



**DOWNTOWN ALBANY**  
Business Improvement District

**Downtown Albany Business Improvement District  
Board of Directors' Meeting  
June 17, 2020  
Zoom**

21 Lodge Street  
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**Georgette Steffens**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**Daniel Fariello**  
PRESIDENT

**Pamela Nichols**  
VICE-PRESIDENT

**Frank O'Connor, III**  
TREASURER

**David Sarraf**  
SECRETARY

ATTENDANCE VIA ZOOM:

Daniel Fariello  
Pamela Nichols  
Frank O'Connor  
David Sarraf  
Leola Edelin  
Lisa Reddy Farrell  
Elizabeth Young Jojo  
Tracy Metzger  
Lucas Rogers

ABSENT:

Louis Bannister  
Lena Hart  
Mohamed Hemmid  
Chris Pratt  
Tyler Wrightson

STAFF PRESENT ON

ZOOM:

Georgette Steffens  
Kate Medhus  
Rebecca Hughes  
Jason Bonafide  
Don Wilson

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Board President Daniel Fariello at 4:35 PM.

Mr. Fariello calls for a motion to approve the April 2020 Board Minutes | Mr. Shahinfar motions | Ms. Metzger seconds | All approve.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

COVID-19 Updates

Mr. Fariello presented COVID updates since the last Board meeting:

- Communications to Stakeholders, retailers and restaurants have been the priority from the beginning with the number of emails increasing seven-fold and an increase in open rates. Recently communications have slowed down slightly as the State's mandates have decreased in number and Staff are turning their efforts to assisting businesses as they enter their reopening phase.
- Virtual events continue and are planned through June. They include a comedy show, trivia, mural and historic tours and fitness classes.
- Staff is working with the City and the restaurants to expand sidewalk areas, set up patio seating and identify new temporary takeout zones now that meters have been turned back on.
- Hanging flower baskets will be up by the end of the week.
- The Clean Team is back to being fully staffed and are operating 7 days a week.
- To date we're only aware of two businesses that have closed permanently during NY PAUSE; Capitol Melts and La Serre. This wasn't a total surprise as they were talking about retiring or selling their businesses prior to COVID.
- The Kenmore is now showing apartments. The response has been very strong and the businesses that are set to move in still plan on opening.

Vandalism Updates

Mr. Fariello noted that:

- Between May 30<sup>th</sup> and June 4<sup>th</sup>, 26 businesses experienced vandalism in the form of broken windows, graffiti, damage to ATMs and in two cases, fire damage. About 1/3 of the windows have been repaired, but several are still boarded up.
- Capitalize Albany announced that they are allowing small businesses that sustained damage to apply for their \$10,000 façade improvement program and they are waiving the application fee and any matching requirements. Staff are assisting businesses to complete applications by the June 30<sup>th</sup> deadline.
- Ms. Steffens will discuss initiatives for both this and COVID-related assistance during the funding requests.

### **TREASURER'S REPORT**

#### **Funding Requests**

Mr. O'Connor noted that the Budget & Finance Committee reviewed Staff's funding requests and felt that they were in line with the BID's mission and are presenting them to the Board for approval. There were 5 different funding requests, 2 of which specifically touch on the riot-related damages. These 2 were under the threshold of requiring Board approval, but Mr. O'Connor let the Board know that the following has been approved by him and Mr. Fariello:

- \$1,000 being paid to the African American Cultural Center to curate murals to be painted on a handful of boards covering broken windows throughout the District. Staff is securing approval of the locations. Once the windows have been replaced the boards will then be displayed in the courtyard at the African American Cultural Center.
- The second is a mural project to be painted on the boards at the recently vacated McDonald's building which sits prominently at the intersection of South Pearl and Madison. The BID will provide another \$1,000 to the African American Cultural Center to curate this project as well. 5 artists will serve as mentors to youth ages 8-18 to create the mural and each mentor will be paid \$200 for their work.

Ms. Steffens added that:

- Some murals have been done already at Excelsior Pub, the African American Cultural Center and Wellingtons.
- Staff was approached by local black artists who wanted to give a voice to kids aged 8 to 18 so the project will be driven by the artists with support from the BID, the African American Cultural Center, Albany Barn and Albany Center Gallery.
- The Housing Authority gave approval to use the building and Albany Barn will supply the insurance and the BID will have a contract with the African American Cultural Center as curator.
- Most of the artists are already involved in youth programs or are art teachers so they have experience in the youth component.
- Staff anticipates that the murals will stay up until there is a new tenant in the building, which may be a while.
- The two sites Staff has identified to receive individual paintings are Fresh & Fly at 13 South Pearl Street and Boost Mobile across the street from the McDonald's site on South Pearl. Those should be painted in the next several days.
- The message for the youth artwork is about meditation and positivity and giving them a way to express how these last months have felt to them rather than being specifically about the Black Lives Matter movement. None of the artwork will feature negativity towards the police or the government.

Ms. Steffens presented a funding request for social distancing decals and signage:

- Staff wants to help mitigate the additional expenses small businesses are incurring due to currently operating at a lower capacity, but at a higher expense of reopening under new guidelines. One of the ways to do that would be to create and purchase decals that businesses can put on the floor and/or sidewalk in order to denote 6 feet apart in lines at counters and registers.
- Clogs will be used on the decals with the wording "Don't clog up the line" as a play on a recognizable icon here in Albany.
- 100 of these decals have already been requested from businesses. Each business can request 2 per cash register inside and 2 for outside.
- Staff will print signs that say "PAWS before you enter" signs featuring Nipper dogs and "We all need to do our part" lawn signs also featuring Nipper will be printed and placed around Downtown and in the dog park.

- The lowest price quote for the 200 decals (100 interior and 100 exterior) was from Camelot at \$1,365 and for 20 lawn signs it was from AM&J at \$280 for a total of \$1,645 for both decals and signs.
- Staff is requesting approval for a price not to exceed \$2,500 as they have not heard back from all businesses yet.

A discussion was held on whether office buildings should receive decals and signs to be placed in common areas as well and it was agreed that they should be offered there as well.

Ms. Metzger motions for the purchase of decals and signs at a price not to exceed \$2,500 | Mr. O'Connor seconds | All Approve.

Ms. Steffens outlined a funding request for the purchase of PPE:

- Staff is looking to purchase PPE in bulk to distribute to businesses in the District at a maximum cost of \$5,000.
- Business owners have expressed that purchasing PPE has added to their financial strain.
- The PPE would be distributed on a first come, first served basis. Business owners will have to make appointments to pick it up at the BID office.
- More PPE could be purchased later if it proved to be useful for the businesses.
- Staff will also need to purchase PPE and cleaning supplies for the BID office at a cost not to exceed \$1,000.

A brief discussion was held on what type of PPE to purchase, how it should be divided amongst the businesses and where the best place to purchase from would be.

Mr. Shahinfar motions to approve the purchase of PPE for businesses in the District in an amount not to exceed \$5,000 as well as the purchase of PPE and cleaning supplies for the BID office re-opening in an amount not to exceed \$1,000. | Ms. Edelin seconds | All Approve.

Ms. Steffens noted that virtual events will continue for the months of June and July and Staff will re-assess the need for more as time goes on. The cost to hold more virtual events for the next two months is \$2,000.

Mr. Shahinfar motions to approve the use of up to \$2,000 on virtual events for the months of June and July. | Ms. Farrell seconds | All approve.

Ms. Steffens noted that the BID has funded the African American Cultural Center's Juneteenth celebration as a partner in the past. Doing a virtual event this year was discussed, but the AACC wanted to have at least some in-person component. People have been invited and asked to socially distance and there will be live music and food. Staff is unsure of how the event will turn out and in order to avoid condoning the gathering of large numbers of people, the BID has agreed to fund the virtual component of the event in the amount of \$500.

#### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Ms. Steffens outlined the results of an office survey distributed by Staff to property owners and property managers:

- The survey was distributed by the Albany Parking Authority to their long-term contract clients as well.
- There was a 10% response rate.
- In Phase II, on average, about 25% of staff have come back to work.
- Full staffing is mostly anticipated after 6 months. Many employees will come back after 4<sup>th</sup> of July and then others will start after Labor Day.
- Shifts are mostly staggered, and employees are working fewer days in the office.
- 11% of respondents felt that they don't need a dedicated office space to work in.

- 16% of respondents said they need less office space than they occupied pre-COVID.
- 68% of respondents have renewed their current leases.
- The Parking Authority turned meters back on and they have been at 50% use in the 1<sup>st</sup> week.
- Parking garages are currently at 30% occupancy as opposed to 80-90% occupancy under normal circumstances.

### **Reopening Grant**

Ms. Steffens described the Reopening Grant Staff is proposing:

- At the last Board meeting we discussed taking our unrestricted money, which comes from sponsorship dollars and ad sales raised over the years, to set up a reopening grant for the Downtown businesses.
- The money was originally set aside for Office Attraction and Retail Incubator projects in the amount of \$250,000. Staff felt it was really important to focus on the resiliency of the existing businesses above trying to bring new business to Downtown. The Board originally approved \$350,000 for the Reopening Grant out of a total \$450,000 that's in the account. Based on the guidelines that have been developed, Staff feels they can accomplish this reopening grant with \$325,000.
- Acceptable uses for the grant funds would be to purchase inventory that perished during closure, PPE, new technology or make interior or exterior changes that adhere to COVID guidelines.
- The funds would be given in the form of a forgivable loan.
- The grant would be offered in three different tiers; Retail, retail-related and personal care businesses would be capped at \$1,500, counter service restaurants and café would be capped at \$2,000 and full service, sit-down restaurants could receive up to \$3,000.
- Non-profit organizations can apply if they experienced vandalism during protesting and could receive up to \$1,500.
- The application is one and a half pages long and the guidelines are fairly short and simple so as not to intimidate anyone by the application process.
- Checks would be cut up front after award and business owners would have 4 months to submit receipts for their expenditures. They would also be required to attend a one-hour webinar in order for the loan to be forgiven.
- If the requirements are not met, the loan must be paid back over 18 months at 2% interest.

A discussion was held regarding how much money should be put into the grant program. The Board agreed that since \$250,000 was originally set aside for the other two projects, it made the most sense to keep the amount the same and save some of our unrestricted money for future endeavors, which could eventually include another round of grant funds if needed.

Ms. Steffens added that there is still \$86,000 in our restricted, special projects funds that can be used on marketing, events, etc. in the future. \$125,000 was previously committed to a wayfinding project connected to the new skyway, but it's currently unsure whether that project will go forward or not.

Mr. Shahinfar motions to change the amount set aside for the Reopening/Stabilization Grant to \$250,000 | Ms. Edelin seconds | Mr. O'Connor abstains | All Others Approve.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

Ms. Steffens noted that the Support Now, Savor Later gift card program is ending on June 30<sup>th</sup>.



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Mr. Fariello calls for a motion to enter executive session at 5:52 PM | Mr. Shahinfar motions | Mr. Sarraf seconds | All approve.

With no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned at 6:24 PM.

**Next Meeting**

**Wednesday, September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 4:30PM.**

**Zoom**