anything else.

Casey Olson said one ways do not have to do with size, it has to do with the size of the street.

Jeff Angelo said if it is going to work with their design that they already all agreed is a good design, they need to keep the traffic flowing one direction not two. He said when you have two directions it is more difficult trying to get across the street as opposed to one direction and you know which way to look. He said he is not saying it is 100 percent the best idea but based on what they have he does not know if there is a better idea.

Dan Walker said the original concept was to obviously have traffic flow but then also have curbside seating and outdoor dining.

Jeff Angelo said it would be nice if they could put more sidewalk space, more walking space, or more Del Frisco dining or just something to give it a little more culture.

Dan Walker said with the safety aspect of it if there is something going on where there is a bunch of people walking it is closed anyway, there is no traffic.

Jeff Angelo said exactly and he just does not see it being a big deal, but he will table it if everyone wants to table it.

Wade Nelson asked why would they table it. The whole problem with these meetings is they keep tabling items.

Jeff Angelo said he is not in favor of tabling anything as he wants to move on.

Wade Nelson asked is it up to one property owner how they handle this.

Casey Olson said no and that is his whole point that they just need to make a decision on what they as a City want it to be.

Wade Nelson said correct. You have to make a goal, an objective.

Jeff Angelo asked ultimately does the City Council and the Planning and Zoning have to get involved and make the final decision on this.

Mr. McCorquodale said with right-of-way items typically yes. He said as he did mention City Council will approve the final plan so the City is not going to move forward with something that the City Council does not want to do. Planning and Zoning really does not get into a specific approval but they have looped them in periodically throughout the downtown design project and will continue to do so.

Wade Nelson said let us move forward. Enough is enough.

Jeff Angelo said let us at least put it out for a vote and this is just to release the design team to get moving along on one of these two options.

Wade Nelson said if this City is ever going to move forward you need to move forward as we are not doing anything.

Motion to approve option A for one way was made by Wade Nelson and seconded by Arnette Easley. All in favor. (5-0). Carol Langley opposed option A.

5. Consideration and possible action on an on-street parking concept for the southern portion of McCown Street on MEDC-owned property.

Mr. McCorquodale said just to clarify this is not within that project scope or the project area they just talked about. This is something different. He said right after the Council meeting on Tuesday Casey Olson asked him what it would take to bring this idea to the MEDC. He did not have a lot of time to put together because it was new to him but he would get it on the agenda to bring it up for discussion.

Casey Olson said if you look at the pictures Mr. McCorquodale has put in there they are pretty good. If you look at the original design concept it does not include any parking on the side of that park. It is designed for a park and there is no parking in there. If you look at the line, if you just want to draw straight lines there is parking behind the Davis house now. His proposal is to just extend the parking all the way down that property that the EDC owns and block off McCown like TXDot wants them to do at SH 105.

Dan Walker asked where access to the ReMax office is now.

Casey Olson said it is still there, you would still use it.

Carol Langley asked how would you get to SH 105.

Casey Olson said the ReMax office from SH 105 you cannot get to from SH 105 because that is a turning lane.

Casey Olson said the traffic flow would stay the same as you could go up or down it unless at some point it was the point of okay it is not safe to go up and down it when there are cars parked there but if they make the parking lot deep enough there would be enough room to back out and go out or they could exit out to the ReMax parking lot. He said he visited briefly with the engineers about this a week or so ago and he said the drainage has basically been taken care of and there is not much they have to do. The project itself would be relatively inexpensive. He said when he says inexpensive, it is 150 or less.

Casey Olson said there is a sidewalk drawn in there right now and if you look at the cartoons there is a sidewalk drawn in there. He said his thought is to move the sidewalk over and line it up with the sidewalk that is coming off the back of the Davis house.

Carol Langley said the original street shows the trees and she does not know where the parking would be.

Casey Olson said they would have to take the trees out.

Jeff Angelo asked why do they need to do this now and was this not just what you were speaking on.

Casey Olson said this is what she talked about that was where she said it is not part of the plan and it is not because the plan just has a sidewalk and a park and that is dead space.

Jeff Angelo said they have not done anything with this piece of property since they bought it.

Casey Olson said no not at all.

Jeff Angelo said they are talking about developing it into more of a feasible parking area.

Casey Olson said yes just moving one side of it so it matches up with the Davis property that is north of it. He said there is parking right there now. They would just extend that parking all the way down and would pick up about 10 or maybe more spots but probably 10.

Dan Walker said so you are talking about parallel parking coming off FM 149 or coming off McCown.

Casey Olson said it is on McCown and it is perpendicular parking or diagonal parking on the side of that lot.

Dan Walker said it is blocking the end of it going into SH 105 with some type of shrubbery.

Casey Olson said the design is to have it as a park anyway but use it instead of just being a big green park, put some parking on one side of it.

Jeff Angelo said it seems like it would fit with the plan they have already.

Casey Olson said it makes your line straight.

Jeff Angelo said he does not see anything wrong with that and asked if that is a good thing.

Casey Olson said it is a cheap easy win.

Mr. McCorquodale said if the Board wants to move forward with putting together a more formal cost proposal drawing they will do it.

Jeff Angelo said he has been downtown since 2012 and parking is not always a problem but he would like for it to become something they really focus on and try to do their best to maximize. He said he is in favor of at least going forward to look at the visibility of doing it. If everyone else feels the same way he thinks it is good.

Dan Walker asked what is that going to change also with the possibility of a purchase of the block.

Casey Olson said it is actually south of it.

Dan Walker said yes it is south of it but what is going to happen if that is purchased. There is historical and then there is other stuff.

Casey Olson said unless heat builds out over the street it does not affect that.

Dan Walker said no, I agree but is that going to be additional parking that would be needed for something that went on over there too.

Casey Olson said additional parking anywhere helps them down there.

Wade Nelson said he agreed.

Casey Olson said the reason he thought it was good was it is basically City controlled property. They do not have to ask permission and they can move forward with it at will.

Motion to approve moving forward with the feasibility study of the on street parking concept for the southern portion of McCown Street on MEDC owned property was made by Casey Olson and seconded by Dan Walker. All in favor. (5-0). Carol Langley opposed.

6. Consideration and possible action on: A RESOLUTION OF THE MONTGOMERY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION PROVIDING FOR THE TIME AND PLACE FOR REGULAR MEETINGS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

Mr. McCorquodale said this is to change the regular standing meeting to Tuesday. He said the first two meetings of the month conflict with holidays and just having the clarity of every City meeting is on a Tuesday.

Motion to accept the resolution for the MEDC Board of Directors meeting to be on the third Tuesday of each month was made by Dan Walker and seconded by Arnette Easley. All in favor. (6-0)

7. Events Report.

Ms. Patricia Campuzano, Events Specialist said on the report are events scheduled for March and the bottom portion of the report are the events that have not happened yet for the rest of



March. She did include Mudbugs, March 4 Our Military, and the Easter Car Hop that are private events happening in the City as well and will follow up with them once they happen.

Ms. Campuzano said on page two of the report is an update on the budget.

Jeff Angelo asked if she would be available to visit with Shannan Reid about possibly taking over the Wine Fest for the month of October.

Mr. McCorquodale said in early conversations with Mr. Palmer he does not know how they take that over this year. He thinks that was what he took away from it.

Jeff Angelo asked if he thinks they should just try to push it for 2025.

Mr. McCorquodale said he is going to stay out of it and let Mr. Palmer decide.

Jeff Angelo asked if it is an MEDC kind of directive or is it something they need the City to be on board with.

Mr. McCorquodale said to a certain degree but right now they are faced with low resources of time, money, and people.

Wade Nelson asked what kind of money does it take to put on a wine fest.

Ms. Reid said they would raise upwards of \$35,000 in just sponsorship dollars to start with. Their full expenses at their largest year was \$80,000 and that is for everything all in as they buy all of the alcohol.

Dan Walker asked did they break even.

Ms. Reid said it was dwindling, which is why it was not worth the time that you spend when you think about how many customers come in, what is the cost per person that comes and how much you are spending on that. She said it is \$20,000 alone on marketing which is one of the biggest challenges now because the world of marketing to tell the story of Wine Fest has changed. She said they trademarked Wine Fest so they own it so it will not be Wine Fest the way it was because they have it trademarked right now.

Wade Nelson asked who is we.

Ms. Reid said Montgomery Area Chamber of Commerce.

Casey Olson said but Montgomery Area Chamber of Commerce does not exist anymore.

Wade Nelson said you are all Conroe now.

Ms. Reid said all that paperwork is.

Jeff Angelo said they own the intellectual property is what you are saying.

Ms. Reid said they still own it so all of that has not all finished buttoning up.

Jeff Angelo said but eventually it will become one and they will have access.

Wade Nelson said there is no use of the Wine Fest.

Ms. Reid said even taking one year off proved to be fatal to them. It is more than you think so start small even now. Even though they had a 16 year track record it was still not what you think or they would have still been doing it. She said they did not want to say goodbye to anything.

Jeff Angelo said he thinks they just need a new way of thinking about it. He said he has a lot of experience in events alone so understanding the City, knowing the City, getting with you and learning about what went right and what was wrong, what was missing, what was confusing and figuring out how they can do it better to build a better Wine Fest. He thinks the name is something they could probably commandeer with the right persuasion because we are all one big family now. It is something they want to be able to continue on doing. Maybe they should table it for 2025.

8. MEDC Financial Report.

Carol Langley said on the first page you will see the amount of sales tax was \$145,705.90 and last month was \$102,000 so it did increase in the month of February. Interest on the TexPool was 5.33%. There were very few checks written and were mostly for security. One was for the DJ and then some items that were purchased for some of the events. MEDC is doing good.

Motion to accept the MEDC financial report was made by Arnette Easley and seconded by Wade Nelson. All in favor. (6-0)

BOARD INQUIRY

None at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

**The meeting was adjourned at 7:34 P.M.**

Submitted by: Diana Titus  
Diana Titus, Deputy City Secretary

Date Approved: 05/08/2024

  
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Jeff Angelo, MEDC President