



DOWNTOWN ALBANY
Business Improvement District

**Downtown Albany Business Improvement District
Board of Directors' Meeting
April 18, 2019
BID Conference Room**

21 Lodge Street
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Georgette Steffens
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Richard Rosen
CHAIRPERSON

Mark Aronowitz
VICE-CHAIRPERSON

Daniel Fariello
TREASURER

Pamela Nichols
SECRETARY

ATTENDANCE:

Stephen M. Cleary Mark Aronowitz
Frank O'Connor, III Lena Hart
Hon. Darius Shahinfar Pamela Nichols
Richard Rosen

ON THE PHONE:

David Sarraf
George Penn
Tyler Wrightson

ABSENT:

Dan Fariello
Tracy Metzger
David Gallin
Chief Eric Hawkins
Seth Meltzer
Louis Bannister
Meghan Barkley
Chris Pratt
Mark Yonally

STAFF PRESENT:

Georgette Steffens
Kate Medhus
Rebecca Haizmann
Jason Bonafide
Don Wilson

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Board President Richard Rosen at 4:36 PM.

Mr. Rosen asked for approval of the February Board Minutes | Motion by Stephen M. Cleary, Hon. Darius Shahinfar seconds | All approve.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Vacancy Rates

Mr. Rosen noted that CBRE-Albany released their office market report and the vacancy rate in Downtown has been reduced by nearly a full percent to 16.6% and has been dropping steadily over the past 5 years by 8.3%. 100,000 square feet of office space was converted to residences in 2018 and vacant and underutilized properties that have been converted to residential properties over the past several years have experienced a 238% average increase in value. The only negative thing in their report was that asking prices per square foot for rental of office space dropped \$1.80 in 2018.

Ms. Steffens added that 1.1 million square feet of office space has been removed since 2012.

Board Elections

Mr. Rosen noted that it is election time. This is the last election under our current by-laws and Mr. Rosen asked that all Board Members fill out the ballots that are included in their packets and return them to Ms. Medhus.

By-Laws

Mr. Rosen noted that the BID's annual meeting is in May and to pass the new by-laws we need to get 2/3 of 10% of membership. Currently, the membership base is 1100 members, meaning we need 74 votes cast. Proxy votes are important.

Ms. Steffens added that we need to do our due diligence in obtaining votes and that Staff has identified building ambassadors to help. Staff is also compiling e-mail addresses for all Stakeholders. Ms. Steffens noted the BID is not the only non-profit having trouble meeting the NYS not for profit law requirements for votes and therefore we are working on implementing an assent vote rule used by similar organizations where when an individual does not vote it is assumed they are in agreement and theirs is considered a yes vote.

Ms. Steffens noted that we will have ballots at the Annual Meeting to capture as many votes as possible that evening as well.

TREASURER'S REPORT

First Quarter Financials

Mr. Rosen noted that:

- there is nothing of significance to report on 1st quarter financials. Most discrepancies in budget vs. actuals are a timing issue.
- Ms. Steffens worked with the Hon. Darius Shahinfar to resolve the \$1,100 discrepancy from the assessment revenue. The system generated the 2019 assessment instead of the 2018 so we calculated it off incorrect numbers. The amount put into our account, \$1,100 less than we anticipated, is correct.
- there were no SCOs in the 1st Quarter.
- BID staff have been working to have our commercial insurance policy reflect our current office space at 21 Lodge, which is significantly smaller than our previous space at 40 N Pearl. That change finally took effect and the BID was issued a \$5800 credit.

Ms. Steffens added that most accounts are at or under budget.

Sponsorships/Grants

Ms. Steffens noted that SEFCU has come on as a \$10,000 sponsor for PearlPalooza and O'Connell and Aronowitz and Remarkable Liquids are sponsoring the two stages. Staff is still looking for a YogaPalooza sponsor.

Ms. Steffens added that the BID has applied for a Fair Gaming Grant for the Open Gallery Project. Awards will be made next week.

Williams Street Lighting Project

Mr. Wilson noted that the BID reached out to 7 electrical contractors in August 2018 regarding the project. 5 attended a site walk through and 3 came back with quotes which were quite high (\$270,000-\$316,000). DLC Electric was the lowest bidder and Staff worked with them on solutions to lower costs. Light poles along the State-owned parking garage were removed and the lights will instead attach directly to both garages. There will now only be 2 steel, powder-coated poles with GFI outlets on the Howard Street side. The original lights which were DMX controlled so they could move and change colors have been changed to static, white festival lights to reduce costs. The final quote came in at \$125,000. The project will use electricity from a neighboring garage but will have its own separate meter paid by the City. The City will own and maintain the lights once the project is finished.

A discussion was held regarding options for adding pops of color, art/murals, plants and furniture. Staff has identified a graphic designer who can create a mural on the sidewalk at a cost of approximately \$3,500. Staff purchased planters last year for this area and plants that do not need much sun are currently being grown. Depending on what type of furniture is purchased, costs can range from \$300 per piece all the way up to \$3,000 per piece and Staff is looking to purchase 6-8 pieces putting total costs anywhere from \$3,000 to \$20,000. The idea, particularly with furniture, is that we would start with a minimal amount to understand how people are using it, with the option to add more over time or make them permanent pieces.

Mr. Rosen asked for a motion to approve the Williams Street Lighting contract with DLC Electric at a price not to exceed \$125,000 | Motion by Mr. Cleary, Mr. Aronowitz seconds | All approve.

Funding Request

Renewals

Ms. Steffens noted that the Budget & Finance Committee recommends renewing the following projects:

- Planting of 10 trees, mostly along Madison Ave, at \$3,250.

- Replacement of missing panhandling sign, plus purchase of 1-2 extras at a total cost of \$210.
- Free parking on nights and weekends and meters ending at 5:00 PM costing \$20,000.

New Projects

Ms. Steffens noted that the Budget & Finance Committee also recommend funding the following new projects:

- Shuttle stop signs on the sidewalk to indicate where the free trolley stops at a cost of \$650.
- Database support to provide broader access, further training and additional templates costing \$1,500.
- Family movie to be shown at SUNY green space at \$425.
- Promotion of Aurora Games in the form of athlete's photos being hung in vacant storefront windows around the district costing approximately \$1,500. The ultimate hope is that Albany will continue to be the host for the Aurora Games year after year.
- Additional payroll services including automatic retirement contributions and loan payments at a cost of \$275.

Ms. Steffens added that the total request for both renewing and new projects amounts to \$28,060 leaving \$98,089 remaining in the special projects budget.

Mr. Rosen asked for a motion to approve renewal funding requests in the amount of \$23,710 | Motion by Mr. Cleary, Mr. O'Connor seconds | All approve.

Mr. Rosen asked for a motion to approve new funding requests in the amount of \$4,350 | Motion by Mr. Cleary, Mr. Shahinfar seconds | All approve.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

DRI Update

Events

Mr. Bonafide noted that the BID recently hosted a Roundtable event to find out what Downtown residents want to see and what types of amenities they are interested in. He is compiling that data and will provide that to Staff and the Board to help set priorities for 2020.

In March staff assisted the Irish American Heritage Museum to put on the 2nd Annual Irish Sweater 5K. Registration increased 66% this year and next year the museum plans to add a 1K for kids to the event.

The BID Annual Meeting is scheduled for May 22nd. Fundraising efforts continue.

Restaurant Week is currently underway. Engagement on social media is strong. We created a video with all 16 restaurants and it has received 35,000 views. Steve Barnes at the Times Union did a giveaway with 264 comments/entries. 4 restaurants have extended the event to include Saturday as well.

Promotion for Fashion Under the Stars, the Capital Region's only outdoor fashion show will begin soon. The event will feature designs by Daniel Mozzes, an international designer whose studio is on Steuben Alley, and will include several Downtown employees and residents as runway models.

The 1st event in the Dog Days of Summer series occurs on May 4th. Dogs and their owners are welcome to attend the Star Wars themed Pup Crawl and similar events geared toward Downtown dog owners will continue through to Halloween.

NEW BUSINESS

With no further business to be discussed, the meeting was adjourned at 5:40pm.