



DOWNTOWN ALBANY
Business Improvement District

**Downtown Albany Business Improvement District
Board of Directors' Meeting
February 2, 2022
Zoom**

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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

ATTENDANCE:
Frank O'Connor, III
Elizabeth Young Jojo
Lisa Reddy Farrell
David Sarraf
Riley Ackley
Leola Edelin
Lena Hart
Leyla Kiosse
Tracy Metzger
Lucas Rogers
Hon. Darius Shahinfar
Frank Zeoli

ABSENT:
Ken Countermine
Mohamed Hemmid
Angelo Maddox
Pamela Nichols
Neil McGreevy

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

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 announced that the Annual Meeting is currently scheduled for Wednesday, May 18th from 4-6PM on the newly completed Williams Street. A ribbon cutting and lunch event will be held midday. Nominations are needed for recipients for the Jim DiNapoli award. Mr. O'Connor invited the Board to make recommendations over the next two weeks so that the Board can vote on the recipient at the next meeting.

Ms. Steffens agreed to email the criteria for the Jim DiNapoli award as well as the list of past recipients to the Board.

Agreement with the City

Mr. O'Connor noted that Ms. Steffens and the Directors of the other two BIDs in the City have been meeting to update the Agreement for supplemental services with the City and the three District Management Associations to operate the BIDs. It has been a long time since it was last updated so it's quite an undertaking. The New York State law that allows for the creation of BIDs defines the role of the DMA and the City. It outlines how to create a BID and the ways a BID would be dissolved as well as ways BID assessment funds can be used. The group is using the state statute to revise the contract. Ms. Steffens is aiming to have a draft by the end of March. Mr. O'Connor thanked Mr. Shahinfar for his assistance with the BIDs and Corporation Counsel in fairly representing both sides and educating people on the role of and relationship with the BIDs. It has been and will continue to be extremely helpful in this process.

BID Committees

Mr. O'Connor reported that the main focus of Staff this month has been creating the new committees based on the Strategic Plan. The Board will hear from each committee later in the meeting.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Ms. Farrell noted that:

- There is not much to report as we just wrapped up the year.
- 1099s were completed and sent out this week.

- Ms. Steffens and Ms. Medhus are working with CFO For Hire, now BST, to close out the financial year. We don't anticipate it to be much different than what was shown at the last Board meeting as part of the 2022 Budget spreadsheet.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Clean & Safe

Ms. Hart noted that:

- The Clean & Safe Committee discussed the initiatives the BID has done in the past and how successful they were.
- The committee is identifying which gateways into Downtown to focus on for a beautification project. Ms. Steffens encouraged committee members to go out and take photos of areas that have potential to be gateways or green spaces.
- A discussion was held on the parcel thief plaguing the area and Ms. Hart noted that the Albany Police Department has been very helpful. Mr. Wilson has reached out to all property managers to notify them of the problem as well.
- The next meeting will focus on specific, targeted improvements that can be made.

Marketing

Ms. Metzger noted that:

- The first meeting was full of healthy discussion and there is a lot of talent serving on the committee.
- Discussion included future advertising avenues, particularly some avenues that haven't been explored in quite some time.
- The use of American Rescue Plan Act funding for attracting commercial tenants in partnership with Capitalize Albany was the focus of much discussion.
- The committee was tasked with providing a list of perceptions that are common for Downtown so that they can work on overcoming those through a marketing campaign.
- Some committee members will participate in the RFP review for the Downtown re-branding and will also serve on a selection committee for choosing the branding firm.

Ms. Hughes then presented the new BID website and e-newsletter and showed comparisons of the old and new versions:

- The new site is more engaging with more whitespace, a cleaner look, is more balanced and easier to navigate.
- Upside Collective, who is based in Downtown, has been working with us to create the new site.
- Downtown Works and the Downtown Albany Gift Card are very clearly called out on this new website homepage.
- The new site has more visual representation using things like images and tiles as opposed to just text.
- The search functionality on the new site is much more advanced with filters being an option when people are searching for residential, commercial or office space.
- Commercial and residential spaces will be listed in both numeric order for addresses and alphabetic order for street names.
- The e-newsletter was updated as well. It will follow the same format as our new website and will also be visually focused.

Economic Development

Ms. Jojo noted that:

- The committee has some heavy hitters, and everyone is excited about the potential impact they will have on the Downtown landscape.

- During the first meeting the committee reviewed the Strategic Plan, went through examples of public infrastructure investments the BID has made and discussed the tasks the Board has set forth.
- Representatives from City Planning discussed the Maiden Lane project and the road project on Clinton Ave from Broadway to Hawk. The Maiden Lane bid came in over budget and they are now value engineering the project and will decide on how to proceed. Funding for the Clinton Ave road work has been received through the DRI program and the project is currently out to bid for construction.
- Representatives from the Albany Parking Authority reported they are going out to bid for pedestrian improvements to Quackenbush Square in the next few weeks. Funding for this project is through the DRI program as well.
- Representatives from Capitalize Albany provided an overview of the Clinton Market Collective which is out to bid for construction now. Ms. Steffens shared some of the design images.
- Committee members were asked to think about ways the BID can come along side some of the current investments that are being made, as well as ideas for areas that need some TLC or new projects to consider as potential investments.
- The committee will meet again during the first week of March.

Special Events

Ms. Kiosse noted that:

- The committee reviewed the proposed 2022 event schedule as well as the tentative schedule for the City of Albany events.
- Ms. Steffens shared information on Capitalize Albany's Amplify Albany grant. The grant is designed to provide funding to non-profits, businesses and other organizations that will create and execute new events or to provide a significant expansion for existing events. These grants can be a resource for both BID events and events established by BID Stakeholders.
- One main objective of the committee will be to establish more recurring events in Downtown. The group began discussing the feasibility of a Downtown Sunday farmers market. Next steps will include further discussions with MVP Arena and market managers for the Troy Waterfront Farmers Market.
- Other initial ideas for recurring events include the expansion of 1st Friday and a flea market event. Staff will look into grant and funding options that could help make those possible.
- The committee also discussed the important role of public art and placemaking projects in Downtown. The next meeting will focus on ideas for the BID's 2022 placemaking program.

A brief discussion was held about how all ideas should be shared across all committees seeing as how the committees have members who are not on the Board of Directors and there is much overlap in ideas and initiatives between the committees. It was agreed that going forward each committee chair will be intentional with sharing what they have heard during this portion of the Board meetings.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ms. Steffens noted that:

- The City's COVID recovery grant applications are out now with the first phase being due on March 1st. The BID is going to be partnering on 4 different applications.
 - Albany Center Gallery will take the lead on a program to expand 1st Friday. Other partners include Lark Street, the African American Cultural Center, Etrice Gallery, Grand Street Arts and Albany Barn. They're looking to re-brand it and bring back the big draw it used to have.
 - We will serve as the lead agency and are partnering with Capitalize Albany on an Office Attraction and Retention program.
 - The third is a wayfinding and ambassador program where we are the lead agency in partnership with the Albany Parking Authority and Interfaith Partnership for the Homeless. The idea is to

provide a comprehensive signage program as well as ambassadors Thursday through Sunday to help direct people around Downtown and help them feel safe.

- The final one is a Small Business Grant program in conjunction with The Small Business Development Center at SUNY Albany. Central BID, the Arbor Hill Improvement Corporation and the Community Loan Fund are other partners. Small businesses, particularly restaurants, are still struggling and this would give business owners the opportunity to meet with the SBDC and learn where their investments are best made for longevity and possible growth. Central BID is the lead on this one.
- Staff ran another BOGO gift card program during the holidays. 2,731 gift cards have been sold since we launched the program in March of 2021. \$133,472 have been sold with \$60,000 of that being a BID match for the bonus cards. 1,878 gift cards worth about \$87,000 have been redeemed. According to Yiftee there is an average overspend of 31% when people redeem gift cards so this would equate to about \$115,000 spent in Downtown.
- We offered two rounds of a free ride home program during both Thanksgiving weekend and the last two weeks of December using the DeCrescente funds leftover from the Split the Bill initiative. Over 200 rides were given across the two offerings.
- The Hot Chocolate Stroll was a success with 300 tickets selling out before the event. Staff believes this could be another signature event.

Ms. Metzger added that she will be opening a thrift store at 412 Broadway.. The Vanderheyden home will own and operate the store and they are currently accepting donations of clothing and small household goods.

Ms. Jojo added that Redburn closed on 66 State Street. The plan is to have 27 apartments with the 10,000 square foot first floor accepting retail and/or office tenants. There is a basement space as well. They anticipate the building to be finished by the end of 2022.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 5:05PM.

Next Meeting

Wednesday, March 9, 2022 at 4:00 PM

Zoom