



James V. Breuer, Chair
Merike L. Treier, Executive Director

DOWNTOWN COMMITTEE OF SYRACUSE, INC.

March 21, 2017

**Downtown Committee Offices
115 West Fayette Street**

3:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

Attendance

- Members:** Messrs. Breuer, Doucette, Dunn, Fiorito, Fisher, Koolakian, Maxwell, Riley, Tascarella Jr., Tripoli, and Walsh; Ms. Gagliano, Ms. Littlejohn (via tele-conference)
- Staff:** Mss. Holbrook, Maggiore, Reed, Schroeder, Sherlock and Treier; Messrs. Campanie, McFadden
- Guests:** Ms. Nora Spillane, Director of Business Development – City of Syracuse
Mr. Joe Fletcher, CPA – Pemco Group, Inc.
Mr. Jeremy DeChario, General Manager – Syracuse Real Food Co-op

I. Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Breuer welcomed guests and members present. He announced that this will be Mr. Maxwell's last meeting as a Board member and acknowledged him for his contribution to the Downtown Committee and development of downtown.

II. Approval of Minutes from January 24, 2017

Chairman Breuer asked the Board if they had any questions or comments on the minutes from January 24 and there were none. Chairman Breuer asked for a motion to approve the January 24, 2017 SDODC Meeting Minutes. Mr. Tripoli moved, Mr. Dunn seconded; the motion was unanimously carried.

III. Financial Report

Mr. Dunn provided the financial report as of February 28, 2017. He noted of special attention under Income, that Transportation-Franklin Street income has increased due to the sale of more parking spots from Apizza Regionale Restaurant patrons. Ms. Treier added that the Miscellaneous Income line is higher than budgeted due to sponsorship supplementation of the March Progress Breakfast. Overall, all Income/Expense lines are trending on budget and are in good shape.

With nothing else to report, Mr. Dunn asked if there were any questions and there were none. Chairman Breuer asked for a motion to accept the February 2017 financial report subject to audit. Mr. Fiorito moved and Mr. Tripoli seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously carried.

IV. Staff Updates

Mr. Breuer commented on the success of Downtown Dining Weeks that took place February 15 – March 1 and how it was terrific activity for downtown. He personally commended Ms. Reed and staff on a job well done. Ms. Reed added she heard from participants that it was the “best ever.”

A. Public Arts Brochure

Ms. Reed announced that the Downtown Committee has released a new publication – “A Guide to Public Art in Downtown Syracuse,” which she distributed to the Board. She noted that the publication took two years to produce and it is designed as a walking tour of all the public art pieces on display in Downtown Syracuse. It was also designed to be a companion piece to the Downtown Committee’s Historic Walking Tour booklet. Two grants were secured through CNY Arts to allow for the publication to be printed. Ms. Reed thanked the OHA for its assistance in researching information on the artwork and monuments. Ms. Treier added that if the Downtown Committee receives more requests for the brochure, a cost-share option will be available as there are only a limited number of brochures currently printed. An electronic version of the publication can also be found on the Downtown Committee’s website. Ms. Treier also commented that the

Downtown Committee will look to connect with the City Parks Department in an effort to assist with raising funds to restore the First World War Monument that Sean Kirst shared a story about at the March 14th Progress Breakfast.

B. Earth Day Clean-up: April 22

Mr. McFadden announced that the Downtown Committee is once again leading the Earth Day Clean-up effort in Downtown Syracuse on Saturday, April 22. He reported that last year a total of 350 volunteers collected approximately 550 bags of litter. Mr. McFadden noted that the Earth Day clean up makes a big impact on downtown and appreciates all of the individuals and downtown employees who participate. Ms. Maggiore reported that as of today, 63 volunteers and seven organizations (with a group of 10 or more) have signed up making for a total of 130 volunteers. The Downtown Committee provides the bags and gloves, plus a small morning breakfast and lunch for volunteers. This effort is coordinated with the City who will collect the bags for disposal.

C. Interstate 81

Ms. Treier provided the Board an update on the progress of the I-81 Viaduct replacement plan. She distributed a list the Downtown Committee had created when this project started that identified the Downtown Committee's goals for the future of the Interstate 81 Viaduct. The document outlines the desire to create a vibrant new neighborhood and restore connections between downtown and University Hill. She noted that an independent study firm, WSP|Parsons Brinckerhoff Engineering Services, is currently performing a study on tunnel/grid design options and depressed highway options and is soliciting input. The Downtown Committee will prepare a social and economic impact statement regarding the tunnel option study which is due by April 7. Mr. Tripoli recommended including all Board member names on the statement for better impact. He also asked if the Downtown Committee will comment on the Northside missing links and common features. Ms. Treier noted that the Downtown Committee has commented that the missing links are not in keeping with the level of design attention to areas south of 690. Mr. Tripoli asked if the Downtown Committee agrees with a tunnel/grid

combination. Ms. Treier noted that there are many ongoing costs associated with a tunnel option such as providing continuous maintenance and construction of ventilation structures that need to be built to support it. Mr. Koolakian asked how many properties could be lost with a tunnel/grid combo option. Ms. Treier will find the NYSDOT report with that information and will circulate to the Board. Other concerns discussed were what the impact would be on the entrance into downtown, traffic flow changes, and the effect a tunnel design would have on the convention center district. Ms. Treier noted that when she spoke with Mr. Frechette at the CNY NYSDOT office, he understood the concerns raised about this area and did not want DOT plans to negatively affect these investments. Chairman Breuer pointed out that the Downtown Committee is not prepared to comment on the proposed tunnel options as it is not yet been made public. He asked if a presentation could be made to the Board to review the new options. Ms. Treier responded that she will set up a review meeting with NYSDOT.

D. Metrics Update

Ms. Maggiore presented to the Board the Metrics Impression report from July 2016 through February 2017. The metrics information covers four main program areas for downtown, including public space, communications, economic development and engagement. Ms. Maggiore asked the Board to let her know if there are any other activities they would like to see tracked. Ms. Maggiore reported that as of February, the Downtown Committee maintenance team has provided 58.5 days of clear sidewalks. She (along with the Board) thanked Mr. McFadden and his crew who put in three 12-hour days clearing sidewalks during the recent snowstorm. Ms. Maggiore also highlighted that an impressive statistic of the metrics compilation was that since July, 102 businesses have been engaged in downtown events as well as 130,000 attending signature events. Ms. Maggiore also reported that the Downtown Committee launched a Pinterest website to expand its social media outreach. The site includes posts of craftsman wears from the Arts & Crafts Festival, news articles and historic mentions. She also noted that the Downtown Committee's database for social media announcements, currently has 7,400 subscribers.

E. 2017 Downtown Living Tour

Ms. Maggiore announced that this year's Downtown Living Tour is scheduled for Saturday, May 20 from 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. She is pleased to report that eight tour spots have been confirmed: State Tower Building, 235 East Water St., Herald Commons, Dietz Building, Jefferson/Clinton Commons, D-Train (doggy daycare) Chimes Building. A bonus stop is being arranged at the Regency Tower and Ashley-McGraw will also have an open house. Chairman Breuer inquired about the stop comparison to last year. Ms. Holbrook responded that last year was the Living Tour's 10th anniversary, so 10 tour stops were highlighted, plus two bonus stops. Mr. Koolakian asked what the geographic audience was, and Ms. Holbrook confirmed that attendees came from the surrounding suburbs and a few outside the state. The audience also included grad students to empty-nesters.

V. Business Development

A. City of Syracuse new website

Ms. Spillane, Director of Business Development, City of Syracuse presented to the Board the launch of the City's new website: "Build Your Business in Syracuse" (<https://business.syr.gov.net/>) which is a comprehensive, single-source site for economic development information for people interested in starting up a business in Syracuse. This new webpage was developed in a partnership with "Code for America," an organization comprised of a network of people who digitally deliver government services. Ms. Spillane noted in the demonstration of the website that the site offers the ability to track applications and better direct a topic area question to the right department for assistance. Chairman Breuer expressed a concern that people could be stopped in the process because of high permit fees or be unable to move forward quickly because of the slowness of the process to have capital improvements approved. Ms. Spillane responded that the development team will continue to address the ease of the digital process. She also shared that this site will help people know what to expect before they get into the zoning process. Mr. Tripoli asked if there was another business identifier for company type not noted in the selection, i.e. "Other." Ms. Spillane took note of his comment to look into. Chairman Breuer asked if there is a mechanism to track permit revenue and Ms. Spillane responded that they can automatically track permit value but not revenue at

this time but she can get it. Ms. Spillane noted that the City's Department of Business Development welcomes feedback right on the new website.

B. Downtown Committee services overview

Ms. Schroeder presented to the Board a “refresher” overview of the economic development services that the Downtown Committee provides business support. She noted that the Downtown Committee works closely with the City's Department of Business Development to serve businesses and develop tailored recruitment packages. From her presentation, Ms. Schroeder highlighted several of the recruitment and retention resources including: cataloguing and maintaining a database on 82 downtown properties; retaining and supporting office and retail tenants; serving as a liaison between the City on approvals and policy; provide and present occupancy reports and demographic info; promote and research housing development; list available real estate and assemble property packages; and identify incentives and grant opportunities. She also noted that the Downtown Committee supports additional programming such as Pop-up Retail, Art in the Windows, District Planning, ReZone, Social Services partnership, public art and Invest Health. Ms. Schroeder commented that more information on these recruitment resources can be found on the Downtown Committee's website under the business tab. The website also provides a semi-annual report that showcases where Downtown Syracuse is in its growth. Ms. Spillane thanked the Downtown Committee as she depends on its resources to assist the City's business development endeavors. Chairman Breuer commented that he has noticed a constant upward spiral of activity in partnerships and programs going on in Downtown Syracuse. Ms. Spillane added that the dollar investment value in downtown has trended up since 2010 and has exceeded \$120 million.

VI. Public Comments

Mr. Jeremy DeChario, General Manager of Syracuse Real Food Co-op shared with the Board that because of the success of the store at its current location on Kensington Road, he is looking into opening another store in downtown Syracuse. He is also excited about campaigning for an

open council seat and engaging with the community. Mr. Tripoli commented that he knows Jeremy and appreciates his commitment to the city.

VII. Other Business and Adjourn

Ms. Littlejohn commented on the good emergency planning cooperation between the city and county during the recent substation power outage that affected portions of downtown. The partnership efforts were crucial in getting the power back in service for many people. Ms. Littlejohn noted that she would like to discuss the collaborative emergency controls in more detail at an upcoming Board meeting in which Chairman Breuer agreed. Mr. Fiorito congratulated Ms. Littlejohn and National Grid staff for the open communication and exceptional response with the businesses and tenants that were affected by the power outage.

Ms. Treier reported that the Downtown Committee's 2017-2018 budget will be reviewed at the Common Council meeting on Tuesday, April 11 from 11:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Ms. Treier will provide an overview of the special assessment funds budget and will use the metrics tool to display the value of the Downtown Committee's services. She encouraged the Board members to attend for support. An outlook invitation for the budget hearing date will be sent out.

Ms. Treier announced to the Board that Ms. Maggiore has been promoted to Communications Manager because of her successful contributions and initiative in the Downtown Committee's communications programs. The Board congratulated Ms. Maggiore.

Mr. Riley reported that the Marriott Syracuse Downtown has had a good start to 2017. They are well above occupancy goals and have been booking many events. The hotel hosted the St. Patrick's Day parade which drew about 1,800 people indoors for celebration. They have also received positive feedback from overnight guests. Mr. Riley noted that 60% of the hotel's staff has been hired from the local neighborhood. He mentioned his thankfulness to the community for its support, and especially for the success of Dining Weeks that helped fill restaurant tables in the hotel. Mr. Riley added that the hotel saw a bump in business during the Winterfest event.

With no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 4:25 p.m.

Next Board meeting:

May 16, 2017

**Downtown Committee of Syracuse Offices
115 West Fayette Street**