

DOWNTOWN COMMITTEE OF SYRACUSE, INC.

May 19, 2015

**CenterState CEO Conference Room
115 West Fayette Street**

3:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

Attendance

Members: Chairman Breuer, Messrs. Doucette, Howard, Dunn, Koolakian, Lemp, Maxwell, Mss. Gagliano, Littlejohn

Staff: Mss. Holbrook, Maggiore, Reed, Sherlock and Treier; Mssrs. Campanie

Guests: Hon. Robert Dougherty, Syracuse Common Council
Mr. Ben Sio – CenterState CEO
Mr. Dave Holder – Visit Syracuse

I. Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Breuer welcomed guests and members present.

II. Administration

A. Approval of March 17, 2015 Meeting Minutes

Chairman Breuer asked the Board if there were any questions on the March 17, 2015 Meeting Minutes, and there were none. Chairman Breuer asked for a motion to approve the March 17 Meeting Minutes. Mr. Dunn moved and Mr. Doucette seconded; the motion was unanimously carried.

B. Tax Filings

Ms. Treier reported that the Downtown Committee successfully completed its tax filing on time and was sent in last week.

III. Financial Report as of April 30, 2015

Mr. Howard reviewed the Financial Report as of April 30, 2015. Mr. Howard reported under Income, the Special Assessment line is on target at 83% of budget. Transportation (Franklin Street) is on target at 83%. Herald Place is on target at 80%. The Annual Meeting expenses will hit in June. Total income is currently at 74% of budget.

Mr. Howard reviewed Expenses by detail and noted that overall, it is below budget. Under Administration: Salaries/Fringes will come in below budget due to one employee not taking benefits. Under Operations/Administration, the line is currently at 85% which includes audit accrual. Insurance is currently high at 140% but will be allocated to the appropriate program lines next month. The overage in the Legal line (\$6,000) will be redeployed to Environmental Maintenance to help cover the cost of overtime this year. Mr. Howard reported that on the Marketing-Salaries/Fringes line, the budget is currently at 72% as a position was open for a period of time. Mr. Howard reported that Advertising funds will be spent in May on airtime for TV ads. Ms. Treier added that Solon Quinn studios will be producing two new 60-second commercials. Mr. Howard reported under Security Salary expenses, that workers compensation insurance covered a portion of Mr. Campanie's salary, but it will not be reimbursed 100%. Salaries are expected to come in about \$4,000 over budget. He noted on the Maintenance Contracts line under Security, that the security cameras have not yet been installed, so minimal costs will be incurred for the year. Ms. Treier added that the security camera maintenance contract is on hold as the Downtown Committee is still waiting for the poles to be electrified. They are working with the SPD, camera provider and Assemblyman Magnarelli's office on the install date. Ms. Treier noted that the Downtown Committee did send the first payment out and logo decals have been ordered that will affixed to the cameras. Mr. Howard reported that the Salaries/Fringe line under Economic Development is low at 63%. Ms. Treier noted that there is a new demographic website that has been created which will be a useful tool and resource for people seeking to move into the area. The Downtown Committee utilized its office recruitment funds to cost share in this website. Mr. Howard reported that Transportation (Franklin St. and Herald Place) expenses are as expected.

Mr. Breuer asked if there were any questions on the Financial Report. He then asked for a motion to accept the financial report subject to audit. Mr. Koolakian moved and Mr. Doucette seconded. The motion was unanimously carried.

IV. Staff Reports

A. Downtown Living Tour

Ms. Treier reported that the Downtown Living Tour which was held on Saturday, May 16, was another successful event. It was the tour's 9th year and it drew in over 2,000 tour-goers. Ms. Treier extended a special thank you to Mr. Breuer for making available the new Creekwalk Commons. She also thanked Ms. Littlejohn of National Grid for being a sponsor, and Mr. Doucette for making the Dey's building a destination. There were a total of eight properties on the tour and each stop was well received. New this year was a Rest Stop in the Dey's lobby where tour-goers could enjoy entertainment by a Symphoria string quartet, while relaxing in the five different living area vignettes provided by Café Kubal's new furniture upcycling business. Café Kubal also had a grand opening special at its new location at Creekwalk Commons during the tour, offering specials. The Downtown Committee partnered with NOexcuses Tours and offered 40 expanded tickets for a guided tour including historical and architectural highlights along the tour route. The Living Tour also partnered with "Believe In Syracuse" to staff a Tour Information Booth outside of the registration area which provided information on the living tour, as well as general information on Downtown. Chairman Breuer inquired on the number of people that attended and Ms. Treier responded that it was about 2,100. She noted that the tour was in competition with various graduations and other events this weekend. TV ads were created to promote the event. Positive comments were also received from the volunteers. Mr. Doucette stated that he believes it is a great event to bring people downtown. Mr. Howard asked Mr. Doucette if people are asking about the residential parking options downtown and Mr. Doucette responded that they are.

B. Results of S.U. Public Relations Campaign (Panhandling)

Ms. Treier reported that last fall, the Downtown Committee partnered with an S.U. New House School class to research ways to address and reduce panhandling in Downtown Syracuse. She recently attended the spring semester's final class to listen to the final campaigns. All four groups selected to target the business owners and employees as the primary target audiences. The two goals included raising awareness of the existing security initiatives, and second, finding a way to deter individuals from donating directly to

panhandlers and instead, give to existing charities. Ms. Treier presented the following campaign ideas:

- Start a month-long mission to raise awareness of four different charities that residents or downtown employees could choose to donate to, rather than giving money directly to panhandlers. (Samaritan Center, Rescue Mission, Vera House for example.) This would be accompanied by creating a two-minute video shared over social media that would feature one of the four charities each week for one month.
- Printing business cards with 423-HELP and distributing these to retail establishments and offices to raise awareness of this resource.
- “Change of Heart” campaign - which introduced the idea of donation boxes to be placed in key areas in downtown. The group also produced heart shaped stickers displaying the “Change of Heart” logo to be distributed in the same fashion to further raise awareness of this campaign.
- PushPay app - downloadable for smart phones for users to automatically donate to identified charities.
- E-Newsletter blasts- used for publishing updates related to security initiatives, keeping the businesses and restaurants in the loop, especially if the Downtown Committee is planning security seminars devoted to the panhandling issue.
- Utilizing the Downtown Committee’s Facebook and Twitter pages to promote the campaign.
- Putting a Face to a Name –introducing the public to our security team with a Q&A through the Downtown Committee Website. Ms. Treier stressed that we want to ensure that we’re not inadvertently making our security team a target.
- Outdoor Fundraiser – to educate members of the community about alternatives to giving to panhandlers. This would focus on those who attended a personal safety seminar, or seminar that raised awareness about panhandling. This could be offered at the end of our campaign as a “thank you” event.

Ms. Treier asked the board for feedback. Mr. Lemp commented that the outdoor fundraiser is a good idea which he feels will institute a mission for residents to band together and create a community spirit. Mr. Koolakian added that the Downtown Committee could hold an event to raise money for charities and to assist its budget for the panhandling effort. Ms. Littlejohn

asked if the homeless and panhandling populations have increased significantly over the past six months. Mr. Campanie responded that based on his observations, it has not. Ms. Littlejohn commented that she likes the E-Newsletter idea which would offer a service to help employees navigate security workshops. Mr. Howard commented that the new location of the Samaritan Center on the north side could be a challenge to the homeless population needs in downtown, and is it truly solving the problem? Chairman Breuer commented that he likes the concept of the “Change of Heart” campaign, but would prefer a different look to the logo.

Mr. Koolakian discussed the problem of the panhandlers who are positioned off the interstates exits. It is dangerous for cars to stop for them. It may be a good idea to put signs nearby to encourage motorists not to give money to panhandlers from their cars. Ms. Treier noted that the police can enforce this problem. Mr. Campanie added that it is only a problem when the panhandler actually steps on the highway. Mr. Lemp asked if it is legal to put up “panhandling prohibited” signs in the downtown area, and Ms. Treier said she will look into it. She also commented that it is important to decide on the best way to promote our message as to who we are as a city and keeping people safe – which is a key piece.

Mr. Koolakian noted that he likes the 432-HELP business cards to protect employees of retail establishments. Ms. Littlejohn added that she understands the safety issues downtown employees face and agrees we need a multi-pronged approach to address the panhandling and homeless issue. She feels that this summer could get worse before it gets better.

Mr. Holder cautioned against giving attention to the “art of giving,” as we don’t want to inadvertently encourage giving to both the organizations and panhandlers if we’re trying to decrease giving directly to individuals. Our preference and target message should be to give to charities. Mr. Holder asked if the students who presented these campaigns researched case studies from other areas. Ms. Treier noted that different students have researched examples of alternatives to giving in other cities.

Mr. Howard commented that he likes the idea of the card. Ms. Treier noted that the 423-HELP line roles over to the SPD in the evenings. Ms. Gagliano noted that the educational component is useful to her. Mr. Howard feels it is important to continue to foster communication with the

students. Ms. Treier added that the Downtown Committee also distributes the Security “Smart” cards. Ms. Littlejohn noted it could take multiple strategies to tackle the problem.

Ms. Treier thanked the board for their feedback. She and the Downtown Committee staff will review the comments and work on repackaging the campaign ideas to bring back to the board.

V. Upstate Revitalization Initiatives

Mr. Sio presented to the board the Upstate Revitalization Fund (URI). The initiative is a \$1.5 billion economic development investment from New York State with three awards of \$500 million each which seven regional communities are competing for. It will be flexible funding and will not be tied to only capital expenditures. He noted that the competition will run concurrently to standard REDC process (of which CenterState has won three out of four years.) Mr. Sio displayed the difference between the REDC process and the URI. He also presented the criteria as to how the competition will be judged – which includes what premium we put on local stakeholder engagement and consensus, maintaining a minimum leverage ratio of \$5 of outside investment to \$1 state investment, and how it will significantly impact jobs, net new wealth generation and economic prosperity. He noted that the council will ultimately decide the awards. Teams are digging into the heart of it and will recommend strategies and business plans to show where the money will be spent over the next five years.

Mr. Sio noted that the teams are currently in the research stage of the process and a 40-page plan will be produced. Mr. Sio advised the board to mark their calendars for the public presentation to be held the week of July 13. If awarded, this will bring a strong investment into our community. Mr. Sio explained that the Work Groups involved in the study consist of both Industry and Economic participants. He also stressed that investing in the urban core is a priority for the public. Mr. Sio noted that the next steps is to dig into the data and to cross-pollinate the work groups. We must present a plan that will have the most impact over the next five years. He noted that the plans rule out educational programs. If we don’t win the \$500 million grant, we could still win a \$90 million grant which will go to smaller regional projects. Mr. Koolakian asked if we could go for both funds, and Mr. Sio confirmed that we are.

Mr. Doucette commented that we need fewer planners and more salesmen to sell this region as a place to bring jobs here. Mr. Sio responded that they are doing a lot of “behind-the-scenes” sales push that will be shared with the board.

VI. Public Comments

Chairman Breuer asked for any further comments.

Mr. Doucette discussed the I-81 initiative. He feels the tunnel idea has had negative responses and will be too costly. There will be a workable plan for a viaduct or grid from the DOT standpoint. He feels it will become a political fight – either plan will move the cars. He stressed the need to continue to educate the public on the street level plan, now called the Community Grid, which is the best option for downtown’s revitalization.

Chairman Breuer noted that the Downtown Committee has a new security officer – Bruno Daniele. Mr. Campanie noted the Mr. Marcon will be back to provide security for the weekly downtown farmers’ market. Mr. Marcon is officially retiring on October 13.

Ms. Treier reported that the Downtown Committee Annual Meeting is scheduled for June 24 at Noon at the Oncenter. Ms. Lynn Richards, President and CEO of the Congress for the New Urbanism will be the keynote speaker. The Downtown Committee is also accepting Awards of Excellence nominations. She noted that 12-15 nominations have been received so far.

Ms. Treier distributed the Downtown Committee Top 40’s List which is posted on the website. It is a celebration of our 40th Anniversary by sharing creative ideas on fun and interesting things to do while downtown. In September, the Downtown Committee is planning an employee appreciation month. Ms. Treier also added that in October, the Downtown Committee plans to host a special meeting devoted to downtown’s progress. This is still in the planning stages and Ms. Treier will confirm with the board on the final date and details.

Ms. Treier reported that the flower baskets are going to be installed in downtown starting May 27. Ms. Treier also added that the Downtown Committee is promoting a “Partners In Planting”

program to engage downtown employees in the beautification efforts of the neighborhood. Notification of this program has been sent out through social media and personal contacts.

VII. Other Business and Adjourn

With no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Next Board meeting: **Tuesday, July 21, 3:00 p.m.**

Location: CenterState CEO, 115 West Fayette Street