



**DOWNTOWN ALBANY**  
Business Improvement District

**Downtown Albany Business Improvement District  
Board of Directors' Meeting  
May 12, 2021  
Zoom**

21 Lodge Street  
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**Georgette Steffens**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**Daniel Fariello**  
PRESIDENT

**Frank O'Connor, III**  
VICE-PRESIDENT

**Elizabeth Young Jojo**  
TREASURER

**David Sarraf**  
SECRETARY

ATTENDANCE:  
Daniel Fariello  
Frank O'Connor, III  
Elizabeth Young Jojo  
David Sarraf  
Riley Ackley  
Lisa Reddy Farrell  
Lena Hart  
Angelo Maddox  
Tracy Metzger  
Lucas Rogers  
Hon. Darius Shahinfar  
Frank Zeoli

ABSENT:  
Leola Edelin  
Mohamed Hemmid  
Pamela Nichols  
Chris Pratt  
Tyler Wrightson

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

The meeting was called to order by Board President Daniel Fariello at 3:04 PM.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Fariello calls for a motion to approve the Minutes from the April 14, 2021 meeting | Mr. Shahinfar motions | Ms. Farrell seconds | All approve.

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

**Employee Handbook**

Mr. Fariello noted that Ms. Medhus emailed the revised Employee Handbook to the Board. It has not been updated since 2010. Ms. Steffens worked with both Pinnacle HR and an HR attorney at Gleason, Dunn, Walsh, and O'Shea on what was presented at the meeting for approval. Most of the updates bring the BID into compliance with recent state mandates. There are four changes of note:

- Allowing staff to carry over up to 20 sick days maximum instead of the previous "use it or lose it" policy.
- Deletion of our previous supplemental paid sick leave now that we allow for sick time to carry over and have included NYS Paid Family Leave.
- Staff can earn a third week of vacation after four years of employment instead of five years and to earn a fourth year after eight years of employment instead of at ten years.
- Extension of the Emergency COVID-19 Paid Sick Leave until September 30, 2021.

The Executive Committee reviewed the revised Employee Handbook and is recommending what has been presented today for adoption.

Mr. Fariello called for a motion to adopt the updated Employee Handbook | Ms. Farrell motions | Ms. Jojo seconds | All approve.

**Board Elections**

Mr. Fariello updated the Board on the upcoming Board Elections:

- Even though the Annual Meeting will most likely be a hybrid of in-person and virtual due to COVID and state restrictions, we want to give every member the opportunity to vote in the elections. With that in mind, the election process will be held separately from the Annual Meeting, similar to last year.
- The timeline is as follows:
  - A call for nominations will be sent out on May 17<sup>th</sup>.
  - Interviews with nominees will be held the week of May 31<sup>st</sup>.

- Nominees selected by the Governance Committee will be announced on June 16<sup>th</sup>.
- Anyone interested in petitioning to be added to the ballot must do so by June 25<sup>th</sup>.
- Voting will begin on June 29<sup>th</sup>.
- Results will be announced on July 19<sup>th</sup>.
- There are 3 Class A Property Owner and 2 Class B Commercial Tenant positions open.
- Frank O'Connor and Lena Hart are up for renewal.
- The Annual Meeting will take place towards the end of July at what will be the newly completed Williams Street Project.

### **Consent Agenda**

Mr. Fariello discussed the possibility of adopting a consent agenda:

- Moving forward the Executive Committee recommends adopting a consent agenda for all future meetings.
- Ms. Medhus previously sent out a document outlining how a consent agenda works.
- The consent agenda would group the routine, procedural, informational, and self-explanatory non-controversial items typically found in an agenda like- minutes, financials, the employee handbook, committee or staff reports, etc. These items are emailed out the Board about a week in advance for their review and then presented to the Board at the meeting in a single motion for an up or down vote.
- Consent agendas are often used by nonprofits and helps streamline meetings and will allow us to have the focus to be more on substantive, strategic issues.

Ms. Steffens added that she would put together a list of what can and cannot be included in the consent agenda and she mentioned that it is possible to pull things out for further discussion as well.

### **TREASURER'S REPORT**

#### **First Quarter Financials**

Ms. Jojo noted that there is nothing substantial to report in the first quarter. Most variances are due to timing issues and overall, the BID is under budget if you remove the restricted and unrestricted initiative expenses since those come from our reserves.

#### **Financial Requests**

Ms. Jojo presented the following financial request to the Board for a new website:

- The BID's website is 6 years old. Staff has identified the need for additional functionality such as search options for apartments- pet friendly, number of bedrooms, parking, etc. and the same with retail or commercial spaces. Staff spoke with the current website vendor and based on the amount of changes that need to be made the vendor recommended, given the age of the current site, that it would be more cost effective to redo the website rather than pay \$15,000 for the changes now and then completely redo the site in two years.
- Staff released an RFP and received 14 proposals. Ms. Steffens and Ms. Hughes reviewed, scored, and narrowed the proposals down to 5 for the Website Committee to review.
- The Website Committee included Mr. Bonafide, Mr. Ackley, Ms. Reddy Farrell, Ms. Jojo, Ms. Hughes and Ms. Steffens.
- Based on score, (91.5 out of 100), and level of services included in the fee, (\$35,800 plus \$50 per month for hosting), the Website Committee is recommending Upside Collective, a BID business, to receive this contract.
- The second highest scores were tied at 78 out of 100 and were higher in both design/development and hosting fees.



A brief discussion was held regarding how several Board members would like to see both the original RFP and the recommended proposal and Ms. Steffens agreed to distribute those to the entire Board after the meeting.

Ms. Jojo added that this summer Staff is focusing on outdoor events to allow for people to feel more comfortable and be able to space out 6 feet or more. She then outlined an additional funding request:

- The BID's free outdoor movies will be moved to the lawn at the SUNY D&H building. They will run for 6 weeks with two additional weeks booked for rain dates on Fridays in June and July. The location change and the additional weeks of staffing will cost \$4,000.
- The BID will also be hosting a yoga series on Saturdays in July and August also at SUNY. Staff was able to negotiate a better rate to use their lawn, so no additional funds are needed for this event.

Ms. Jojo noted that the total request from Restricted Funds is \$39,800 which would leave us with approximately \$150,000 left in Restricted Funds. The Budget & Finance Committee has already reviewed these requests and is recommending them to the full Board for approval.

Mr. Fariello calls for a motion to spend \$4,000 from the Restricted Funds for the outdoor movies at SUNY | Ms. Metzger motion s | Mr. Zeoli seconds | All Approve.

The Board agreed to vote on the website contract after reviewing the RFP and proposal.

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

### **Event Updates**

Ms. Steffens updated the Board on the following upcoming events:

- The Bites, Camera, Action movie series will most likely start in mid-June as Staff is still working on obtaining licensing to show the movies.
- As mentioned earlier, yoga will take place in July and August and that will coincide with Fort Orange General Stores Saturday sidewalk sales.
- SUNY is interested in doing some type of welcome back event in September and we may partner with them to provide some lunchtime yoga classes.
- We agreed to commit money to sponsor the Split the Bill event which will take place on Tuesday, May 18<sup>th</sup>, (518 Day). Table Hopping will run something the Sunday before and then we will have a press event the day before on Monday.
- Staff pushed back the newest round of Downtown Albany bonus dollars so that people cannot use bonus gift cards to pay for their Split the Bill checks that they will be reimbursed for. During the last round of this promotion the bonus gift cards sold out in one week. This time we will limit the bonus dollars to one per purchaser to stretch the program's reach. The promotion begins on May 24<sup>th</sup> and the bonus dollars will be good until July 31<sup>st</sup>.
- We are partnering with the African American Cultural Community Center for their Juneteenth celebration. This year Juneteenth is on a Saturday, and it is the first time it is officially a state holiday. Staff is working out the details with them to see what capacity we will partner in to make sure that all state COVID guidelines are followed.

A brief discussion was held regarding people arriving early for Saturday yoga and the possibility of having some vendors set up along Broadway to provide things like coffee, doughnuts, etc. for the people coming to the yoga classes. Ms. Steffens agreed to reach out to some of the coffee shops and related businesses to see if they would be interested in this and added that Staff is already looking into something similar for the Friday night movies.

### **Districtwide Updates**

Ms. Steffens presented the following updates from throughout the District:

- Food Near Me opened next to The Hollow on N Pearl St. They are a convenience store with some household items and groceries as well as serving breakfast and lunch sandwiches.
- Downtown Studio Fit has unfortunately closed.
- 90 State Street is not renewing leases for their commercial tenants. Staff has been working with Maurice's Deli and Modern Body Art to find new spaces Downtown so that we don't lose them as Downtown businesses.
- A new brewery and catering company is also looking for commercial space Downtown as Staff is assisting with that as well.
- 66 State Street is under contract and the closing is expected to happen in about 3 weeks. There will be 27 apartments on the upper floors and a commercial space on the first floor.
- 61 North Pearl is under contract and is slated to become apartments and a new restaurant. All of the retailers on Steuben will be staying aside from Downtown Studio Fit.
- The county legislature has renewed the lease for Lam Kitchen for 5 years, Ballistic Shrimp has been approved for a 5-year lease and there is a tenant slated for the old Johnny Rockets all on that same strip. The former Jubilee Jewelers is under contract.
- C-Suite Fitness has moved to State Street, so the Broadway space is available.
- A lease has been signed and work has begun in the old Pearl Street Pub space on the corner of Steuben and N Pearl. A well-known Vermont restaurant called Skinny Pancake is coming to that space.

Ms. Steffens added that due to the Annual Meeting happening later this year, a June meeting has been added on June 16<sup>th</sup> at 3pm. A proposal for the Associate Membership will be ready for the Board to discuss at that meeting.

A discussion was held regarding loitering and smoking outside of the County probation building and Mr. Rogers agreed to follow up on the issue. A separate discussion was held regarding graffiti along Madison Ave and Mr. Zeoli and Mr. Wilson agreed to stay on top of the situation.

With no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned at 3:58PM.

**Next Meeting**

**Tuesday, September 14, 2021 at 3:00 PM.**

**Zoom**