

ATTENDANCE:

Frank O'Connor, III  
Elizabeth Young Jojo  
Riley Ackley  
Leola Edelin  
Lena Hart  
Lucas Rogers  
Benn MacDonald  
Angelo Maddox  
Neil McGreevy  
Hon. Darius Shahinfar  
Josh Wainman

ABSENT:

Mohamed Hemmid  
Leyla Kiosse  
Ken Countermine  
Lisa Reddy Farrell  
Frank Zeoli

STAFF PRESENT:

Georgette Steffens  
Rebecca Hughes  
Jason Bonafide  
Don Wilson  
Jevan Dollard

ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES:

Matthew Peter, Albany  
Parking Authority

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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.

Mr. O'Connor called for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda | Mr. Shahinfar motions | Mr. Maddox seconds | All Approve.

Mr. O'Connor stated that many questions have been raised about parking during the last few Board meetings and that there has been interesting news lately regarding potential development projects that include the Albany Parking Authority. He noted that we have therefore invited Matthew Peter, Executive Director of the Albany Parking Authority, to tell us more about what they are seeing as it relates to parking in the District and to learn a little more about development they have recently completed or are currently exploring.

**ALBANY PARKING AUTHORITY**

Mr. Peter gave a presentation on current parking numbers and future projects:

- The parking meters are a telltale sign of how busy Downtown is.
  - During COVID restrictions, activity at the meters was down to 35-30% usage. Now they are only down by 6% from pre-pandemic numbers and have been consistent for two to three months.
- There are 3 garages available for monthly parkers.
  - Currently there are 2,218 parkers made up of office tenants, residential tenants and individuals. This is an 18% decline from 2019.
  - The numbers are based on 120% capacity (meaning the Parking Authority oversells by 20%).
  - Residents use spots more regularly. The number of daily parkers is going up. There is not a lot of room remaining in the garages.
  - The Quackenbush garage is now busier with event parkers than it ever was with monthly parkers.
- In all of 2019 there were 19,821 event parkers in all 3 garages. There are already 19,810 event parkers to date in 2022.
- Parking is primed for some really nice growth but is in a transition period. Even though it's improving, it is still in a temporary lull. Parking numbers are akin to 2017/2018 profit-wise. These are true recovery numbers.
- A feasibility study is being conducted with the Transit Center and CDTA.
  - The property is under contract, and nothing can be seen or done with it until it officially changes into the new owner's hands.
  - The study will appear on the Parking Authority's website.
- A study is being done on the Riverfront garage.
  - It was built in 1984 and is technically past its useful life. It only gets more expensive to maintain.
  - The garage connects Maiden Lane, Steuben Alley and Columbia St. It also provides 3 connections to the waterfront via the Skyway, Jennings Landing and the SUNY Admin Building.
- The Parking Authority plans to continue with more murals and lighting projects.

A discussion was held regarding the Parking Initiative Program. Mr. Peter confirmed that the program has been discontinued for the past 5 years because it created a deficit and too many various pricing structures. Anyone who has a PIP will see it increase by \$2-3 per year until it meets the regular cost, which was in fact lowered for everyone.

Mr. Peter added that:

- The meters subsidize the garages.
- The Parking Authority does not receive any money from parking tickets. That all goes to the City.
- The Quackenbush lot offers a discounted retail employee rate of \$55 per month.
- APA is working on a way for business owners to be able to easily pay for their customers' metered parking.
- They are working on removing the lockout period on the parking app.

A brief discussion was held on reserving parking spots on the street and Mr. Peter explained that it can be done on one-time basis, for a fee, through Bill Trudeau at the City. In instances like that, no parking signs will be hung, but the Parking Authority will only ticket vehicles if called by the person who reserved the spots.

A discussion was held regarding the possibility of a retail parking deal on the other, (southern), side of Downtown and Ms. Steffens agreed to reach out to Capitalize Albany to ask if they'd be willing to open some spots in their lots for small businesses.

Mr. Peter stated that:

- The Parking Authority does price checks periodically by visiting other garages and lots to ensure their rates are comparable.
- There have been issues with towing in Albany as the tow fee here is the lowest and therefore tow companies do not prioritize Albany and often come here last.
- It has been shown time and time again that by adding a mural or greenspace, you can gain an extra block and a half of comfort for parkers to walk.

A brief discussion was held about how dark the area is around the Green Hudson Garage and Mr. Peter noted that the APA is investing \$200,000 in security cameras and is focusing on lighting in the Green/Hudson/Beaver area. They are also looking into fixing the entrance to that garage on Hudson.

Mr. Peter left the meeting at 4:43 PM.

#### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Mr. O'Connor thanked Mr. Bonafide for helping the BID to expand the events that have attracted thousands of people to Downtown over the past five years. He noted that Mr. Bonafide is moving out of events and into doing PR work at Ed Lewi & Associates. There will be a sendoff for Jason on Friday from 2-4pm at The Hollow and all are invited.

Mr. O'Connor added that Mr. Dollard has been promoted to Special Events Manager. Jevan's passion and experience in creating and implementing events makes him a great fit for the role. This means that the BID is looking for a new Marketing & Special Events Coordinator. Ms. Medhus sent out the job description and has asked that if any Board members know someone that might be a good fit for that role, please ask them to send their resumes to her.

#### **State of the Office Market**

Mr. O'Connor noted that:

- While the impact of COVID was not immediately felt in the office market, we are now starting to see office tenants make decisions on their leases, both in size and location, that will have a real impact on Downtown over the next 6-18 months.
- Ms. Steffens sent out a survey to property owners of the larger office buildings in the District. We invited 14 of the larger office buildings and their owners to respond. To date we have received 5 responses and it shows an interesting picture of what the office market could look like in the near future.

Ms. Steffens will be meeting with the Mayor, Capitalize Albany and the Albany Parking Authority next week to discuss some retention and attraction strategies.

Ms. Steffens shared some statistics and presented the findings of the office building survey:

- Staff have been made aware of some office tenants who are looking or planning to move out of the District.
- We did not see the mass exodus we were expecting in 2021. It appears that office tenants waited to see what COVID recovery and return to work looked like and are now re-evaluating their leases.
- The national average of people back to work in the office is 44% and in Downtown we are at 63%.
- Hybrid schedules mean that only 50% of employees are here on any given day. That translates into roughly 9,000 employees not in Downtown each day.
- Statistics are showing an uptick in people in Downtown this month over this same time last year. Employees are up 32% and visitors are up 43%.
- The CBRE Marketview for the second quarter of 2022 shows that total vacancies are down due to residential conversions. Class A space currently occupies 22% of the total office market. Office vacancies in Class A space have increased 5% from last year and 4% from 2020. Asking rates per square foot are now higher.
- The Omni properties are not currently included in the 5 survey responses received. We received 3 Class A and 2 Class B property responses.
- From those responses we learned there is a 30% vacancy rate and a total of 48 tenants within those 5 buildings. 63% have leases expiring soon and only 9% have re-committed to staying in Downtown. 9% are still considering all their options and 6% have decided to move out of Downtown. We are also seeing some subleasing happening in the District.
- The tenants who are staying have given the following reasons for doing so:
  - Dynamic office environment
  - Proximity to entertainment
  - Attraction to revitalization
- The tenants who are moving stated the following reasons:
  - COVID
  - Hybrid schedules and/or working from home
  - They have no reason to be in Downtown

Ms. Steffens added that other concerns for being in Downtown have to do with crime and safety. She then shared statistics from our police beat which is comprised not only of Downtown, but also includes Mansion Hill and Lincoln Park:

- Robbery and aggravated assaults are down.
- Burglary, larceny and vehicle theft are up.
- Murder and rape have stayed about the same.

A brief discussion was held regarding restaurants being open for lunch on weekends and the need for expanded hours.

## **TREASURER'S REPORT**

### **Funding Requests**

Ms. Steffens noted there will be a Shop and Savor event running for two weeks following Small Business Saturday where people can submit receipts for purchases they have made in Downtown and be entered to win up to \$500 worth of prizes. Staff would like to order custom Downtown ornaments that will be hidden around Downtown and whoever finds the ornament gets to keep it. It is still being decided what exactly will be printed on the ornaments, but Staff are anticipating the cost to be \$1,500 to run that for two weeks. That still leaves \$26,000 in Restricted funds.

Mr. O'Connor asked for a motion to approve the purchase of ornaments in an amount not to exceed \$1,500 | Mr. Shahinfar motions | Ms. Edelin seconds | All approve.

### 2023 Property Assessments

Ms. Steffens noted that she has received the 2023 property assessment values from the City and stated that:

- There have been increases in values, mostly from residential conversions, but also properties that were owned by the state or nonprofits that were purchased by private entities and are now on the tax rolls. There were several decreases in values in all other categories.
- The total result was a decrease in total assessed value for the District of \$3.6 million.
- This results in a decrease of slightly over \$10,000 to our operating budget if we keep the special assessment rate the same.
- The SCO list includes 98 Columbia, 74 State, (the Fairfield Inn), 126 State and 144 State (the Renaissance). This shows us what we might possibly have to pay back, but that usually will apply going forward. We just need to be aware of our liability.

### COMMITTEE REPORTS

#### Marketing

Mr. Ackley shared some updates from the Marketing Committee:

- The new website has launched and includes new features and search abilities. Staff has asked business owners to check the website and make sure that their information is listed correctly.
- We are looking to put together a re-branding committee to help conduct meetings and interviews. That should be established by the end of February. Please let Ms. Hughes know if you're interested in sitting on that committee.
- The Committee continues to address perceptions of Downtown. The Digest will feature residents to negate the "no one lives here" perception. A video has been made regarding parking in Downtown as well as a video on parks and green spaces. Those have gotten 18,000 views thus far. Kiki's photos showing life in Downtown will hopefully help people to feel that Downtown is a safe place to be.
- Parking info is now front and center on the new website.
- The Committee has heard that businesses are feeling disconnected from residents, so they are looking into having the Neighborhood Association collaborate on something with the businesses.
- They are working to develop a media kit for 2023 which will include content blocks and ad blocks that will be for sale.

A brief discussion was held on businesses offering discounts to Downtown residents and it was agreed that the Committee would look into how Redburn's Downtown living program has been going and if it might be something we should consider implementing.

#### Clean and Safe

Ms. Hart shared an update from the Clean and Safe Committee:

- Last month homelessness was the main topic of discussion. Liberty Park has been cleared out, but there is still a presence at the Greyhound station.
- People are using the bistro sets in Liberty Park again.
- Lieutenant Dan is the new supervisor for our beat officers in Downtown.
- Lighting for the Broadway corridor is a priority and hopefully \$400,000 in grant funds awarded will be going towards that.
- The quality of life in Downtown looks promising.

Ms. Steffens added that the APD has informed us that the parks in Downtown are supposed to close by 10pm and the police will patrol those to make sure people are not camping out there. The Greyhound building has also been added as a property of interest and will get extra attention from the police as well.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

**Recent and Upcoming Events**

Ms. Steffens provided an update on recent and upcoming events in Downtown:

- Hounds of Halloween was very successful. Over 200 dogs and 500 people attended the event. This year we added a yappy hour where bars and restaurants with patios offered extra specials. The event received lots of new coverage. Staff would love to expand this event and maybe tie it in to Discover Albany's big Halloween event that they'll be having next year.
- Small Business Saturday is coming up the Saturday after Thanksgiving and includes the Shop and Savor event previously mentioned.
- The Hot Chocolate Stroll is scheduled for December 10<sup>th</sup>. Last year it sold out at 300 tickets. Staff hopes to grow this event more each year. This year the Kenmore Ballroom will host the registration table and will have a holiday market with vendors and entertainment at the same time.

Ms. Steffens added that our next meeting will be focused on the 2023 Budget that will need to be approved.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 5:45 PM.

**Next Meeting**

**Wednesday, November 30<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 PM**

**21 Lodge St., Second Floor Conference Room**