



DOWNTOWN ALBANY
Business Improvement District

**Downtown Albany Business Improvement District
Board of Directors' Meeting
September 19, 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:
Pamela Nichols
Leola Edelin
Lisa Reddy Farrell
Lena Hart
Mohamed Hemmid
Tracy Metzger
Hon. Darius Shahinfar

ON THE PHONE:
Frank O'Connor, III
David Sarraf
Elizabeth Young Jojo

ABSENT:
Daniel Fariello
Louis Bannister
Matthew Cannon
Chris Pratt
Tyler Wrightson

Also Present:
Robert Palmerino, CPA

STAFF PRESENT:
Georgette Steffens
Rebecca Haizmann
Jason Bonafide
Don Wilson

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Board Vice-President Pamela Nichols at 4:35 PM.

Ms. Nichols moved to approve the June Board Minutes | Mr. Shahinfar seconds | All approve.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Audit Review

Ms. Nichols noted that she and Mr. O'Connor met with Bob Palmerino, the BID's Audit CPA, to review the audit and subsequently discussed the audit with the Budget & Finance Committee. No significant issues were found.

Mr. Palmerino noted that:

- this is the first year that the BID's numbers match the numbers provided by the City. There are often differences in the starting assessment revenue or properties have been misclassified in the past.
- this year was a much smoother year in terms of the audit because last year the BID replaced the CFO for Hire consultant with a more senior level person from their team. It costs a little more, but we feel that we are getting what we pay for and have seen a difference in our accounting practices. Ms. Steffens will review the journal entries recommended by Mr. Palmerino with CFO for Hire to ensure there are minimal JEs next year.
- he recommends that Staff increase their focus on the BID's CDs and their maturity dates and that we continue to be diligent with the segregation of duties when it comes to money (Ms. Medhus opens the mail and copies checks, Mr. Wilson deposits checks, Ms. Steffens signs off on all deposits and the CFO for Hire enters them in the system). Segregation of duty is tough for all small organizations like ours, but something we need to make sure we are always striving for.
- Staff went through anticipated liabilities for property assessment challenges and believe the liability to be under \$50,000. They recommend keeping the SCO reserves at \$50,000 however, as they anticipate a few residential properties may challenge their assessments as the City settles into an assessment calculation for apartment buildings and as their financial incentives time out.
- \$123,000 is allocated for special projects. The Board votes on how this money is spent and it can only be used for public projects and not on private property. The Board decided that money must be spent within two years of when it's designated, or it must be given back to the property owner through a lower assessment rate. This offers flexibility for the Board to come alongside the DRI projects and other investments taking place in the District. In past years this has included the dog park, the convention center district and new events that the BID has been putting on.

- Staff is currently considering using non-assessment revenue for an office attraction program. Ms. Steffens is talking with Capitalize Albany about the renewing of their retail grant program and the BID would create an office attraction program that is very similar.
- the BID underspent last year so there is an extra \$100,000 that could potentially be spent on a project, however, the BID does have a few grants applications out that have matching requirements. The Board originally set aside \$125,000 for the Wayfinding Project. We didn't receive it through the CFA, but it is possible we will receive it through the DRI in the Clinton Streetscape money that the City received. We are still waiting to find out how much the City will use for Wayfinding and the BID will be required to match. In addition, Ms. Steffens applied for a CFA for \$1,000,000 for the renovations of Tricentennial Park and the BID would be required to match \$100,000 for that grant.
- there have been changes in how reporting takes place in the auditing industry. The BID can no longer spread out administrative expenses amongst all the main categories. They must specifically go under Management and General. Lawyer services and Annual Meeting costs are just a few examples.

Ms. Nichols motioned to approve the 2018 Audit | Mr. Shahinfar seconds | All Approve.

By-laws

Ms. Nichols noted that the new by-laws have been approved and that final copies for your Board binders will be distributed to the entire Board via e-mail.

Board of Directors Positions

Ms. Nichols noted that the Secretary position has opened up due to Seth Meltzer recently moving to Florida, hence resigning from the Board.

Ms. Nichols stated that Mr. Fariello, in agreement with the rest of the Executive Committee, has recommended David Sarraf to fill that position.

Ms. Nichols motioned to approve David Sarraf to serve as Secretary on the Executive Committee | Mr. Shahinfar seconds | All Approve.

Ms. Nichols noted that Mr. Meltzer's property owner position on the Board will also need to be filled. In addition, David Galin, our resident representative, has now moved outside of the district and thus the resident position on the Board now needs to be filled as well.

Ms. Steffens stated that recommendations for both positions will be made at the next Board meeting.

A discussion was held on what the BID has been doing to engage residents in the district and how the BID can connect more with residents in 2020.

Ms. Nichols noted that Matt Cannon will be replacing George Penn as the County Executive's representative on the Board, effective immediately. Mr. Cannon is the Director of Intergovernmental Affairs for Albany County and he previously served as the Director of Public Affairs at Gramercy Communications.

2020 Budget

Ms. Nichols noted that the next Board Meeting, previously scheduled for October 23, 2019 has been moved to November 6, 2019 to give Staff more time to finalize the draft budget which will be presented at that meeting.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Mid-Year Financials

Mr. O'Connor noted that there were no large variances in any of the numbers. Most anything above or below budget can be explained by a timing issue.

Ms. Steffens noted that:

- \$85,000 of the Main Street Grant has been paid out to 420 Broadway and the remaining \$200,000 will be paid out soon- one by the end of the year and one early next year. That explains the variances in the actual vs budgeted expenses.
- the BID received a credit of almost \$6,000 from the insurance company due to them charging the BID based on the old, larger space.
- she attended a placemaking conference earlier in the year which is reflected in the training and travel budget.
- the Annual Meeting was budgeted for the third quarter, but actually took place in the second quarter.
- Staff is reviewing the final version of the new Downtown Albany map and it will go to print in the next week.
- the last timing issue had to do with payment for the growing and installation of the hanging flower baskets. The florist invoiced for the baskets as soon as they went up, which is earlier than usual.

Funding Requests

Mr. O'Connor noted that Staff has two funding requests; one for reinforcement of the poles for the new holiday lighting display and the other for travel expenses.

Ms. Steffens noted that:

- last year the BID purchased a new holiday light span to hang across State and North Pearl Streets and the City asked the BID to have an engineer come in to do an assessment and make sure the existing structures can support the new display. The assessment determined that the current poles and wires are already at their weight-bearing capacity. Staff worked with an engineer to develop a plan for safely hanging the light span and it requires deadweights that must be purchased as well as the replacement of the wires and cables that are currently up there. The cost for both of these will be under \$5,000. The holiday lighting display will go up after Thanksgiving.
- in addition to the placemaking conference in Alabama, Ms. Steffens also received a scholarship for and participated in a two-week course for urban heritage management in the Netherlands. The full course and a portion of the housing were paid for by the scholarship, but there were still some expenses that had to be covered by the travel budget. An additional \$1,500 is needed for Staff to attend an International Downtown conference in Baltimore this year which will heavily focus on marketing.

Mr. O'Connor called for a motion to approve the use of up to \$5,000 for support for the new lighting display | Ms. Metzger motioned | Ms. Farrell seconds | All approve.

Mr. O'Connor called for a motion to approve the use of \$1,500 for Staff to attend the International Downtown Conference in Baltimore | Ms. Metzger motioned | Ms. Farrell seconds | All approve.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Downtown Updates

Ms. Steffens noted that:

- The timing of the sale of the new round of Nippers and the Open Gallery project ended up occurring relatively over the same period of time. The Nippers were not budgeted for whereas Open Gallery was. Some sponsors supported both projects and some only did one. Fundraising for Open Gallery did not

quite cover the expenses, but the Downtown is Pawsome project is anticipated to raise around \$30,000. \$13,000 of that will come in 2020 and the rest in 2021.

- In June the BID partnered with the African American Cultural Center in holding a Juneteenth celebration. The event previously attracted around 300 people, but this year with the partnership and planning and marketing efforts, 1,100 people attended. Staff is discussing the possibility of arranging quarterly events with some of the vendors they had and the potential for using the venue more.
- SUNY plaza let us use their space to show the Captain Marvel movie in July in partnership with Christ's Church and 350 people attended.
- The Bites, Camera, Action movie nights are wrapping up. The most popular was Avengers: End Game so the Marvel movies seem to be well-liked. Staff will gather feedback from those who attended to gain their general opinion of the experience.
- The placemaking project Open Gallery was launched with a Garden Party in Liberty Park. 14 doors have been decorated so far with the ability to roll out the program District-wide.
- Pearlpalooza just occurred. Last year there were 300 people for Yogapalooza and this year 550 people signed up before the event, but due to the threat of rain only about 300 showed up. Attendance was down by 2-3,000 people this year which Staff attributes both to the weather and not having a big headlining band playing at the event. The event was still a success overall with 6,000 people in attendance.
- We hosted a residential open house where over 100 people came to see the available apartments units that were being shown. The next one will be in August of next year just before the big wave of new apartments come online.
- The next special event will be Hounds of Halloween on October 19th for costumed dogs and their owners to trick-or-treat Downtown. Last year, our second year, we had 150 dogs in attendance. Small Business Saturday and Handmade at the Hollow, as well as the Fort Orange Holiday Market will follow before the end of the year.
- Cleo, the Nipper statue at the First Church, was stolen. They were discussing re-doing it because of fading so the BID will supply them with a new Nipper and Staff continues to communicate with the police during their investigation. Staff is also working with DGS to find ways to better secure all of the Nipper statues.
- The Bishop had their ribbon cutting and have been open for about a month and Downtown Studio Fit on Steuben Alley will have their ribbon cutting this week. They are a fitness studio offering group classes. Next week there will be a ribbon cutting for Semblance Med Spa on the same street.
- Sandwiches to Go officially closed last week. A new lunch shop will open soon in that space called Cobblestone Lunch Shoppe.
- Far Shot, an axe-throwing venue, will be opening in mid-October at 69 North Pearl Street offering axe throwing, knife throwing, and archery. The owner is a professional axe thrower, coaches the world champion team and has another location in Syracuse which has been successful. They will have both a Downtown Open House and a resident Open House. Another game place, called The Yard, will open at 16 Sheridan in mid-November. They will have axe throwing, but the main focus will be on international lawn games.

New Business

With no further business to be discussed, the meeting was adjourned at 5:51pm.

Next Meeting

**Wednesday, November 6, 2019 at 4:30pm
21 Lodge St, 2nd Floor Conference Room**