



DOWNTOWN ALBANY
Business Improvement District

**Downtown Albany Business Improvement District
Board of Directors' Meeting
May 18, 2022
21 Lodge St & Zoom**

ATTENDANCE:

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

ABSENT:

- David Sarraf
- Mohamed Hemmid
- Neil McGreevy
- Pamela Nichols
- Frank Zeoli
- Leyla Kiosse

STAFF PRESENT:

- Georgette Steffens
- Kate Medhus
- Rebecca Hughes (Zoom)
- Jason Bonafide
- Don Wilson

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Georgette Steffens
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Frank O'Connor, III
PRESIDENT

Elizabeth Young Jojo
VICE-PRESIDENT

Lisa Reddy Farrell
TREASURER

David Sarraf
SECRETARY

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

CONSENT AGENDA

Mr. O'Connor asks for objections to the Consent Agenda and hearing none adopts the Consent Agenda on behalf of the Board.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Mr. O'Connor reminded the Board that Annual Meeting will be on Wednesday, June 15th at 4pm on William Street and the Board meeting previously scheduled for that date and time has been moved to June 29th. He noted that voting for the Board Elections is still open until Friday, May 20th. He thanked the outgoing Board members, Tracy Metzger, Pam Nichols and David Sarraf, for their time and dedication over the last several years.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Restricted Funds Requests

Ms. Farrell noted that the Budget & Finance Committee heard and supports the funding requests which will be presented by the Marketing and Clean & Safe Committees later in the agenda.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Governance

Ms. Jojo announced the Governance Committee's recommendations for the 2022-2023 slate of officers for the Executive Committee:

- Frank O'Connor to remain as President
- Elizabeth Young Jojo to remain as Vice President
- Ken Countermine to become Treasurer
- Lisa Reddy Farrell to move to Secretary

Ms. Jojo calls for a motion to approve the Governance Committee's recommendations | Ms. Metzger motions | Ms. Edelin seconds | All approve.

Economic Development

Ms. Jojo presented the following updates:

- Quackenbush Square is currently under construction and will include a pedestrian entrance to the Quackenbush Garage from the Pump Station parking lot as well as the new hotel once that is finished.
- The Governor opened the Skyway and the BID staff has been asked to be involved in planning a kickoff event for some time in July.

- Ms. Steffens reviewed the Placer.ai online service that uses cell phone data to track location, intelligence and foot traffic. The possibilities of using the information provided for attraction and development Downtown are exciting.
- Ms. Steffens will hold a meeting for commercial property owners this Wednesday, May 25th to discuss trends in the office market and ways the BID can support our office property owners and tenants. There will be a similar meeting for restaurant and retail owners on June 2nd.

Clean & Safe

Ms. Hart noted that:

- The Committee had the second half of their walk through the District. The lighting was good, people were out and a few traffic light and crosswalk issues were discovered and will be addressed with the City. The Committee discussed that art on the street in crosswalks could be a good option as there has been research showing that cars do slow down for that.
- Mike Delano, one of the BID beat officers, reported that the murder on Grand and Madison was drug related and that it was a hit that had been put out. Unfortunately, he does not anticipate the drug deals in that area to get better anytime soon.

A brief discussion was held on how we plan to select artists to paint the abutments under 787 in the South End. Ms. Steffens confirmed that a call for artists will be put out and that the Capital Walls murals group will facilitate the process, but there will be a selection committee that will make the final decision.

Ms. Steffens noted that the BID had previously set aside \$7,000 for a mural project in the South End, but it is no longer needed for that location as the African American Cultural Center had one painted there instead. The Clean & Safe Committee identified the abutments under the Empire State Plaza ramp as a location for two murals to help make a connection between the Central Business District and the South End. The total cost of the murals on the abutments will be \$35,000 so the Committee would like to put the initial \$7,000 towards this project and is therefore requesting an additional \$28,000 for this project.

Marketing

Ms. Metzger noted that:

- The branding RFP has been released and responses are due back by the end of May. There have already been three firms who have expressed interest and asked follow-up questions.
- The Committee discussed the misconception of Downtown being unsafe. Crime that is often reported as happening in Downtown does not occur in our District. Ideas for increasing media outreach with positive ideas were talked about in the committee meeting.
- The lobby coffee talks in office buildings should be re-implemented.
- The Committee would like to hire a photographer to take lifestyle photos 3-4 times per months throughout the District to use on social media, the website and possibly in ad campaigns. The photos would show people walking Downtown, in parks, dining out, at events, etc. in all seasons. The BID has previously used Kiki Vassilakis and have been happy with her work so the Committee would like to hire her for this project. The cost for this would be \$5,250 for June to December. Additionally, the Committee would like for Kiki to do a second round of business photography like she has done in the past in order to capture any new businesses that have opened or ones that didn't opt to have photos taken the first time around. The cost for photos of 20 businesses is \$3,500.
- The other misconception the Committee discussed in their most recent meeting is the one that no one lives Downtown. The Live page on the BID's website is the third most visited page overall and the fourth most visited page in 2021. The Committee discussed sharing social media content from Downtown residents and asking resident ambassadors to take a more active role and having "bark rangers" which would be dog ambassadors for Downtown residents. Highlighting people in Downtown in the Digest and better signage and/or flags for apartment buildings were also discussed.

A brief discussion was held on how the lifestyle photos could be used, what permissions need to be involved and if the cost is reasonable. Mr. McGreevy confirmed that the price is very good.

Special Events

Ms. Steffens noted that Employee Appreciation Week has been successful so far and Staff would like to continue offering lunchtime music events once a week throughout July and August. The budget for this would be \$4200, (\$400 per musician for 2 hours of music). Staff has some ideas for musicians and DJs but are open to suggestions as well.

Mr. O'Connor calls for a motion to approve all funding requests in the amount of \$40,950 | Mr. Countermine motions | Ms. Jojo seconds | All approve.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

City COVID Funds

Ms. Steffens provided an update on the City's COVID ARPA fund applications:

- The BID has advanced to the next round on all 4 applications and has submitted an edited, second round of applications. We reduced the amount requested on 2 of the applications and the other 2 were left as they were.
- There is a meeting with the City on Friday to have an interview on the wayfinding and ambassador project.
- Staff should know by the end of May which applications will go forward and be presented to the Common Council for final approval and award.

Events and Updates

Ms. Steffens noted that:

- Employee Appreciation Week is underway and going well so far. Yesterday's weather was iffy and about 40 people showed up. Today's weather was great and about 100 people stopped by throughout the lunch hour. Tomorrow's event will be on Beaver Alley and Friday will be back in Tricentennial Park with e-scooter demos by CDTA and a DJ. Monday's event had to be re-scheduled due to the threat of tornados so this coming Monday we'll be at SUNY Plaza for a wellness day.
- The first round of the NCAA men's basketball tournament will be coming back to Albany March 17th to 19th. The City is considering moving the St. Patrick's Day parade to March 18th to capture some of that crowd. The second round of the women's tournament is slated to come the following year.
- Zachary's is closing due to one of the partners being sick and they are unable to keep up the second location.
- Steuben Street Market is closing and looking to either sell the business or rent out the space to a new tenant.

A discussion was held regarding crime in the District. Ms. Steffens reported that she received some statistics from the Albany Police Department and that there was an increase in burglaries, both to vehicles and buildings in the first quarter from 2021 to 2022. The APD has also informed Staff that the new bail reform laws have made it more difficult to respond to nonviolent crimes and aggressive panhandlers Downtown. Ms. Steffens is scheduling the Assistant District Attorney, the APD and Tiana from Joseph's House to come to a meeting and give us some more detailed information.

The meeting went into Executive Session at 5:23PM. The Board approved the addition of a new Marketing and Event Coordinator position during Executive Session. With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 5:38PM.

Next Meeting

Wednesday, June 29, 2022, at 4:00 PM

21 Lodge St., Second Floor Conference Room and Zoom