



DOWNTOWN ALBANY
Business Improvement District

**Downtown Albany Business Improvement District
Board of Directors' Meeting
January 20, 2021
Zoom**

21 Lodge Street
Albany, NY 12207
p 518.465.2143
f 518.465.0139
www.downtownalbany.org

Georgette Steffens
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Daniel Fariello
PRESIDENT

Pamela Nichols
VICE-PRESIDENT

Frank O'Connor, III
TREASURER

David Sarraf
SECRETARY

ATTENDANCE:
Daniel Fariello
Frank O'Connor, III
David Sarraf
Riley Ackley
Leola Edelin
Lisa Reddy Farrell
Elizabeth Young Jojo
Lena Hart
Angelo Maddox
Tracy Metzger
Pamela Nichols
Chris Pratt
Lucas Rogers
Hon. Darius Shahinfar
Frank Zeoli

ABSENT:
Mohamed Hemmid
Tyler Wrightson

OTHER ATTENDEES:
Sarah Reginelli

STAFF PRESENT:
Georgette Steffens
Kate Medhus
Rebecca Hughes
Jason Bonafide
Don Wilson

The meeting was called to order by Board President Daniel Fariello at 4:33 PM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Fariello calls for a motion to approve the Minutes from the December 9, 2020 meeting | Mr. Shahinfar motions | Ms. Metzger seconds | All approve.

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Mr. Fariello welcomed three new members to the Board this evening. After winning their respective elections, Mr. Fariello welcomed the new commercial tenant representative, Angelo Maddox, owner of Fresh & Fly Clothing and the new residential tenant representative, Riley Ackley who works at the New York State Assembly in PR, Communications and Graphic Design. The third new member Mr. Fariello welcomed is the Mayor's appointed representative, Frank Zeoli, Deputy Commissioner of the Department of General Services, who is replacing Chief Hawkins. Ms. Steffens and Ms. Medhus have met with all three new members and given them each an onboarding including any and all paperwork in need of review and completion.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Mr. Fariello introduced Sarah Reginelli, President of Capitalize Albany Corporation, the Albany IDA, and Ms. Reginelli gave a presentation on development projects that are taking place in Downtown Albany, particularly in our district:

- Capitalize Albany had to jump into COVID response just like other organizations such as the BID and business development has been more of the focus in 2020.
- \$600,000 in grants has gone out to local businesses across the City with about one third of that being in Downtown.
- The focus is now on the recovery period and building back.
- Commercial office trends are now a priority- ensuring that office tenants are renewing leases, coming back and spending money in the area and continuing to contribute.
- Real estate development started back in the early 2000s and there is no slowing or stopping that growth. We are closing in on 1,000 residential units in Downtown Albany. Close to \$200 million are currently invested and are either under construction or are on the horizon. Pilot payment structures in lieu of tax payment structures are allowing those to move forward.
- Market studies and pilot structures will be updated later in the year in order to be able to flex with the demands of development moving forward so as not to miss opportunities.



- The IDA will also be heavily focused on the Port of Albany's offshore wind manufacturing facility as there will be dozens and dozens of companies that will be related to the operations at the Port that will be looking for homes in Downtown.
- Planning in advance for big strategic initiatives has paid off and ensured that Capitalize Albany has not missed a beat even with things not going as planned in 2020.
- Construction for the Skyway is starting in spring of 2021 with completion anticipated for fall 2021. The off ramp will be turned into a pedestrian walkway. DOT has been excited to explore how this will work. We are anticipating more than 100,000 visitors per year and the project is currently out to bid through DOT. This will be a linear park stretching from the Riverfront to Broadway at the base of Clinton Ave. There will be small performance opportunities throughout in a covered area and the views and sounds that can be experienced from the Skyway will be a pleasant surprise for skeptics.
- The Clinton Market Collective will be a place for Skyway visitors to land. It will turn an underused space into a flexible market space. A few containers will house full-time businesses and it can be a great pre- or post-show opportunity, open-air seating for eating takeout or an event space. Design on that is wrapping up and the bid for construction should go out late this year. Capitalize Albany is looking for strategic partners to help make the most of the space and capture the buying potential.
- Liberty Park continues to make moves in economic development but has been incredibly complicated. Empire State Development called for an organization that could start putting funding and property together to catalyze reinvestment in that area and Capitalize Albany has since put together the funding and is working on putting the property together and negotiations are still ongoing. The timeline for that is tough, but it is being worked on daily and huge strides are expected to be made in 2021.

A discussion was held regarding more specifics about office tenant outreach. Capitalize Albany is trying to show research and testimonials regarding how working remotely has not necessarily been positive in order to remind office tenants about why they chose to be in Downtown and what the lay of the land will look like as we come out of COVID.

With no further business to discuss Ms. Reginelli left the meeting at 5:01PM.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Mr. Fariello proposed starting future Board meetings at 4:00PM and members expressed their approval of a change to an earlier start time.

Board Committee Assignments

Mr. Fariello appoints the following committee assignments:

- Elizabeth Young Jojo, as Treasurer, to serve as Chair of the Budget & Finance Committee with Frank O'Connor, David Sarraf, Mohamed Hemmid and Lisa Reddy Farrell serving as committee members with Mr. Fariello as an ex-officio member.
- Frank O'Connor to serve as Chair of the Audit Committee with Tracy Metzger, Darius Shahinfar and Leola Edelin serving as committee members and Mr. Fariello as an ex-officio member.
- Frank O'Connor to serve as Chair of the Governance Committee with Pamela Nichols and Lena Hart serving as committee members and Mr. Fariello as an ex-officio member.

CDPHP Grant

Mr. Fariello announced that CDPHP gave the BID a \$50,000 donation. The funds are to be used to support our small businesses that have been negatively impacted by COVID-19. Ms. Steffens outlined some recommendations for how the money could be used in order to have the highest impact:

- The creation of a Downtown Albany Gift Card. It would be an e-gift card that would be redeemable at any Downtown business that chooses to participate. There is no cost to either the BID or the business owners.

An e-delivery fee is charged to the card purchaser in order to fund the program. Any business in Downtown that accepts Mastercard is able to participate. Staff would like to consider doing a bonus program and/or covering the e-delivery fees during the beginning of the program.

- Purchasing Downtown Albany-branded thermal bags to be distributed either to residents, restaurants or both so that takeout food can be kept warm during transport.
- Use funding for another grant program. Both the County and State recently rolled out grant programs, but there is still a need for funds for our small businesses that have been challenged during the winter months. Business owners are also walking away from grant opportunities due to the difficulty of the applications and loan forgiveness requirements. Staff proposes allowing a second round of grant money be eligible to cover fixed costs in addition to all of the COVID-related costs that were eligible the first time around. Full-service restaurants could apply for up to \$2,500 while retail and personal care businesses could receive up to \$1,250 and the money would be eligible for use on rent, insurance, utilities and permits in addition to any COVID-related costs. Businesses who received any previous grants would have to use this funding for something different than the previous funding. There would be a two-week application period and priority would be given to businesses with the highest decrease in revenue, with a minimum of a 25% decrease. Receipts would be due to the BID within 60 days in order for the loan to be forgiven. Franchises would not be eligible and a business would have to have been open for at least one year prior to COVID hitting, meaning since at least March 1, 2019. The goal is to roll this program out on Monday if the Board approves.
- All \$50,000 could go towards the new grant program and there is still BID assessment money that can be used on the other suggested items.

A brief discussion was held regarding how the wording should be on the grant application when it comes to previous grant funding as well as the revenue decrease requirements and Ms. Steffens agreed to make the language clear in those sections based on the Board's suggestions.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Photography Marketing Initiative

Ms. Steffens showed a few photographs from the Photography Marketing Initiative the Board had previously approved. Business owners have rights to their photos and are welcomed to use them as they please for their own marketing purposes. 53 businesses participated and Staff is highlighting one business every week on Fridays on social media.

Omni Business Attraction Video

Omni Development approached the BID about a video they put together about the Capital Region. There has been an influx of residents and businesses moving out of New York City due to COVID and the video's purpose is to get people to consider Albany, particularly Downtown, as a less expensive, high quality of life option for their relocation. The BID's website will host a landing page for the video. Staff has been working closely with Omni's marketing team in developing the webpage, which will serve as an attraction page and the BID will collect any email inquiries that come in and connect people with property owners as applicable. A new email address has been created in part to collect these particular emails and the landing page will serve as a development page for Downtown as well. Staff are hoping to revive the previously released RFP for a demographic study later this year in order to support development even further.

COVID Support Updates

Ms. Steffens noted that:

- The BID will host a meeting on February 9th for Board members who are residents and resident ambassadors to begin discussions on creating a neighborhood association. Mr. Bonafide is currently researching boundaries of the existing neighborhood associations in the City and then the BID will propose where our boundaries would be.
- The City will not be hosting a St. Patrick's Day parade this year and will instead do a virtual event.
- Currently the City is not expecting to be able to hold Tulip Fest or the Freihofer's Run for Women as usual.

Districtwide Updates

Ms. Steffens informed the Board that Walgreens on N Pearl St. is slated to close on February 18th. An effort has been started to try and convince Walgreens to stay.

Ms. Steffens added that Cider Belly Doughnuts is re-opening after their temporary closure.

A discussion was held on potential ways to get Walgreens to stay open and/or how to get another pharmacy into that space to fill the large void this will leave. Calls have been made to the Mayor and the local Assembly members to see what can be done.

With no further business to discuss Mr. Fariello calls for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:40 PM | Ms. Farrell motions | Mr. Shahinfar seconds | All Approve.

Next Meeting

Wednesday, March 3, 2021 at 4:00PM

Zoom