Committee of the Whole

December 20, 2021

Present: President King; Council Members Baltzell, Fleck; Lochtefeld, Scott, Sovinski Clausen, and Buxton answered roll call. Also present were Law Director Moore, Safety-Service Director Hitchcock; Mayor Hazel; and Auditor Strawn

President King called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm for discussion in creating a DORA in the City of Celina. Director Hitchcock started with discussing that there is a limit of 150 miles for the DORA and the 3 sheets handed out on 3 different ways the DORA can be set up. The first was just with all the businesses that want to be a part of the DORA. The second is the same only it includes the Bryson Park District. The third is the exact same as the second but includes Montgomery Field. All 3 keep us under the 150 miles but that’s why we have 3 different maps.

CM Clausen asked if there are some businesses that haven’t responded yet. Director Hitchcock stated there are some that haven’t given us a hard yes. CM Clausen asked would that change the map? Director Hitchcock stated it would, that map 1 was just a mpa of the businesses that gave us a hard yes.

CM Fleck asked if Montgomery Field was added for special events? Mayor Hazel stated it was all about how it’s set up in the legislation. He then pointed out another handout given to members on the Greenville DORA. He stated it can be set up differently with days, times, or events. There are 26 businesses that have proper license for this that can attach in some way, and this map would give us the area. That area can be dictated by time, day, or event. Then gave the example of Plaza Lanes wanting to do an event in the back parking lot there but they wouldn’t do that event during an event like taste of Celina. But that means we need to figure out what days this will fall under, what times this will fall and how early. CM Fleck stated the Greenville one has time restraints. Mayor Hazel stated most do. Director Hitchcock stated there’s not really a set standard. It’s up to council on what they want to do.

CM Scott asked if we go with the map with the park and the park has an event usually they would buy a license of some sort, would we still have to get the license or does that have any impact on that? Director Hitchcock answered that the outside licenses couldn’t sell within the DORA. So when the DORA is active and the people who can be walking around outside is the license holders that in proposed orders. So if we have an event that has alcohol, we would have to shut the DORA down and it would not be in affect during that time. CM Scott then asked so it would be one or the other, as far as the park is concerned. Mayor Hazel we can have it in the DORA that we would shut it down so that like Lake Fest can have an F1 permit. CM Scott ask if we shut the DORA down for just the park or the entire district? Director Hitchcock stated it would be the entire district but we will clarify that for you.

CM Fleck asked if Greenville has a DORA now since the papers marked 2020? Director Hitchcock stated to his knowledge they do, they just received this from them. That Wapak, St. Marys, and Greenville all have them.

CM Sovinski asked if we have talked to all these other cities to get their opinion on this since they have them? Talked positives, negatives, what they would have done differently, or what their terms of operations are? Why not take advantage of their knowledge? Director Hitchcock stated that all the individuals they talked to have had no real issues, the biggest being the cups or trash. The cups are supposed to be single use, so if you are walking with one of the cups, you pay for it at the place you are leaving, drink it on the way to the next place, through it away before entering in to get another one.

CM Clausen asked if the park area is the only place we use the special licenses? Mayor Hazel stated there is also the ball field that gets their special license. CM Clausen asked so if we just left certain areas off the DORA, then these areas wouldn’t affect the DORA when they had special events. Director Hitchcock stated that that’s correct. He stated that they only added the parks because they knew they would come up eventually and we just wanted to show the acreage with the parks. Mayor Hazel brought up Concert in the Park, that would fall under but people could not bring their own alcohol, they would have to buy it from a licensed facility.

CM Buxton stated that we should go to the people this will affect, the businesses, and what I remember is a few of them were worried about the cups, the trash, and who would be policing it. One of the biggest questions that came up were, who would benefit it besides the people who were selling the beer? Have we talked to any of the other businesses, the none adult beverages business? Director Hitchcock stated that they have talked to some, and what it comes down to when we have the area figured out there will be 3 stickers. One sticker says DORA Cups Sold Here, second will say we allow DORA cups in our facility, and the third will say no, you are not allowed to bring DORA cups in here. This will stop anyone from coming into a store that doesn’t want it in there. CM Buxton referenced his own survey, that a lot of businesses didn’t want it downtown, though this is a few years ago. Director Hitchcock stated that they have not done another pull downtown since the last one a few years ago. CM Buxton stated maybe redo the pull. Mayor Hazel stated that this is for more like anyone that wants to go window shopping and doesn’t want to leave their beer, this gives them the ability to do so. It’s almost like Taste of Celina, where it’s the forbidden fruit that you can’t do every day. And if CJ’s or C-Town want to do an event in their lots, this can let them do this too.

CM Fleck stated that you can’t sit in a car or sit on a car, including golf cart, correct? May Hazel stated that that was correct. It does not allow an open container in a vehicle.

CM Scott stated that Celina is supposed to be a destination town, and I’ve been asked “You can do it St. Mary’s, why can’t you do it in Celina?”. This seems to be a part of that destination city amnions. He stated he is not against any of this, he is not sure we need people stumbling around, but I don’t think it would escalate into that, either. It’s an evening where people can get out. Director Hitchcock stated that from a police standpoint I wouldn’t do this until midnight. A lot of these cities cut this off at 10 because if we hit midnight we are going to have our normal problems we usually have. CM Scott stated that it will all come to our follow-up on this and our planning. The amount of control will determine the kind of problems we have.

CM Sovinski stated that several years ago we had a “Whining About Winter” where it was something similar to this, and I remember that was well received by the community and the stores and everyone involved, and then they started looking into legal questions and that all died down. But the DORA will open up for some activities like that and I agree that setting a limit for 10 pm would be great. He states it would still be wise to reach out to these other communities about their experience. Maybe invite, maybe a downtown manager or something like that, to a committee meeting? Mayor Hazel stated we can surely look into that. Director Hitchcock stated that he doesn’t see an issue with that, they’ve all been very helpful. CM Sovinski stated I’m sure they would like to come and talk about their communities and I think it would be good to hear from their experience. Mayor Hazel stated that one positive aspect of it is that it seems like everyone one is doing it, Kenton has had one several years ago and they said they never had any issues with it. They said it was actually one of the biggest booms for the area. I can see that this is an atmosphere thing. CM Sovinski stated that looking at the map, even if we had an event it would be concentrated in that area and not covering the whole DORA, but this will allow people to participate.

CM Clausen stated he looked at the Greenville DORA and how condensed it was to the downtown area where they only needed like 28 signs, and looking at our map we will need a whole bunch of signs. Director Hitchcock stated yes we already know that, we’ve already talked about it, and I did add them all up and I had a price but don’t have that with me. CM Clausen asked would that deter us from this? Director Hitchcock stated no, they weren’t that much.

President King then opened it up to the audience.

Cody Muhlenkamp, owner of the Anchor, has worked very closely with Bellefountaine and has asked about their DORA. They have been very successful with theirs, increasing foot traffic, increased revenue for all businesses, especially retail stores, and expanded the stores hours. As far as outdoor seating, it’s nice to be able to have that option if a new COVID restriction comes down, to put people outside. For restaurants, it was nice for turnover. His source stated that that police are actually big fans of it, that problem makers were already causing it anyway. Bellefountaine only has it for special events and their biggest regret was not putting it in permanently, and consistency was key for legality. Marysville is looking at expanding theirs now, and they call it a MORA instead of DORA, so we could do something fun like that.

CM Scott stated that we are constantly looking for something to bring people to our downtown, and I think this can be what brings people down there.

Julie Fleck, owner of Belles , stated how well the downtown has revitalized and how great it looks. With the lake side coming along with the new cottages, this would be perfect for people that stay there to be able to walk around and enjoy that atmosphere. And with more people coming this will also make the businesses to step up a little also and extend their hours, creating more revenue. I think the people who will be utilizing this won’t be the people causing trouble but truly are enjoying the atmosphere and being responsible with it. States that she believes during the summer between Memorial Day and Labor Day, making it 7 days a week because you have so much development during that time.

Phil Moeller and Michael Hoyng, owners of 202 S. Main Street, stated they are planning on putting in a food service there with a liquor license. He stated that Tim Davis is the economic developer for Troy, Ohio, stated they just passed their DORA and they did an economic study where they interviewed 25 different cities that have it, with 18 – 19 questions, with a lot to learn from all of them. The one question he pointed out is “If you could do it again, would you?”, there were 24 of them that answered, the 25 didn’t answer a lot of the questions, and every one of the 24 said they would do it again. And we would be happy to share this with you.

Jared of Mercer County Element, came on behalf of several different business owners. I get the privilege to sit on a lot of different things for the city and be involved with a bunch of different aspects. I support anything that will create the environment to attack more to our town. Taking part in some of these around different towns, I can tell you how nice it is. It’s just bringing people down to enjoy the atmosphere we have created here in downtown Celina.

CM Fleck stated that he has worked with a lot of the southern county people and they go to events all the time with beer and not cause trouble, it’s just a part of what they do. The demographic we are looking for is not the 2 am stumbling drunk people. We are targeting those who will be responsible, will shop, and will fill their bags.

CM Buxton stated that maybe we could do a DORA trail, like we do the brews and vines.

Jared stated exactly, helping businesses not only prompt themselves but all the other businesses around them and we can benefit from it.

CM Scott stated that on the other side of this if someone doesn’t want them in their store they can stick a sticker up in their window. Director Hitchcock stated that that will only be for mostly downtown area. Making the downtown its own block.

CM Clausen stated that he has been pretty outspoken on downtown buildings being empty, and everything Cody has been doing down there has been positive. Would this help fill up some of those other empty building as well? Jared stated yes, if you go to Bellefountaine, you can see all the stores that are filling up. And we have an awesome town with so much to offer, I think we would be creating a beehive. CM Clausen stated it looks like there is a lot of positives to it.

CM Sovinski stated that he really thinks it brings us back to when communities were communities and had community activities. Our town has been getting a lot of interest in development of retail instead of services. And with this we will get a lot of foot traffic into our retail shops. Our biggest problem isn’t if we will have the DORA it’s how should we have our DORA, it’s the most important things we should be looking at.

Jared asked would it be conceivable to have this up and running for next summer? Mayor Hazel stated I think it should be easily done.

CM Sovinski stated if you use common sense, it shouldn’t be rocket science. If we set it up and find issues then we also have the opportunity to change it. Mayor Hazel stated that with how this is you can’t amend the Ordinance; we would have to replace it. Director Hitchcock said they were going to verify the aspects, being it seems hard to change once it’s put into place.

CM Lochtefeld stated thanks to the Administration for this outside of the box idea, because I think some communities would be like no we aren’t doing this spider-web thing but I think it could work in our town. Director Hitchcock stated it’s defiantly different than any other DORA. We really tried to get who wanted in to be in. CM Lochtefeld thanked those who showed up because that was the problem before, that no one showed up.

CM Buxton stated he read someplace that you have to review them every 5 years anyway. Director Hitchcock stated we will have to find out because none of these DORAs are 5 years old. Mayor Hazel stated that Celina is unique, we are a destination city, we sit on the lake, and downtown is revitalizing and businesses will see the empty business and say we need to be there. It’s about creating that buzz and creating that excitement. We will still have the laws and people won’t be able to step on those laws without repercussions but it needs to be held in a way that is beneficial to the folks that have those permits and be responsible to the rest of the community.

CM Fleck stated that we have a good window to do it right, with all details in it. Director Hitchcock stated that it’s law to have all those laws in there before instating it. We have good parameters, all we need to do is where we will have it, what times, etc.

CM Scott asked Dan if he sees there being more of a presence for the Police Force downtown. Dan stated he thinks it will depend on the hours. The busy places aren’t normally the bars, per say, so if we keep it during business hours. CM Scott asked could you see more of a foot presence downtown, or more incognito. Director Hitchcock stated that it probably would be the normal presence.

President King asked if there is any other comments from council?

CM Fleck asked what do we need to do? Director Hitchcock stated what we need to do first is do we want to include parks or not? That way I can get it down to one map. President King asked what is the benefits and the set-backs if we add the parks? Director Hitchcock stated that for us to add Eastview, you would have to get your beverage at Eagles’ or C-Town and it’s a long way away from everyone. I don’t see anyone walking that far, so that we could at least eliminate Eastview Park. Mayor Hazel also stated that the people that are getting their beer there are getting it for the Mariners and they have their permit. Director Hitchcock also stated we don’t want people walking across that 4 lane from Eagles’. Lakeshore is up to you guys.

CM Buxton stated lets eliminate Lakeshore to because we are trying to promote that as a family setting. Mayor Hazel concurs and if anyone wants to do a special event they can get a F1 permit for that. CM Buxton stated correct, they are not that expensive and pretty easy to get.

Director Hitchcock stated that they will get it consolidated down to the one map and talk to some businesses/establishment to see if we can’t get a cleaner answer.

CM Sovinski stated that the parks add a lot of acreage to the DORA and much rather keep those as reserve if the DORA becomes successful and we want to add onto it. And if something were to come up in the parks they can get their own permits. I think the DORA outline could be more flexible than the rules. Director Hitchcock stated and we will look into that because you would think you could change it if you get another liquor store.

President King asked will we be keeping this in committee then? Mayor Hazel stated yes, we will be bringing more to it as we get more.

CM Scott asked all three maps add Westview? Director Hitchcock stated it is not in any of them. Mayor Hazel states there Romers initially said they didn’t think they wanted to but we will go back and ask and we can discuss more than. Director Hitchcock stated that we will recall all 26 businesses and invite them.

President King adjourned the meeting at 6:55 pm.