



DOWNTOWN ALBANY
Business Improvement District

**Downtown Albany Business Improvement District
Board of Directors' Meeting
November 6, 2019
BID Conference Room**

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:
Daniel Fariello
Frank O'Connor
David Sarraf
Matt Cannon
Leola Edelin
Lisa Reddy Farrell
Hon. Darius Shahinfar

ON THE PHONE:
Elizabeth Young Jojo
Tracy Metzger

ABSENT:
Pamela Nichols
Louis Bannister
Lena Hart
Mohamed Hemmid
Chris Pratt
Tyler Wrightson

STAFF PRESENT:
Georgette Steffens
Rebecca Haizmann
Jason Bonafide
Don Wilson

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Board President Daniel Fariello at 4:41 PM.

Mr. Fariello calls for a motion to approve the September Board Minutes | Ms. Farrell motions | Ms. Edelin seconds
| All approve.

TREASURER'S REPORT

990 Review

Mr. O'Connor noted that Staff sent out the draft of the 990 and the filing deadline is November 15, 2019. Mr. Fariello added that if a more comprehensive view of how the BID operates is desired, the Audit is more user-friendly, is easier to read and is based on the information in the 990 form.

Mr. O'Connor calls for a motion to approve the submission of the 900 form as completed by Mr. Palmerino | Mr. Fariello motions | Mr. Shahinfar seconds | All approve.

RFP Responses

Mr. O'Connor noted that:

- there were two responses to the BID's RFP for auditing services.
 - Bob Palmerino bid \$7,500 per year for a 3-year term.
 - UHY bid \$9,000 per year for a 3-year term.
- Bob Palmerino has been charging \$6,750 so there is a slight increase in his rate, but his number is still \$1,500 less than UHY's and the BID has been happy with his level of service over the past years.

Ms. Steffens added that Bob Palmerino is located within the District and the BID likes to give business to stakeholders when possible.

Mr. O'Connor calls for a motion to approve the RFP response from Bob Palmerino at \$7,500 per year for a 3-year term | Mr. Fariello motions | Mr. Shahinfar seconds | All approve.

Mr. O'Connor noted that there was one response to the RFP for flower services and it is from the current vendor, M&K Warehouse. The total for the 1-year contract is \$70,773. There is also an option for two one-year renewals after the initial year term and the price for everything except the actual flowers and bulbs would be locked in for those two years. The 2019 contract cost \$65,292. The increase in the quote are mainly due to additional labor for the emptying and disposing of 100 self-watering planters, soil, growth and the cost of water.

Ms. Steffens added that M&K has done a great job and Staff feels that we get what we pay for in both the attention to detail and the quick response we get when there are issues.

Ms. Metzger motions to the approve the flower contract with M&K Warehouse | Mr. Fariello seconds | All approve.

Funding Requests

Mr. O'Connor noted that Staff is working on a new round of Residential Welcome Kits for residents in and just outside of the District which would include a nice bag filled with maps, promotional materials and offers from retailers and other businesses. The cost to create 600 bags would be \$10,000 from the Special Projects budget, which is \$16 per bag. Staff anticipates being able to secure about \$2,500 in sponsorship for the bags.

Ms. Steffens added that it's a great way to market our retailers to the residents and it's a good way to get information to the new residents in the District and connect them to the Downtown community. Staff will put together a coupon book and the request includes the cost of printing for that. The kits would be distributed to all residential buildings within the District plus a few just outside of the District because while just outside our boundaries consider Downtown their neighborhood, spending time and money here.

Mr. O'Connor calls for a motion to approve the use of \$10,000 for the creation of the Residential Welcome Kits | Ms. Edelin motions | Mr. Fariello seconds | All approve.

2020 Draft Budget Review

Mr. O'Connor noted that:

- The Budget & Finance Committee has been working with Staff to develop the draft budget for 2020 which was included in the Board packet. It mostly follows the formula for last year's budget. The Budget & Finance Committee and Staff will work to incorporate the Board's input and will finalize the Budget for the December 5th Board Meeting.
- There are two items that the Budget & Finance Committee are recommending:
 - Hold the special assessment rate steady for 2020.
 - Do not include new money in the budget for SCOs as there are sufficient funds in the SCO reserve to cover any potential settlements.

Ms. Steffens added that:

- The BID has the ability to go to a maximum of 20%, which several years ago the BID decided to not utilize the full amount if it wasn't needed. In similar fashion, when the City decreases their rate, we have decreased our rates and when they increase their commercial rate, the BID has hold steady to not overburden the property owners. The City's commercial tax rate is going up slightly this year, hence the recommendation to hold the BID's rate steady.
- Property values have gone up from \$291 million last year ago to \$300 million now.
- It was anticipated that 10 North Pearl Street was going to be sold to the State/SUNY, but that sale has not happened, so they are obligated to continue paying their pilot payment until the sale occurs. That amount was therefore added back in to the budget.
- The property assessment challenges spreadsheet has been updated. Many properties are agreeing to have a lower rate going forward so the BID is not having to pay money back from the time of their initial challenge on those settlements. When the challenges do settle it is at an average rate of 30% so based on the properties we know have challenged their assessment, which was provided by the City Assessor's Office, our current liability is \$6,800. There is \$50,000 in reserves for SCO challenges. Staff anticipates

that there may be some residential properties, as their incentives begin to expire, that will challenge their assessment values which is why it's important to keep the reserves at its current level.

Mr. O'Connor added that the 414 Broadway challenge was settled recently and can be removed from the SCO spreadsheet..

Ms. Steffens added that:

- Residential properties continue to remain strong and the average is still an increase in value of over 300% from a vacant/underutilized building to a fully occupied residential building. The main set of buildings that decreased in value were the Bank of America/Merrill Lynch buildings.
- Because of the special projects line item, the BID only budgets for things that are actual expenses or that are events that have been previously successful, and we are continuing with that formula. If it's a new event, it will be presented to the Board for approval within our Special Projects line.
- The 2019 projected spending will change a bit between now and December, but you can see where we estimate landing, which is under budget for the year.
- The Main Street grant project money will be wrapped up this year. The last residential building is about to receive a CO and hopefully the reimbursement will hit before the end of the year so we can pay that out to the property owner this year.
- The Williams Street Lighting Project/National Grid Grant for \$250,000 has been difficult. The Swyer Companies have agreed to the contract regarding attaching to their garage, but we are still waiting to hear back from the City and OGS on the draft contract. If we do not attach to the OGS garage, it will cost an additional \$22,000 in order to move forward immediately. Staff felt that the money could be better spent on high impact events over the next year or two and we will just continue to wait to hear back from OGS so that Staff can finalize the contract and begin work. The money budgeted for that project for this year has been moved to next year's budget.
- The additional cost under Office Equipment/Purchases is for a contract with our database company to do additional training with Staff and customization of our database.
- Insurance went down because they corrected our office space and owed us a credit.
- The professional fee changes are for the RFPS we discussed earlier as well as the annual sexual harassment training that is now required by State law.
- The budget includes a part-time, seasonal worker from May/June until the end of August who can work on weeding in the district for 4 hours per day, 5 days per week. The Clean Team Supervisor cannot keep up with both the weeding and sidewalk sweeping. If no weeding is needed, this person would contribute with additional cleaning. New Downtown maps were just printed, and Staff doesn't anticipate needing any more next year. If it becomes necessary to print more, it will be brought to the Board as a Special Project.
- Juneteenth was a successful event and partnership with the African American Cultural Center that we would like to continue with next year. The Fort Orange Holiday Market is another event we would like to continue with in December. Both have been added to the Special Events line.
- Extra money was added into Visual Improvements due to the new Holiday Light Span that will be put up across State Street.
- Staff anticipates generating \$42,000 in sponsorship revenue, which is unrestricted money.
- \$39,000 is budgeted for Special Projects that will go to the Board for approval before being executed.
- 2020 priority projects have been identified by Staff and some carrying over from 2019. Potential projects that have been identified by staff, Board members, BID Committees, and residents' feedback include:
 - \$125,000 is committed to Wayfinding
 - \$100,000 is committed to Tricentennial Park
 - Renewing free night and weekend parking

- Renewing the free trolley
- Putting together a free summer fitness series at SUNY greenspace
- More small business owner events
- Season video series
- Create quarterly events in the South End in collaboration with the AACCC
- Purchase of a container to store tables, chairs, lights, etc. right here in Downtown
- Purchase of another gaming table for Downtown
- Updating of the BID website
- Demographic study/information in Downtown
- Purchase of a van to transport items to and from events
- Participation in the Clinton Market Collective
- Enhancement of Jim DiNapoli signage
- Eventual replacement of all holiday lights
- Office Attraction and Pop-up Retail programs (must come out of the unrestricted, sponsorship dollars)

Funding for these initiatives would come from reserves and unrestricted sponsorship dollars.

- The BID has not updated any demographic data in at least 10 years and updated information is important to attract new retail and offices.
- Staff would like to increase residential engagement and is working on ways to do that.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Project Updates

Ms. Steffens noted that:

- Hounds of Halloween had 200 dogs, up from 125 from last year and from 75 the first year. 24 retailers participated for the dogs to trick-or-treat at and they gave good feedback saying that the event gave them good exposure. The event costs only a few hundred dollars to put on and \$1,200 was raised for the Mohawk Hudson Humane Society. This event is in the budget again for next year.
- The IGNITE volunteer festival is on Sunday, November 17th at the Capital Center. 45 not-for-profits that need volunteers will be there for people to learn about and there will be master classes, training and awards as well. The BID will have a table at the event and will promote to residents.
- Small Business Saturday is Saturday, November 30th. There will not be Handmade at the Hollow this year, but Staff is working on other ways to draw people to our businesses that day.
- The Fort Orange Holiday Market will be the first two Friday nights and first two Saturday afternoons in December since Thanksgiving is so late this year. Staff is looking to do a hot chocolate competition, horse-drawn carriage rides, holiday window decorating, church choirs to sing and the official lighting of the new holiday light span. Staff is also looking into making Christmas cards for veterans in collaboration with Albany Center Gallery to play up on the local history of the first Christmas card.

New Business

Ms. Steffens noted that:

- The Kenmore Ballroom opening was announced, and Staff is looking into holding the BID Annual Meeting there in May.
- Capital Rep kicked off their final fundraising campaign at their new location which is now just outside the district.
- A new art gallery, Recto Y Verso Editions, opened. They are mostly open during weekdays.
- Far Shot, an axe and knife throwing venue opened and Staff hopes to organize a resident open house with them.



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- The Paper Dragon will open in Clinton Square where The French Press was. It's an Asian-inspired, NYC-style deli.
- A new law firm, Rivkin Radler, with 26 employees, will have their ribbon cutting tomorrow.
- Several of the businesses Downtown that have been here for a long time have owners that are now considering retiring and they don't have anyone taking over so we will have to keep in mind ways to help promote the sale of those businesses or fill all of the spaces that will be left vacant.

With no further business to be discussed, Mr. Fariello calls for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:36pm | Mr. O'Connor motions | Ms. Edelin seconds | All Approve.

Next Meeting

Thursday, December 5th at 4:30pm

21 Lodge St, 2nd Floor Conference Room