

ATTENDANCE:

Frank O'Connor, III
Elizabeth Young Jojo
Ken Countermine
Lisa Reddy Farrell
Riley Ackley
Leola Edelin
Benn MacDonald (Zoom)
Angelo Maddox
Lucas Rogers
Hon. Darius Shahinfar

ABSENT:

Mohamed Hemmid
Lena Hart
Leyla Kiosse
Neil McGreevy
Josh Wainman
Frank Zeoli

STAFF PRESENT:

Georgette Steffens
Rebecca Hughes
Don Wilson
Jevan Dollard
Molly Eadie

ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES:

Dr. Dorcey Applrys, Chief City Auditor
Peatros Haile, Deputy Chief City Auditor
Shantal Plass, Auditor

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

Georgette Steffens
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Frank O'Connor, III
PRESIDENT

Elizabeth Young Jojo
VICE-PRESIDENT

Ken Countermine
TREASURER

Lisa Reddy Farrell
SECRETARY

The meeting was called to order by Board President Frank O'Connor at 4:03 PM.

CITY AUDITOR PRESENTATION

Mr. O'Connor welcomed Dr. Dorcey Applrys, the Chief City Auditor, to the meeting. He noted that she has served in her current position since 2020 and that prior to that she was a Common Council Member for 6 years. Mr. O'Connor invited Dr. Applrys to talk to the Board about the role and accomplishments of her office.

Dr. Applrys noted that:

- She was appointed to the Chief City Auditor position in 2020 by the mayor and has since run in two different elections to keep the seat.
- She believes in transparency as a city leader and wants her office to be transparent to the public. They are focused on city resources and accountability. She aims to work together with others to improve the quality of life for all Albany residents and those who work in the city of Albany.
- The priorities of the Office of Audit and Control are 3-pronged:
 - The first is conducting performance audits. They play a role in the City's overall fiscal health, and they work with the City Treasurer and his team every day. Performance audits look at the City's programs, services and resources and ensure that those programs are being implemented as intended and that City resources are being spent as intended.
 - They review and sign off on payments made by the City Treasurer's Office. They audit roughly 20,000 vouchers every year.
 - They certify the validity of the investments made by the City Treasurer's Office.
- The office looks internally at advancing the City's work in terms of equity and being accountable to every neighbor.

The Deputy Chief City Auditor presented some examples of performance audits their office has recently performed, and the Chief City Auditor elaborated on them in further detail. A brief discussion was held on these audits and the Board was invited to visit the website of the City Office of Audit and Control to look at the full findings of the performance audits.

Dr. Applrys added that the Office of Audit and Control has some non-performance audit initiatives as well:

- The Ready, Set, Goal! Program is a youth program established to try to help engage young people and prevent them from becoming entangled with the criminal justice system. The program is a week-long, Citywide program that looks at entrepreneurship, economic development, mentorship, business etiquette, dining etiquette, goal setting, and college prep. Business leaders from the Capital Region participate to give the students a wide variety of exposure. It has gotten a lot of great feedback.

- 30-min Download: Community Audit Report is a platform for the Albany Community to hear from City leaders and obtain information about programs and services. Dr. Applrys interviews different City team members or public figures. The last interview was with Police Chief Hawkins and related to public safety. It creates an opportunity for people to give uninterrupted information to the public.

Ms. Steffens thanked Dr. Applrys and her staff members for their attendance and their informative presentation.

Dr. Applrys, Mr. Haile and Ms. Plass left the meeting at 4:48 PM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. O'Connor calls for a motion to approve the April 2023 meeting Minutes | Mr. Countermine motions | Ms. Jojo seconds | All approve.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Board Elections

Mr. O'Connor noted that there were no petitions submitted for anyone to be added to the election ballot for the Board, so the voting opened with only the renewal of Riley Ackley and Angelo Maddox. Both candidates are Class B tenants meaning that only Class B tenants can vote in the election. Ballots are due on Friday, June 2nd. Mr. O'Connor asked that any Class B tenants on the Board please complete a ballot before leaving the meeting.

Annual Meeting

Mr. O'Connor stated that:

- The Annual Meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 27th at noon.
- Omni Development has graciously donated space at 66 South Pearl Street for the meeting.
- The event will focus on the future of the office and Ms. Steffens has put together an impressive list of speakers.
- Ms. Steffens spoke with Carm Basile, and he is thrilled to be this year's James M. DiNapoli awardee.

Mr. O'Connor asked Ms. Steffens to provide details on the event and she noted that:

- The post-pandemic office market has been talked about a lot in recent years.
- There are still a lot of people who work from home, either fully, or on a hybrid schedule.
- The placer data shows us that about 77% of employees are back in the office in comparison to 2019, however, they only average 3.7 days per week in the office. That is an increase of 33% compared to last year at this time.
- Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays are when we see the most people in the office.
- The mayor has been pushing the state quite hard to bring all of their employees back full time.
- We have heard from some of our property owners that several office tenants are not renewing their leases and are moving out to places like Corporate Woods.
- We want to understand what the future of the office looks like, does our inventory match that, what should the collective we be doing and what is the BID's role in this.
- We have a great panel coming in that includes:
 - Larisa Ortiz from Streetsense. She's a national expert in real estate trends and she's worked on the Clinton Square DRI so she's familiar with the area.
 - Paul Levy, who is the grandfather of BIDs, works out of Philadelphia and has been in this line of work for over 30 years. He is the person that Mayor Jennings and Jim DiNapoli met with when considering whether to establish a BID in downtown Albany or not.
 - Eric Simonds from CBRE, will provide a local perspective for us and will tell us what they're seeing and what office users are asking for.
- The event will be a luncheon in a vacant office space.
- Electronic save the dates went out this week and invitations will go out next week.

- The event will likely go over budget due to it being different in nature than our previous annual meetings with it being a lunch meeting and with providing an honorarium to the panelists, but Staff is working on obtaining additional sponsorships to cover the excess.
- We are hoping to get a good and varied crowd in attendance.

Ms. Steffens added that Downtown restaurants and coffee shops are reporting that while their gross sales are up and close to where they were pre-pandemic, their profits are down due to overall cost increases and fewer patrons visiting on fewer days of the week.

TREASURER'S REPORT

First Quarter Financials

Mr. Countermine noted that:

- The first quarter financials are included in tonight's packet.
- As with most of the first quarters, there isn't a lot to report as most of the variances are timing related.
- The assessment revenue came in \$6,000 under what we anticipated, and Ms. Steffens is working with the City to identify why there is a discrepancy.
- Payroll and payroll related is being adjusted to move parts of the first payroll of the year that are for the final days of December 2022.
- Office Equipment includes April's payment and the cost of setting up an additional phone line for Molly.
- Clean & Safe is a timing issue. ABM bills are usually sent significantly late.
- Ms. Steffens is happy to answer any questions the Board may have regarding the financials.

Financial Requests

Mr. Countermine stated that the Budget & Finance Committee is recommending the following funding requests for approval:

- \$1,135 for Upside to address an issue with limited functionality that we're currently experiencing when creating pages and listings for businesses, (including attraction listings), and property pages on the website. In short, the update would give us the ability to add different content blocks to those pages, including the ability to embed videos, add side-by-side content and informative blue bubbles that highlight content.
- \$1,170 for the purchase of 12 trash receptacle liners.
- \$750 to commission Albany Center Gallery for community engagement for our murals at the Juneteenth event. This is an opportunity to meet with community members and learn from them what they would like the feeling of the newest mural to be. It would also include an art activity at the event.

Mr. Countermine calls for a motion to approve the above-mentioned funding requests at an amount not to exceed \$3,055 | Ms. Farrell motions | Ms. Edelin seconds | All approve.

Mr. Countermine added that our annual audit has begun and will be presented at the September Board meeting.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Governance

Ms. Jojo noted that the Governance Committee met to discuss the slate of officers for the 2023-2024 Executive Committee. The bylaws only allow for someone to be President of the Board for 2 years at a time and Mr. O'Connor is wrapping up his second year as President. Therefore, the Governance Committee proposes the following slate of officers:

- Elizabeth Young Jojo as President
- Lisa Reddy Farrell as Vice President
- Ken Countermine as Treasurer
- Neil McGreevy as Secretary

Mr. O'Connor calls for a motion to approve the above-mentioned slate of officers | Mr. Maddox motions | Mr. Ackley seconds | All approve.

Marketing

Mr. Ackley gave an update from the latest Marketing Committee meeting:

- The Committee discussed the draft advertising and product budget for the re-brand. Based on the feedback from that meeting, Ms. Hughes will be making adjustments to the budget.
- In the coming weeks, the Board will be invited to a branding meeting with Overit so they can provide feedback to them ahead of the launch.

Special Events

Mr. Dollard noted that the last two meetings of the Special events Committee have dealt with the Farmer's Market and discussing and approving vendors. The Committee agreed upon the following criteria:

- Products must be high quality.
- Vendors must be directly involved in making the products.
- Products should complement other products that are being sold at the market.
- Competition is good but saturation is bad.
- Products should be sold at a price point that is fair to shoppers and other vendors.
- We will prioritize vendors who are located within our district as well as Albany County.
- The vendor's business practice and image should align with the BID's and the market's values and rules.
- Vendors cannot change their line of products without the approval of the Committee and written permission from the BID.
- There will be no weapons sold, that includes fake or ornamental.

Mr. Dollard added that thus far the Committee has approved 5 farms, 8 prepared foods, 7 artist/makers and 2 non-profits, so in addition to the 4 sponsors, there will be a total of 26 booths. A vendor approval subcommittee has been established for any further applications that come in.

The Committee also discussed some potential new events for next year, including:

- A family event at the First Church parking lot.
- A community/maker market featuring vintage goods.
- Putt-putt pop-up events featuring mini golf and food trucks.
- A healthy kids day promoting healthy activities for kids and families.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ambassadors

Ms. Steffens gave an update on the ambassadors:

- They have been out on Fridays and Saturdays for the past three weekends.
- Rain does sometimes shorten the time that they're out.
- They can be seen wearing red shirts and khaki pants and badges that say, "I'm here to help".
- There are 6 ambassadors out on Fridays from 4-8pm, 6 on Saturdays from 10am-2pm and 6 on Saturdays from 2-6pm.
- Mr. Wilson works with Interfaith Partnership for the Homeless on the zones and venues where ambassadors are most needed and should be deployed based on events. We're continuously assessing the situation to figure out the best locations, days, and times for the ambassadors to be out.
- They pass out one-pagers that show what's open on the weekends to help them engage with visitors.
- Several businesses have generously offered to let them use restrooms and take breaks and the Hampton Inn kindly offered to let them store their personal belongings there while they work their shifts.

Recent & Upcoming Events

Ms. Steffens ran through our recent and upcoming events:

- The Farmer's Markets will be the 3rd Sunday in July, August, September, and October. Each one has a theme and activities and music during the market will be related to the theme. The first market coincides with the Punk Rock Flea Market at Empire Live so we will co-promote with them for that day. There will also be a voucher program for low-income households to give them \$25 towards purchasing food items.
- Next Saturday will be the first outdoor yoga event. It will run every Saturday in June, July, and August. The Hot Yoga spot is providing the instructors for those classes.
- The outdoor movie series is starting in June and will take place on the first Friday of the month during June, July, August, and September. There will be activities at each movie relating to the film that is being shown. The first movie is The Lion King and there will be African drummers playing, The last movie will be Akeelah and The Bee and we'll have both adult and kid spelling bees, some of the players from the Albany Patroons will host an activity when we play Space Jam and when we play the Iron Giant we have musicians who will play the score live while the movie shows with subtitles.
- We are assisting the African American Cultural Center with Juneteenth again this year as we have done in the past. It takes place on Saturday, June 17th in front of the South End Grocery.

With no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned at 5:23 PM.

Next Meeting

Wednesday, July 19, 2023, at 4:00 PM

21 Lodge St., Second Floor Conference Room