

ATTENDANCE:

Elizabeth Young Jojo  
Lisa Reddy Farrell  
Ken Countermine  
Leola Edelin  
Lena Hart  
Leyla Kiosse  
Angelo Maddox  
Josh Wainman  
Lucas Rogers (Zoom)

ABSENT:

Riley Ackley  
Mohamed Hemmid  
Benn MacDonald  
Neil McGreevy  
Frank Zeoli  
Hon. Darius Shahinfar  
Frank O'Connor, III

STAFF PRESENT:

Georgette Steffens  
Rebecca Hughes  
Don Wilson  
Jevan Dollard  
Molly Eadie

ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES:

Paul Fahey, Overit Media  
Robert Palmerino, CPA

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

Georgette Steffens  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Elizabeth Young Jojo  
PRESIDENT

Lisa Reddy Farrell  
VICE-PRESIDENT

Ken Countermine  
TREASURER

Neil McGreevy  
SECRETARY

**The meeting was called to order by Board President Elizabeth Young Jojo at 4:06 PM.**

AUDIT

Ms. Jojo introduced Bob Palermino, CPA, to review the 2022 audit report:

- Mr. Palmerino stated that his opinion, as noted in the Independent Auditor's Report, is that the financial statements are fairly presented in all material respects in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.
- There were no discrepancies that concerned Mr. Palmerino.
- Due to a change in accounting standards, there was a change in the way rent is presented in the financial statements. Rather than showing rent as an expense, the right of use of the office is now shown as an asset and the rent is shown as a liability.
- In the statement of cash flow shows \$262,784 generated in 2022 and \$197,634 used in 2021. This is explained by a National Grid grant received in 2022, which was completed in 2021.
- While the BID adopted another change in accounting standards regarding how in-kind donations are represented, this adoption did not have a material effect on the financial statements.
- In a liquidity analysis, the total available funds for general expenditures were consistent between 2021 and 2022. While these amounts may appear low, there are Board designated funds for future operating expenses that can be undesignated at any time.
- In evaluating the management of the organization, Mr. Palmerino did not find any significant difficulties or material weaknesses.

Ms. Jojo calls for a motion to adopt the audit as presented | Mr. Maddox motions | Ms. Edelin seconds | All approve.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Jojo calls for a motion to approve the July 2023 meeting Minutes | Ms. Farrell motions | Mr. Countermine seconds | All approve.

BRANDING

Ms. Hughes presented on the BID's rebranding progress:

- The new branding will be rolled out in in October, specifically at the Albany County Farmers Market on October 15 and Hounds of Halloween on October 22, with ongoing efforts during the week in between.
- Branded items for giveaways have been ordered and promotional videos are in the works.
- Ms. Hughes reported she had gathered feedback on the branding from approximately 50 people at pop-up residential events and the farmers market, and the response has been overwhelmingly positive.

Ms. Hughes turned the presentation over to Mr. Fahey of Overit Media, our consultant on the rebrand:

- Mr. Fahey went over the process that resulted in the final branding design including a SWOT analysis, meetings with the marketing committee, reviewing historical materials used by the BID, and interviews with residents and stakeholders.
- Mr. Fahey explained the final branding concept was based on the concept of Downtown as the core of the City of Albany as well as the Capital Region as a whole. The final designs include a color palette based on colors of tulips, with a range of logo designs to be used in various contexts.
- Ms. Hughes said she is building a landing page for the website that will give a deeper understanding of why Downtown is the “core,” as well as a tag for branded items like shirts and tote bags.

A brief discussion was held wherein Board members gave their feedback on the branding designs. The question was asked if the tulips will make people think of Washington Park and Lark Street. It was suggested as part of the brand the BID could plant more tulips in the District. The quest was asked about having two logos and staff stated the new branding will be used for community-focused events, while the current BID logo will continue to be used for organizational items, like the Annual Report.

Ms. Hughes added that the BID is developing a brand ambassador program, in which residents and visitors who are already excited about Downtown will receive branded items to keep and give away as well as post on social media promoting Downtown and the new brand throughout the year.

## **PRESIDENT’S REPORT**

### **Staffing**

Ms. Jojo announced that after four and a half years, Ms. Medhus has left her position as the BID’s Program Coordinator for a position in Special Events at OGS, and that Ms. Steffens would like to take some time to determine the needs of the BID and better define the job duties and skill set before beginning the hiring process, with the plan to post the job description in December and have a new hire start work in January.

## **TREASURER’S REPORT**

### **Mid-Year Financials**

Mr. Countermine reported that we are running roughly \$50,000 under budget, but some of that is due to timing of when projects and initiatives will hit this year, and that number will decrease in the third quarter.

Ms. Steffens explained variances in the mid-year financials:

- MVP paid the BID for Albany County Farmers Market marketing costs ahead of time, rather than reimbursing later in the year as expected.
- There is a discrepancy between the anticipated amount the BID receives from the City, which can differ from the actual amount received, typically due to a property’s assessment settling at the last moment. This amount is typically under \$3,000, but this year is approximately \$6,500, and the BID is still working with the City to understand the reason for this variance.
- There is an overage variance on office equipment and telephones. She explained the BID planned to join Capitalize Albany’s internet plan to save costs, but due to a number of reasons this did not come to fruition and those planned cost savings were not realized, however this will be offset by other cost savings in the budget.
- An unspent \$20,000 in the Clean & Safe budget was due to ABM’s delay in invoicing the BID, and that variance would decrease once the BID pays the bill for June.
- In the Marketing budget, there is a lack of spending shown due to the October brand launch, which was originally planned for June.
- There are unspent funds in the visual improvements budget because the contracted flower grower sometimes requires a deposit for growing flowers, but this year did not ask for a deposit.
- There are some restricted initiative funds and \$4,000 in non-assessment projects, both of which the Board has approved.
- There are also unspent grant funds due to a change in schedule of the fabrication and installation of the wayfinding project that will be used in the second half of the year.

- Ms. Steffens stated she expects to be under budget at the end of the year but close to budget.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

#### **Clean & Safe Committee**

Ms. Hart reported that the working hours of the Ambassador Program have been amended according to the District's needs. They will not be out Monday through Friday at lunchtime and for specific events. Ms. Hart also reported that the BID held a de-escalation workshop with the Albany Police Department at the Renaissance Hotel, which was well attended. Ms. Hart stated the mural planned for South Pearl Street is on hold due to the Department of Transportation's decision to develop a policy and standardized approval process for murals on their structures.

A discussion was held on the bus station, specifically safety concerns at the site, including the lack of shelter for riders, lighting and sidewalks, and condition of the surrounding infrastructure, among other issues, as well as the appearance of that area, located at one of Downtown's gateways.

Ms. Steffens reported that the Mayor announced a quality-of-life effort which has increased the police presence in a portion of Downtown. She stressed the importance of reporting safety issues on SeeClickFix, which informs the City's allocation of resources. Ms. Steffens also reported that the County has increased the number of staff working in the Mental Health Court, and that the City will be provided \$300,000 a year for the next three years for social services and treatment provided on the street.

Ms. Hart reported that the DA's office reached out to her concerning a No Trespassing program, though she did not yet have specific information about it.

Ms. Edelin asked if there were plans to reschedule a second de-escalation training which was cancelled because the officer leading the workshop was injured. Mr. Wilson confirmed that the BID does plan to hold another training, but did not yet have a date as the officer is on medical leave.

### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Ms. Steffens also reported that the stoplight at the intersection of North Pearl and Sheridan has been turned. This was a top request of Downtown residents for pedestrian safety.

A discussion was held on the topic of homelessness, disruptive individuals, and individuals with mental health issues and potential initiatives for the BID to explore.

### **Events**

Ms. Steffens commended Mr. Dollard for his work on this year's events:

- State Street Yoga had 491 unique registrants this year, compared to 120 in 2022.
- Ms. Steffens also discussed the success of the Albany County Farmers Market, which is completely full with vendors, as well as the Farmers Market Dollars program. Plans for a weekly or bi-weekly schedule are being discussed for next year.
- PearlPalooza and YogaPalooza was a success, with vendors pleased at their sales despite a slightly smaller turnout from last year.

### **News & Updates**

Ms. Steffens gave updates and news from the District:

- City Beer Hall has rebranded their second floor as Charlie's Loft, and will soon announce plans for their basement level bar.
- Alias Coffee is now open.
- Ama Cocina has reopened.



**Downtown Albany Business Improvement District  
Board of Directors Meeting  
September 20, 2023  
21 Lodge St and Zoom**

- There are conflicting reports on the status of Jack's Oyster House.
- Several new businesses have opened in the Coliseum.
- A new pizza shop will be opening on Madison Avenue.
- Elif's Kitchen is opening on N Pearl Street.

Ms. Jojo spoke of the plans for a culinary school with a restaurant component at 55 Columbia Street.

With no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned at 6:44 PM.

**Next Meeting**

**Wednesday, October 25, 2023, at 4:00 PM  
21 Lodge St., Second Floor Conference Room**