

City of Detroit



Downtown Development Authority

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**DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
TIGERS TICKET DONATION PROGRAM COMMITTEE MEETING
TUESDAY, MARCH 8, 2019 – 1:00 P.M.**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ehrlich Crain
Melvin Hollowell
Richard Hosey
Steve Ogden, Chair

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Sonya Delley

OTHERS PRESENT:

Angela Baldwin (The Miller Law Firm)
Jordan Field (Detroit Tigers)
Gay Hilger (DEGC/DDA)
Malinda Jensen (DEGC/DDA)
Paul Kako (DEGC/DDA)
John Lauve (Self)
Elaine Lewis (Detroit Tigers)
Glen Long, Jr. (DEGC/DDA)
Mike McLaughlin (IHI)
Rebecca Navin (DEGC/DDA)

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**MINUTES OF THE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
TIGERS TICKET DONATION PROGRAM COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8, 2019
DETROIT ECONOMIC GROWTH CORPORATION
500 GRISWOLD STREET, SUITE 2200 – 1:00 P.M.**

GENERAL

Call to Order

Noting that a quorum was present, Mr. Ogden called the meeting of the Downtown Development Authority Tigers Ticket Donation Program Committee to order at 1:05 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Ogden called for a motion to approve the minutes of the August 22, 2017 Committee meeting.

On a motion by Mr. Hollowell, seconded by Mr. Crain, the minutes of the August 22, 2017 Committee meeting were unanimously approved.

PROJECTS

Detroit Tigers Ticket Donation Program Review of 2018 Mid-Season Report

Ms. Jensen advised that the Detroit Tigers Mid-Season Activity Report was included with the Committee material for review. This report has been reformatted to highlight the following:

- Ticket distribution by geography instead of by highest number of tickets requested
- Letter sent by Tigers to Detroit churches dated May 15, 2018
- Master List of Churches in Detroit as of May 22, 2018 created by Tigers

To date, Detroit Tigers have distributed/committed 33,900 tickets to schools and organizations so that children can attend Major League baseball games. Of which, approximately 35% have been donated to Detroit based organizations and approximately 56% have been donated to Wayne County schools and organizations. Also, an estimated 52% of the organizations that have requested tickets thus far this season represent organizations in the city of Detroit and Wayne County.

The mid-season activity report demonstrates an increase in the number and type of organizations and schools that would be representative of deserving Tiger fans who could not otherwise afford to see the Tigers Play at Comerica Park.

The next Tiger Tickets Donation Committee will be scheduled in October/November 2018 to review the final ticket distribution information and will recommend program changes at the time if necessary.

Ms. Jensen asked Board members to hold their questions until after she reviews the Tigers final report, as that would be a better use of time.

Detroit Tigers Ticket Donation Program Review of 2018 Final Report

The mid-season activity report issued in June 2018 demonstrated an increase in the number and type of organizations and schools that would be representative of deserving Tiger fans who could not otherwise afford to see the Tigers Play at Comerica Park with an estimated 52% of the requested tickets representing schools and organizations in the city of Detroit and Wayne County. As demonstrated in the final report, this upward trend continued with an estimated 38% of the 50,000 tickets being distributed to organizations representing the city of Detroit and 19% of the tickets being distributed to organizations in Wayne County (not including city of Detroit).

Highlighted features of the 2018 Ticket Donation Program include:

- Ticket donation requirements and application process is easily accessible at Tigers.com and DetroitTigersFoundation.com;
- Special outreach and coordination with DPS administration and Detroit faith-based organizations in May 2018
- Each application is reviewed, vetted and approved based on published program guidelines with a focus on organizations that serve children in low to moderate income families in the greater Detroit community.
- Donated tickets are tracked for utilization and monitored for re-sale (which is not permitted)

The Tigers have provided a summary record of the 2018 season ticket distribution identifying the requesting organizations and quantity of tickets 50 and above.

Ms. Jensen also stated that she had gone on the Tigers website to look at the application for ticket donation and they have modified the general narrative or overview to focus on donations to “charitable organizations that serve children who wish to organize a group outing for deserving Tiger fans who could not otherwise afford to see the Tigers play at Comerica Park, with a focus on the greater Detroit community.”

Ms. Jensen advised that we have representatives present from the Tigers organization to answer any questions.

Mr. Ogden asked the Tigers representatives to come up to the table and introduce themselves.

Ms. Elaine Lewis stated she is with the Detroit Tigers and she oversees the Foundation Community and Public Affairs. This is her 21st season and was with the Tigers when this program was started at the time they moved from Tiger Stadium to Comerica Park.

Mr. Jordan Field stated that he is both Director of Player Relations for the Tigers and Director of Community Relations for the Foundation. He has been with the club for 17 years.

Discussion Regarding 2019 Season

Mr. Field stated that if you go to your smartphone and Google Detroit Tigers ticket donations, the first thing that pops up is the page for donations. The 2019 ticket donation application has evolved

over the years, including the modification last year to add, specifically, “children in low to moderate income families in the greater Detroit community.”

Mr. Field shared some additional measurements from the 2018 season:

- Last season, tickets were donated for all 181 games, including opening day.
- Of the tickets that were donated, the total value of the program was over \$1.6 million, which makes the average ticket value over \$32, the equivalent of an upper box infield seat.
- It had been uncommon for the Tigers to donate tickets for opening day, but it was done last year, and the tickets went to charitable organizations serving children in Detroit.
- The organizations that received the highest number of tickets, which were included in report provided, were DPS, Detroit PAL and the Catholic schools in Detroit.
- Church outreach was very successful.

Mr. Ogden requested that Mr. Field provide the Committee with an executive summary or final report of the statistics that were just verbally presented. Mr. Field stated that he would be happy to provide that information.

Mr. Field advised that for the 2019 season, they have offered DPS 10,000 tickets for games that will work best for them (day games during the school year). When they met with the DPS Superintendent, he assigned Alecia Merriweather, Deputy Superintendent, to work directly with the Tigers to consolidate all requests from DPS and to arrange for transportation for the outings. We've agreed that 10,000 tickets would be a great starting point for the school district and are working with them to ensure they have submitted the proper paperwork according to the guidelines.\

Mr. Hollowell asked how they arrived at 10,000 tickets for DPS. Mr. Field replied that it was more than last year and if they should require more tickets, they would be happy to donate more.

Mr. Hollowell informed that he had spoken to some folks at DPS and they had identified some Title I money to cover the transportation, so that shouldn't be an issue or barrier.

Mr. Crain asked if there was any outreach to non-DPS schools or charter schools in the city. Mr. Field replied that they have struggled to find a comprehensive list of those schools. There has been outreach on a case-by-case basis. Mr. Crain suggested that they talk to Central Michigan and Grand Valley. They are the two remaining authorizers for charters in Detroit. Mr. Field thanked Mr. Crain for that suggestion.

Mr. Ogden questioned if DPS used all of their tickets last year. Mr. Field stated that what he can share is that 74% of the 50,000 tickets last year were used. It is higher than the league average for baseball, especially keeping in mind that last year we had snowouts, rainouts and cancellations in April. He does not have a specific number for DPS. Mr. Ogden asked why they decided to increase the amount this year for DPS. Mr. Field said that the thought was, with some of the bus transportation funding issues resolved, that the utilization would be very high.

Mr. Hollowell stated that he had just gone to the website and read the language and it is much broader than what the agreement says. The 10,000 tickets for DPS for 2019 would be 20 percent of the allotted amount. The feeling is that the DDA wants to work with the Tigers organization to be the best league around. Mr. Hollowell informed that he did some research and Baltimore supposedly has the best program around. Their Kids Cheer Free Program is unbelievable. The second best in the league is the Pittsburgh Pirates Community Tickets Program. What they do is so outstanding. We have a template to work from here and don't need to reinvent the wheel.

Mr. Hollowell informed that he had spoken to Assistant Chief White who really runs the Department and he was saying that one of things that is so important for us in the City summer jobs program for kids is what constructive thing can we give kids to do during the summers. This is one of things that could really be great, exposing them to the sport, giving them opportunities that maybe they

wouldn't have. He's got Commander Beddison who in charge of Community Policing. So, in addition to PAL, he is another person you could contact to make sure that we are doing the best that we can. The Police Department is very interested in working with the Tigers on this.

Ms. Lewis informed that they work with Detroit Public Safety Foundation, which includes Police and Fire, and they know that anytime they want tickets for any youth program, they are to contact us.

Mr. Field advised that some of the global language that Mr. Hollowell shared from the website is meant to refer to both the Memorabilia Donation Program and Ticket Donation Program because, per Major League Baseball, our territory is the State of Michigan, parts of southern Ontario, and parts of northern Ohio. So, our Memorabilia Donation Program is for nonprofits in those communities. Also, above and beyond this program and entirely separate, the Tigers donate an additional 150,000 tickets that go to organizations that do include southern Ontario, northern Ohio and charities that don't specifically service children, so to veterans, firefighters, families and special needs adults.

Mr. Hosey added that now that he knows there is an additional 150,000 tickets available, he wants to make sure even more that the 50,000 tickets are utilized by children from low-income families in Detroit.

Mr. Ogden stated that, although the Program has come a long way in the last couple of years, it would be great if the children's ticket program was separated from the other 150,000 tickets on the website.

Mr. Hollowell also suggested, like is done by the Pittsburgh Pirates, corporate season ticket holders that are not going to use their tickets for a particular game could donate the tickets and the corporation would get a tax break.

Mr. Field advised that he is familiar with that program and it is a great program that works best for adults. In terms of this program for the 50,000 tickets, he would like to focus and stay on the fact that the Tigers organization's interpretation of the agreement does not necessarily say exclusively Detroit Wayne County. If we've misread that, we will be corrected.

Mr. Crain commented that when we looked at this two years ago, his interpretation was that the DDA's 50,000 tickets were somewhat lumped in with the other 150,000, and we were going to try to isolate and pull this back out because we were going to try to identify the 50,000 tickets because there was a specific requirement in the agreement. Mr. Crain asked if anybody has an understanding of the definition of who the 50,000 tickets are to go to? When we went back and looked at the agreement, there was a requirement for an approved plan. Has anybody ever found an approved plan?

Ms. Navin responded that no a plan was ever officially approved by the Board, but for the past roughly 20 years, the practice of both the Tigers and the Board has been to receive, review, and accept the plan. It appears that, early on, there was an acknowledgment that the language in the CMA was difficult for the Tigers to track, and the tickets were going to go to deserving individuals instead, as stated in the program requirements. As far as we have been able to find, it was never formalized by the Board, but this has been the practice since about 2000.

Mr. Field apologized if there was confusion. This has always been a separate and isolated program.

Mr. Crain said that for him, it is the results. There are a lot of suggestions for increasing utilization to 50,000. For him, the issue is, defining the 50,000. Is there a legitimate belief that the 50,000 includes Macomb, Washtenaw, Livingston, Genesee, Calhoun, and other counties? From the DDA standpoint, I believe that this side of the table believes these other counties that did not initially contribute toward it nor contribute now should be included in the 50,000 tickets.

Mr. Field advised that if there was a ruling on that, the Tigers organization would respect that. The Tigers interpretation was that if a nonprofit served children in Pontiac, or in Flint, or in Southfield, they would like to offer them tickets to attend a Tigers Baseball game. Mr. Crain questioned who would make the ruling. Mr. Field responded whomever would be the proper entity to make that decision.

Mr. Hollowell stated that this seems grudging, but the taxpayers of Detroit and Wayne County are the ones who funded the stadium, and the whole intent behind it is to try to get Detroit kids or underprivileged kids in the area that paid for the stadium into those 50,000 seats. When we look at the breakdown, we've got a lot more than would seem to make sense. The Committee is just trying to help by making suggestions.

Mr. Field stated that they welcome the help. He would just like to share their experience. They sent a very warm and welcoming letter on Ms. Lewis' letterhead to Detroit churches last year making them aware of the Program and encouraging them to apply, and that we would love to have their congregation be a part of Tigers baseball. The letter and list of churches was shared with the Committee. Of those 300 to 400 organizations that were sent letters, 43 of them applied for tickets. It doubled the number of tickets from the year before, so it was successful.

Ms. Lewis stated that every year they reach out to the churches and Detroit Public Safety as well to remind them of the program. Each year, the number of tickets utilized by those organizations increases and they plan to continue to reach out. She shared that she is a Detroit and Detroit is in her heart and would love to see all of the tickets utilized. She also expressed that they have met with this Committee several times and feel they now has an understanding of the reason why the Committee is emphasizing that children from low-income families in Detroit receive these tickets. Please know that Detroit is at their heart and they can make their website a little more isolated for this program.

Ms. Lewis informed that one of the problems they have had early on is that they give 50,000 tickets away. They have been reaching out and not getting a huge response. Each year it gets a little better. They have identified all of the nonprofits involved with children and reached out to them. Ms. Lewis welcomed the Committee to provide names of groups for them to contact.

Mr. Crain believes that the challenge here is not that the Tigers are not working to give these tickets away, but the result is that there are 28,000-plus tickets that were given away that did not comply with this program. The Committee is not suggesting that the Tigers are not putting forth a valid effort, but he would like to see them work with the Committee to get that number up.

Mr. Ogden called on Mike McLaughlin of Ilitch Holding to speak to the Committee.

Mr. McLaughlin apologized for the confusion on this. They are more than willing to come in and meet with the Committee. He understands this is the DDA of the City of Detroit, but it wasn't just the City of Detroit and it wasn't just Wayne County that built the stadium. It was the State of Michigan as well that contributed too. As a result of that, in the CMA with the Stadium Authority, 50,000 tickets would be used for underprivileged youth, so they began a program. There wasn't a stipulation that the recipients of the tickets needed to be from Detroit or Wayne County.

Mr. Ogden asked if the agreement says across the state and Ms. Navin responded that the agreement is silent on that.

Mr. Hosey questioned if a plan were put in place, who would approve the plan? Ms. Navin replied that it would be the Detroit Wayne County Stadium Authority and the DDA. Mr. Hosey said that is why good intent becomes so important. The idea is for everyone to work together to have amazing results.

Mr. McLaughlin said that is the reason that they are here. They understand DDA's desire to maximize the number of tickets given to deserving youth in Detroit.

Mr. Ogden said that the Committee now knows that these 50,000 tickets are intended for Detroit and Wayne County. If we then amended this plan to say pull out those 50,000 tickets for Detroit and Wayne County, and if Elaine and your team cannot exhaust the 50,000 there, then a simple communication to the DDA to say that we've hit this number and cannot go any further would be helpful.

Mr. Field said that they receive donations daily from February 1 through September 1 and are approving applications not daily but at least weekly. They share the desire to increase the number utilized by children of Detroit and Wayne County, but to report on it in that capacity would be challenging. The Committee has been a great resource to us to help with that outreach. If we are able to ask you for help in identifying organizations that serve children in Wayne County that we have not already worked with, we will do the outreach to them, but it is on them to apply.

Mr. Hosey asked if they get the sense that there is a lack of common knowledge about the program or if there are barriers for them, like a lack of money for transportation.

Ms. Lewis responded that Mr. Hosey raised a good point. She believes it is a combination of all of that. She also pointed out that the kids have to want to come to a game. Maybe the schools' transportation fund is being spent on other outings for the kids. The games are during the school year and we are trying to balance our kids' education and it is not always about baseball. So, it is all of this.

Mr. Field said that when the school year ends, their strategy then shifts to churches, baseball and softball youth programs, and city recreation department youth programs. If you can help us find organizations serving kids in Detroit Wayne County, we will reach out to them, we will hold their hand to some extent and help them apply and hopefully we will get a good response.

Ms. Lewis advised the Committee that they are very pro-active and have a good pulse on all the little leagues in the area. We make sure they know they can come to a game. One thing the Committee might be able to help with is there are probably a lot of summer programs in Detroit through the Mayor's office or wherever. Mr. Hollowell said that he will get them that list.

Mr. Hollowell stated that this is what he is thinking. You can't manage what you can't measure. For him, this is the outline in his head. What is the mission? The mission is somewhat defined by statute, but it is somewhat silent as it relates to who does it go to. It is open to be interpreted and for you to say, this is what our objective is. Our objective is to have 75 percent of the tickets go to Detroit and Wayne County. After you have a good definition of what we are trying to do here, because I don't think we have a good idea of what it is to be quite honest, second, is there a standard that we can all agree that we'd like to try to emulate. We want to be the best ticket giveaway program in Major League Baseball. Is that a fair thing to say that we would like to be proud of. If we use national standards, we elevate the conversation. The third thing is a metric. How are we doing on a regular basis. We come back to having these conversations that look like they are not going anywhere. You put something on a board. Here is how we are doing versus the standard based on the mission and here is how we are doing based on the definition that we've done. Finally, is the Committee's responsibilities being fulfilled to get you what you need so that we can all be successful.

Mr. Hosey said he completely agrees. Tell us the barriers. If it costs \$2,000 to move the kids from the school to the game and back, we can say are there any corporations out there that want to sign up for getting a bus to take the children. And if the letter can say that a bus can come free, now the barrier is gone, I do want these kids to go to the game.

Mr. Ogden advised that the Committee has a “hard stop” time of 2:00 and would like to wrap things up. He believes there needs to be another Committee meeting soon and asked the Tigers’ representatives if there is enough here for them to put something together and come back to the Committee with their plan. Mr. Hollowell requested that they put the plan on a board.

Mr. Ogden asked the Tigers representatives if they have what they need from the Committee other than the names of some more organizations for them to contact. Mr. Field said that the nuts and the bolts of the program are in place, but they need the Committee’s help to identify organizations in Detroit Wayne County serving children and then they need to Committee’s help to recommend how best to play that touch game in the community to invite them in a warm way to participate in this program.

Mr. Hollowell said that the nuts and the bolts are not in place. That is the whole point of the first thing he said. We don’t even know what the goals and the mission are. What the next meeting would be for is to actually have a mission—what is it that we trying to accomplish, what definition are we using, and how do we measure.

Mr. Field responded that he respectfully disagrees with Mr. Hollowell. What we read on our phones was the header for the Tigers in-kind donation program, but having clicked “ticket donations” would have taken you down to more specific language that references “specifically serving children in low- to moderate- income families in the greater Detroit community.” Again, he would respectfully disagree--the nuts and bolts are in place, but we need help identifying organizations serving these children so that we can bring them to the ballpark together.

Mr. Crain stated that he would go back to his fundamental point that if we are not in agreement of the plan and what the plan is, that, to him, would be the starting point—to define the plan and the components of the plan –because that is where there is disagreement.

Mr. Field said that if it is okay with the Committee, because it is past February 1 and the season is less than 30 days away, he would like us to agree, as a group, on this season, to increase beyond 57 percent going to Wayne County as a whole, which includes Detroit in that 57 percent; and. we can agree, as a group, that the overall metric for measuring is both percentage to Detroit and Wayne County, but also utilization—that is the key. If we are donating 100 tickets and they use zero, that doesn’t do anybody any good. Last year we were at 74 percent, which is in the top three of all Major League Baseball ticket donation programs. We both made presentations at League meetings on our ticket donation program. We are thankful that it is seen as a best practice, but there is no doubt we can also learn from other teams in many ways. If we can agree that our goal this year is more than 57 percent, or growth from last year, with the help of this Committee providing additional names of organizations to contact and some touch and feel relations; and, if we can agree that the metric is utilization, that is going to be key. And if we can continue to learn from other Major League Baseball clubs where there are places to learn to be that very best in the entire League.

Ms. Lewis advised that they have regular meetings and conference calls with all Major League teams to talk about ticket donation, but the meetings address the 150,000 tickets, not the 50,000 tickets for the kids. She will address the 50,000 tickets at one of these meetings to find out if other teams have a program for the inner-city kids and maybe learn from the other teams.

Mr. Field said that he will put together an Executive Summary of and provide it to the Committee.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Ogden called for public comment and stated that two minutes would be given.

Mr. Lauve stated the following:

“All I have is the integrity of the Ilitch organization. Here is example one. In 2005, DDA gave \$1.5 million dollars to this. And then, I read this donation program. It isn't a donation program, it is an obligation program and it is buried in some of this other stuff. It says here that it has to have a plan. It is here in the obligation that was subscribed to. You open it up and there is no plan that is subject to being presented and approved by these two bodies. It is not deserving kids--it is children of low-income families to enable them to attend. So that is what the criteria is that was agreed to, and it has not materialized. And they were 13,000 tickets short, 10,000 the year before. You shorted the whole system over the years. And there should be a list on the criteria you talked about, of how many of the kids were low income kids. How many were used and how many were adult tickets as opposed to kids' tickets. It has to be a program that is created so it can be accomplished. And on the first day, you have the baseball players out there greeting them and that would give some recognition to them. There is a list of every kid entitled and that is the school lunch program. Every one of those kids should be given a ticket and say that the bus is going to be here and the Tigers will pick them up, or whatever it is going to be, so that they don't have to buy a parking spot, whoever is taking them to the game. It has to be to enable them to go to the game. Let's make it right, not just, well, we're working on it. That doesn't cut it.”

Mr. Ogden informed Mr. Lauve that his time was up and thanked him for his comments.

OTHER MATTERS

ADJOURNMENT

With there being no other business to be brought before the Committee, Mr. Ogden adjourned the meeting at 2:03 p.m.