



DOWNTOWN ALBANY
Business Improvement District

**Downtown Albany Business Improvement District
Board of Directors' Meeting
December 6, 2018
BID Conference Room**

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Georgette Steffens
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Richard Rosen
PRESIDENT

Mark Aronowitz
VICE PRESIDENT

Daniel Fariello
TREASURER

Pamela Nichols
SECRETARY

Mark Aronowitz
David Galin
Lena Hart
Chief Eric Hawkins

Seth Meltzer
George Penn

ATTENDANCE:

Frank O'Connor, III
Richard Rosen
Hon. Darius Shahinfar

ON PHONE:

Chris Pratt
David Sarraf

ABSENT:

Louis Bannister
Meghan Barkley
Stephen M. Cleary
Daniel Fariello
Tracy Metzger
Pamela Nichols
George Penn
Richard A. Rosen
Tyler Wrightson
Mark Yonally

STAFF PRESENT:

Antigona Beshello
Jason Bonafide
Jenny Coye
Rebecca Haizmann
Georgette Steffens
Don Wilson

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Board President Richard Rosen at 4:33 PM.

Mr. Rosen asked for approval of the October Board minutes | Motion by Hon. Shahinfar, Mr. Galin seconds| All approve.

Mr. Rosen welcomed the newest BID Board member, Albany Police Chief Eric Hawkins, who's an appointee of Mayor Sheehan. Chief Hawkins joined the City of Albany in September and came from Southfield, Michigan. Mr. Rosen added the BID looks forward to working with him and seeking his guidance and input going forward. Ms. Steffens added that the BID's Beat Officers are great partners with the BID and provide invaluable services to Downtown.

Mr. Rosen noted that 2019 Board meeting dates were emailed out and asked all members to add them to their calendars. He added that Board members should contact staff with any concerns, and that if anyone is unable to attend in person, they can always call in for meetings as well. Ms. Steffens noted that under the new bylaws, more than nine members will be needed for a quorum, and that meeting materials are emailed out so if you can't make it you have those for the phone call.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

DRI Update

Mr. Rosen noted the DRI process has begun, and Ms. Steffens added that the public workshop was held a few weeks ago, and that two Local Planning Committee meetings have been held, with the next one coming up next week. Mr. Rosen noted that the BID is playing an active role with Ms. Steffens, Mr. Aronowitz, and Ms. Metzger on the LPC.

Ms. Steffens added by tomorrow, everyone will have to submit project forms for projects in the Clinton Square area to be considered for DRI funding and that they must be shovel ready. Proposed projects will be discussed, and the public will weigh in about what they feel are priority projects, and those will be discussed by the Local Planning Committee and will help make the decision on what projects get recommended to the State and Governor's Office. The final plan is due March 31 with the State announcing funding in June.

A discussion was held on who makes the recommendation for project funding. Ms. Steffens noted that the award went to the City and Capitalize Albany Corporation is facilitating the process with a consulting firm, and they – in conjunction with State departments – are leading the process, and there is a Local Planning Committee on which 15-20 people serve. Each LPC meeting has a public comment period, several public meetings have and will still be held for public input, and the Local Planning Committee will direct the consulting team of their top priority projects, with



the Governor's Office making the final awards. Mr. Rosen and Ms. Steffens noted that the BID is advocating, but it is a City project. Mr. Rosen noted there will be public and private projects, adding that the BID's Wayfinding project and Tricentennial Park renovations are among those proposed. Mr. Rosen added that there was a closing on several Downtown properties including the Kenmore and Steuben buildings that have been vacant for some time, and that they offer huge potential. He added that the Clinton Square project will be a nice way of connecting Downtown to the Warehouse District.

Ms. Steffens noted when the City submitted the application for the DRI monies, and there were 28 projects that were initially identified independently totaling an ask of \$15 million. They are going through now to ensure all 28 are shovel ready, and have also received several new projects for consideration. It will be a competitive process, and Ms. Steffens added it will be exciting from the BID's and City's perspective that there are potentially less restrictions on the money and of the other cities that have received the DRI Award, about 50% has gone to public infrastructure and projects. It's an opportunity to get funding without needing a 5-to-1 match that is typically required for State funding. The BID is submitting Wayfinding, which has also been submitted to the State for Consolidated Funding Application money, Tricentennial Park redesign which is one of the only parks in the City that closes in the winter and needs some major renovations, and the BID did assist one property owner and one not-for-profit in filling out their forms.

Mr. Rosen reiterated that Ms. Steffens, Mr. Aronowitz, and Ms. Metzger are all on the Local Planning Committee and if Board members have any questions they can reach out to any of them.

Jim DiNapoli Award

Mr. Rosen noted that the BID is looking for suggestions for the 2019 recipient of the Jim DiNapoli Award, and that names should be sent to staff. The award is handed out during the Annual Meeting in May, and any person has had a positive impact on Downtown can be nominated. Mr. Rosen added the BID is working on a venue for the 2019 Annual Meeting.

Ms. Steffens added that there are four Board members who are rolling off in May, all four of which are property owners, so the BID is looking for property owners or property owner representatives. The nomination process will begin in the upcoming weeks, and Ms. Steffens asked that if Board members knew of anyone interested to nominate them or they can self-nominate.

TREASURER'S REPORT

2019 Budget

Ms. Steffens noted that she and Mr. Fariello met on Monday to review the final numbers in the proposed 2019 budget, and that the BID received the City's final commercial tax rate, so the budget is ready to approve. Ms. Steffens highlighted the following:

- The City's commercial assessment rate decreased this year, as they have been working toward to the homestead and non-homestead rates being closer.
- Over the past several years, the BID's assessment rate has held steady, and the Budget & Finance Committee is recommending matching the decrease that the City rate experienced. This means going from .0027% to .002654%. Shown in the Board packet is also the BID special assessment calculation and history, and the \$825,000 is what max allowed and the BID is well below that, bringing the total to \$780,000 which is what the BID total assessment revenue for 2019 will be. Commercial property owners will experience a decrease from both the City and the BID, all while the BID continues to enhance the services it provides.
- The BID has been discussing for some time that SUNY purchased one of the properties they reside in, so now the BID will receive only one PILOT payment for the Hilton garage for \$16,000.
- On the SCO list provided by the City, Ms. Steffens noted that the liability for this year is relatively low. There were some significantly large properties that settled two years ago, and that the BID has approximately \$74,000 in reserves for any properties that settle. The Budget & Finance Committee is proposing not adding



money in the SCO line because there are enough reserves to cover potential settlements, and that the \$74,000 will be kept in reserves because the current conversation taking place about which residential properties are being assessed and if people will challenge those. Mr. Rosen noted that the BID typically keeps funds in reserves. Mr. Steffens added that almost \$100,000 has been paid back in SCOs, and that the City-wide reassessment was the BID's biggest year and that most of those challenges have happened, with vacant properties that have challenged coming back online through residential conversions, so the BID may see an increase in assessment funds.

- Fresh Connect grant is no longer a State program, which is why it is not in the 2019 budget.
- Under Payroll, there is an increase as Ms. Steffens has requested to make the Executive Assistant position full time. She noted with trying to close out both the National Grid and Main Street grants in 2019, as well as the hope for the Wayfinding grant, the BID will need some additional assistance for grant administration.
- Under Office Equipment, both a new phone system and database were installed last year which is why it was \$17,000, but for next year the BID only needs to replace two computers. Two were replaced this year after they crashed, and there are two more the BID would like to replace before it is critical, totaling \$17,500.
- Under Administrative Expenses, professional fees have increased. The person the BID had handling accounting and bookkeeping wasn't at the level needed and was coming in every other week, so now a senior level person with CFO for Hire is coming in once per week for four hours.
- Under Clean and Safe, under subcontracts, we had a slight increase on our contract for our Clean Team. The other additional cost is the feedback we were hearing from the Clean Team supervisor is that they were unable to keep up with the amount of weeding that needs to happen around the tree grates and on the sidewalk, and it was taking significant amount of time away from cleaning. Therefore, the BID budget includes an additional person weeding for 7 hours every other week and will be billed as needed, separate and above the Clean Team which is a huge visual need in the District.
- The BID is updating the Downtown map which had been planned for completion this year, however the graphic designer is inundated with work and unable to get to the project until 2019. The project will hit the 2019 budget and why there is less spent this year and that project is now included in the new budget.
- The BID has increased the number of special events while keeping approximately the same budget as last year, with Mr. Bonafide and the team doing a great job. Mr. Rosen noted that the dog events have gotten a ton of attention and attendance, and Ms. Steffens added that dog-related items have their own budget line now.
- Under Special Events and Deja View, the \$2,500 should be under the resident line as the BID looks to enhance resident events and make them more consistent. There will be a meeting in January looking to garner feedback from residents to see what kind of events they want to participate in and go from there.
- Under Visual Improvements, there is a minor increase in Materials & Supplies as the BID will pilot planting mums on State Street in the self-watering planters to see how they do. If that works, it will be something that could be done for all of the planters in the District in the future. Ms. Steffens noted the flowers from 2018 lasted a long time, and that Mr. Wilson is working with the grower on changing the flowers that didn't last as long with something else.
- Under Special Projects, one of the things the BID did in 2015 was instead of programming the entire following year in the fall/winter of the previous year, a pot of money was created that the Board would then vote on for special projects. It was items that committees, staff, or Board members might make recommendations on how funds would be spent, and it is assessment revenue that needs to be spent within the public realm and offers the flexibility to vote on how the Board spends those funds. Ms. Steffens provided a spreadsheet with an update on the Special Projects funds. The previous years budgeted & spent numbers were pulled from the audit statements. Ms. Steffens anticipates by the end of 2018 the BID will spend \$105,000 and roughly \$74,000 is budgeted for 2019, leaving the BID with approximately \$96,000 for Special Projects in 2019. Ms. Steffens noted that the BID has \$216,000 in Operating Reserves, which is higher than needed and recommended dropping it to \$175,000 which would give the BID an additional



\$41,000 for Special Projects, bringing the total to about \$137,000. Ms. Steffens added that potential projects for 2019 include Wayfinding, Tricentennial Park, new events and if there are any supplemental pieces for example the City's Maiden Lane and Skyway projects, or other projects the BID is working on. Mr. Rosen noted that if the Wayfinding and Tricentennial Park projects happen at the same time, it would be one of the largest undertakings the BID has ever experienced.

Mr. Rosen asked for approval of the 2019 Budget | Motion by Hon. Shahinfar, Mr. Aronowitz seconds| All approve.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Events

Ms. Steffens provided an update on dog related events, noting that Hounds of Halloween doubled the number of participants to at least 150 dogs and many more owners. For puppies that walked around Downtown and their owners, there were close to 20 retail establishments that were open and handing out treats. It was a fun, wildly successful and low-cost, high-impact project for us put together by Mr. Bonafide and Ms. Coye. Mr. Rosen added that the Mohawk Hudson Humane Society continues to be a great partner, and Ms. Steffens noted they help promote the event and proceeds of the event go to their organization. The event cost approximately \$300 and \$600 was raised for the humane society. The event will continue next year partnering with Olde English.

Ms. Steffens discussed Small Business Saturday, noting that several property owners were interviewed, and Ms. Coye ran a selfie contest, and Mr. Bannister ran Handmade at The Hollow which is a huge draw for Downtown. Schuyler Bull, who owns Fort Orange General Store, said it was his best day ever since he's been open. The BID got some great press coverage as did business owners in Downtown.

Ms. Steffens noted that the Fort Orange Holiday Market continues at the Arcade Building for two more Fridays. Mr. Bonafide noted there are a total of 50 vendors which rotate, marking a significant increase since the market's inaugural year in 2018. This Friday is also the Albany Center Gallery's member show opening with Bombshell's and Stacks also open, making it a big draw. Ms. Steffens added that the BID has placed white lights on the trees in Jim DiNapoli Park to add the look and feel of the event.

Ms. Steffens noted the BID is holding a holiday window decorating contest, where you can vote with a form or online for your favorite, encouraging people to go out and walk around. Various offices and retailers are participating, and the BID hopes to incorporate residential buildings next year as well.

NEW BUSINESS

With no further business to be discussed, the meeting ended at 5:08 PM.

NEXT MEETING

Thursday, January 24, 2019

4:30 PM

2nd Floor Conference Room