



DOWNTOWN ALBANY
Business Improvement District

**Downtown Albany Business Improvement District
Board of Directors' Meeting
October 21, 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:
Daniel Fariello
Pamela Nichols
Frank O'Connor
Lisa Reddy Farrell
Elizabeth Young Jojo
Lena Hart
Tracy Metzger
Lucas Rogers
Hon. Darius Shahinfar

ABSENT:
David Sarraf
Louis Bannister
Leola Edelin
Mohamed Hemmid
Chris Pratt
Tyler Wrightson

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

ADDITIONAL
ATTENDEES:
Jill Delaney, Discover
Albany

The meeting was called to order by Board President Daniel Fariello at 4:34 PM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Fariello calls for a motion to approve both the June 17th and the September 16th Minutes as a quorum was not established at the September 16th meeting | Mr. O'Connor motions | Ms. Farrell seconds | All approve.

TOURISM IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

Ms. Steffens introduced Jill Delaney, President and CEO of Discover Albany, formerly the Albany County Convention and Visitor's Bureau, and Ms. Delaney presented the following proposal:

- Discover Albany is going through the approval process for an Albany County Tourism Improvement District. A Tourism Improvement District very much mirrors what a Business Improvement District is in general concept. The difference is that the assessed businesses for the TID would be the hotels in Albany County.
- TIDs have existed for decades, starting predominantly in Southern California, and there are currently about 200 nationwide, but none in New York State yet.
- Albany is currently one of the lowest funded Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) based on the revenues collected through the hotel occupancy tax. Hotels would add an assessment to all bills which the County would collect for the TID.
- Tourism has a huge impact on all businesses, not just hotels. Before COVID Albany County had \$1 billion in direct visitors spending in one year. The more money a destination spends on attracting tourists, the more the direct visitors spending exponentially increases. The goal is to put more money into our destination promotion so that we can bring more money in to local businesses.
- The proposed breakdown of the TID budget would put a large focus on sales & marketing, but investment would be made into the destination itself as well.
- The TID budgeting would be separate from Discover Albany's budgeting, but Discover Albany would be administering the program.
- The TID would fund projects such as the Discover Albany app, which costs \$15,000 per year, TV ads and digital marketing campaigns to drive overnight visitation and attracting new sports business. This would allow Discover Albany to shift focus from raising money for such things to actually doing the events well.
- This project would be driven by the hotels and several hotels in the District such as the Hampton Inn, the Holiday Inn Express and the Renaissance have written letters of support and the Hilton has voiced their endorsement as well.

Ms. Delaney left the meeting at 5:03 PM.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Board Elections

Mr. Fariello noted that:

- Board elections were paused during COVID and the Annual Meeting was cancelled.
- The election process has been restarted and we've received six nominations for four Board of Directors positions. Of the six nominations, four individuals completed their Statement of Interest forms.
- There are two Property Owners positions available and Corrine Luft Masino, owner of Mug Shots Café was the only one to complete the form. This means that next year we will add the remaining open property owner position to the ballot.
- There is one Resident position available and the individual nominated is Riley Ackley who currently serves as one of our building ambassadors.
- The Governance Committee will conduct interviews this week for the three individuals who completed Statement of Interest forms for the one open Commercial Tenant position. The people being interviewed are Leyla Kiosse of The Yard Hatchet House and Bar, Nicola Coleman of Greenberg Traurig and Angelo Maddox of Fresh & Fly Clothing. The Governance Committee will select the individual for the open Commercial Tenant position and the slate of nominees will be announced to the full membership on Friday. Anyone not on the slate will have the opportunity to petition to be added to it.
- Voting is expected to be in early November.
- New members will join the Board as of January 1, 2021 and will serve a term of two and a half years instead of the usual three due to COVID.

Ms. Steffens added that Staff is working on a video that will go out to the Membership in lieu of an Annual Meeting to highlight what the BID has been working on both in 2019 during COVID. Neil Murray will receive the Jim DiNapoli award at next year's Annual Meeting as long as we are allowed to meet in person by then.

TREASURER'S REPORT

990

Mr. O'Connor noted that Bob Palmerino completed the 990 Tax Form which needs to be filed by November 15th. There was nothing surprising. The form has been reviewed by the Budget & Finance Committee and it is in line with the 2019 Audit that was approved at the last Board Meeting. It was sent out in the Board packet last week for everyone's review.

Mr. O'Connor calls for objections to Mr. Palmerino filing the 990 form | No objections were voiced.

Contract Awards

Mr. O'Connor presented the proposal received for the holiday light installation and removal RFP:

- One company responded and that was our current company Donofrio, out of the Buffalo area. They have done the holiday decorations Downtown for at least the past ten years and they also install the Central BID's banners and decorations.
- The proposal was for a three-year contract at \$6,000 per year. The previous contract was for \$5,600 and we've since added the State Street light span and asked them to remove that in February, requiring them to make a second trip to Albany.
- The Budget & Finance Committee recommends awarding the three-year lighting contract to Donofrio at a rate of \$6,000 per year.

Mr. O'Connor calls for a motion to approve the holiday lighting contract award to Donofrio at a rate of \$6,000 per year | Ms. Metzger motions | Ms. Jojo seconds | All Approve.

Mr. O'Connor presented the proposal received for the clean team services RFP:

- The RFP for cleaning services received two responses. Mr. O'Connor, Ms. Steffens, Ms. Reddy and Mr. Wilson interviewed both companies.
- ABM, our current contactor, proposed \$153,700 for 2021, \$161,385 for 2022 and \$169,000 for 2023.
- The other company to bid was Legacy Cleaning & Maintenance. They are a newer company, but both of the owners come with extensive cleaning services. While most of their current work is indoors, one of the owners worked for ABM and operated the contract for the BID when it was first created in the mid-90s. Legacy's price was \$206,070.60 per year for all three years.
- The parties who conducted the interviews, as well as the Budget & Finance Committee, recommend awarding the one-year contract with two optional one-year renewals to ABM at the prices outlined in their proposal.

Mr. O'Connor calls for a motion to award the clean team contract for one year with two one-year renewal options at the above-outlined prices to ABM | Ms. Farrell motions | Ms. Metzger seconds | All approve.

Lease

Mr. O'Connor noted that the BID's original lease is up, and Staff is recommending a three-year renewal of the lease with one three-year renewal option. The current rent is \$1,591.03 per month which will increase each year based on CPI. The Budget & Finance Committee recommends authorizing the Executive Director to sign all necessary documents for a new three-year lease at 21 Lodge Street.

A brief discussion was held regarding the size of the current space.

Mr. O'Connor calls for a motion to renew the current lease for a three-year term with a three-year renewal option | Ms. Reddy motions | Ms. Metzger seconds | All approve.

Funding Request

Mr. O'Connor presented a funding request made by Staff for the creation of a second promotional video with Bizi Media to use on social media to attract consumers to our Downtown establishments at a cost of \$1,423.

Ms. Steffens played the first promotional video created a few months ago and noted that it has been the BID's second most popular and viewed video. This second, newer video would encourage people to support the Downtown businesses in the same way they usually would even if they're not currently working in person here.

Mr. O'Connor calls for a motion to approve the creation of a second video with Bizi media at a cost not to exceed \$1,423 | Ms. Jojo motions | Ms. Hart seconds | All Approve.

2021 Budget

Mr. O'Connor noted that the Budget & Finance Committee has begun conversations about the 2021 budget. The Committee and Staff are recommending we be conservative for next year as we expect to see the impacts of COVID with assessment reduction requests in the 2022 budget.

Ms. Steffens presented the following:

- There are 3 main areas of focus for Staff: Enhance Place (public infrastructure investments, clean and safe, visual improvements, re-design of parks and creating a dynamic public realm), Community Engagement (marketing and networking, driving people to live, work and recreate Downtown) and Advocacy (on behalf of our Stakeholders and businesses to allow for economic growth and high quality of life in Downtown).
- Spending percentages have not changed much over the past 6 years. One third of the budget is typically used for Clean and Safe as those are two core priorities.

- It's expected that revenues will decrease in 2022. Some property owners have already challenged their assessments and they have until July of next year to enter those. Staff is concerned that there could be an increase in commercial and office vacancy and a lower assessment revenue is anticipated in 2022.
- Currently only events that meet State guidelines are being budgeted for. If things change Staff will come to the Board with funding requests.
- Priorities for 2021 are assisting with sustainability of existing and new small businesses and Staff will continue to identify creative ways to do this. This includes advocating to the City, County or State on behalf of our businesses to get them whatever support they need in order to remain open and thriving.
- The Williams Street lighting project will be completed in 2021.
- Staff will participate in the Maiden Lane Redevelopment Project as well as the Clinton Market Collective and The Albany Waterfront Access, Vitality and Economic Strategy Group. Staff would also like to be involved in the South End Strategic Plan update as well as the Liberty Square project.
- The City is replacing the acorn lamp shades throughout Downtown, so it is much brighter. Staff would like to upgrade the over 15-year-old holiday lights and decorations around Downtown into more winter-themed decorations so that they can stay up longer.
- The sink holes in Tricentennial Park are getting worse and the park is in dire need of renovations.
- The draft Budget will be sent out to the full Board prior to the next meeting.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

COVID Support Updates

Ms. Steffens noted that:

- 38 businesses have been assisted by the BID's Stabilization Grant forgivable loan. 2 additional businesses are pending awaiting either paperwork or re-opening. 20 of them are using the funds to replace perishable inventory, 9 are using them for technology upgrades, 2 have used the funding to repair damages from protesting in May and 2 barbershops/salons have used them to replace their fabric barber chairs with ones that can be easily sanitized between clients.
- 64 patio heaters were purchased and distributed to 13 businesses in the District in order to extend the outdoor dining season. For every heater purchased by the restaurant, the BID made a matching purchase, up to a max of 3 heaters.
- Social distancing decals and signs were printed and distributed to 39 retailers and 8 commercial properties.
- Staff distributed PPE to 31 of our businesses in collaboration with the County and Assembly Members Fahy and McDonald. 235 boxes of gloves, 81 boxes of masks and 40 gallons of hand sanitizer were given out.
- Staff assisted Albany Center Gallery and the Albany Barn in obtaining a grant for over \$75,000 to fund 4 murals in the Clinton Square area. The first two are going up on Redburn properties at 45 Columbia on the side of the building and the back side of 39 Columbia. There will be a press event next Tuesday to highlight these. One of the mural artists is a young, local artist and this is her first mural while the other is a pair of national artists from Brooklyn.

A brief discussion was held regarding homeless individuals in Downtown and Ms. Steffens noted that conversations with HATAS are ongoing and the issue is still a priority for Staff.

With no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned at 5:43 PM.

Next Meeting

Wednesday, December 9, 2020 at 4:30PM

Zoom