

SDODC

Special District Operations and Development Committee
115 West Fayette Street, Syracuse, NY 13202
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James V. Breuer, Chair

SPECIAL DISTRICT OPERATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

Meeting Minutes

January 19, 2016

CenterState CEO
115 West Fayette Street

3:00 pm

Attendance

Members: Chairman Breuer; Mss. Gagliano, Littlejohn (via phone); and Slater; Messrs. Doucette, Dunn, Fiorito, Fisher, Howard, Koolakian, Maxwell, Nutting, Tripoli and Walsh

Staff: Mss. Holbrook, Maggiore, Reed, Schroeder, Sherlock, Treier; Mr. Campanie

Guests: Ms. Karen Hawkins – Gilberti, Stinziano, Heintz and Smith
Mr. Cory LaDuke - Cushman & Wakefield/Pyramid Brokerage

I. WELCOME AND MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 17, 2015

a. Introduction of New Board Members

Chairman Breuer welcomed the Board members and guests present. He welcomed new Board member Mr. Ben Walsh, Deputy Commissioner of the Division of Business Development/City of Syracuse, and Ms. Theresa Slater, President of Empire Interpreting Service and a downtown resident.

b. Reappointment of Board Members

Chairman Breuer welcomed back reappointed Board members: Mr. Doucette, Mr. Fisher and Ms. Littlejohn.

II. ADMINISTRATION

a. Approval of Minutes of November 17, 2015

Chairman Breuer asked the Board if there were any questions on the Minutes of November 17, 2015, and there were none. Chairman Breuer asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Maxwell moved and Mr. Fisher seconded. The motion was unanimously carried.

b. Conflict of Interest Policy

Ms. Treier asked the Board to fill out and sign the annual Conflict of Interest Statement which will be kept in the Downtown Committee files.

III. FINANCIAL REPORT AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2015

Mr. Howard reviewed the Financial Report as of December 31, 2015. He indicated that there were not a lot of changes in the report since the last review, but wanted to note the following: Under Income, Miscellaneous reflected a 573% value, which is where the income from the Magnarelli grant was being accounted for. The auditors have recommended a different way to account for the grant income and next month's statements will reflect the change. Mr. Howard also reported that under Environmental Maintenance Expense, Horticulture is high at 145% due to an extra watering service for the tree pits as a result of the dry summer. He also noted under Marketing, the Events line is high due to the Progress Breakfast expense, however, the income from this event is accounted for under the Miscellaneous Income Line. Mr. Howard noted under the Economic Development Line that Salaries/Fringes is low due to the temporary open position of the Economic Development Manager. Mr. Howard asked the Board if there were any questions on the financial report. Mr. Fisher asked if any unused Special Assessment funds rolls over into the following year. Ms. Treier responded the funds are collected by the City and put into the Downtown Special Assessment Fund. Ms. Treier stated that during the monthly financial statement review, projections are made and if expenses look to come in under budget, resources are reallocated into other expense areas to provide additional support for those activities.

Chairman Breuer asked for a motion to accept the financial report subject to audit. Mr. Fisher moved and Mr. Doucette seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously carried.

IV. DOWNTOWN COMMITTEE SURVEY RESULTS

Ms. Maggiore presented an overview of the Downtown Committee Constituent Survey that was circulated this past fall via regular mail and electronically, through a link to the survey on the Downtown Committee website. The survey provided feedback from stakeholders to use for better prioritization of Downtown Committee programs. She reported that a total of 489 people responded to the survey which is a 7% increase from the previous survey last distributed in 2013. In 2015, the two largest groups of respondents were "downtown employees" (42%) and "none of the above, but interested in Downtown" (33%). The survey indicated that the two downtown areas where respondents reported spending most of their time was in Armory Square (39%) and Heart of Downtown (24%). The survey also recorded a total of 81% of respondents having an overall positive perception of downtown's strength.

The survey gathered new data on where people learn about the majority of information related to Downtown Syracuse to gauge the impact of the Downtown Committee Newsletter and social media outreach. It was calculated that 58% of respondents receive their news through the Downtown Committee Newsletter, 54% turn to local newspapers and 23% go to Downtown Committee social media platforms. Another new item on the survey was to determine which gateway respondents most often use to enter Downtown Syracuse. Results noted that 30% enter from the east, while 29% enter from the north; 24% come from the west and 10% from the south. The survey also gathered information on the perception of Downtown Committee initiatives and offerings. Overall, the highest priority activities were "maintaining a welcoming, attractive streetscape experience," "providing streetscape maintenance," "addressing vacant spaces and/or buildings," and "recruiting and welcoming new companies, office and retail to city

center.” These have also consistently been top priorities for survey respondents dating back to 2008.

Mr. Fisher asked if the respondents are replying to the Downtown Committee programs alone, or about their general downtown experience. Ms. Maggiore noted the question specifically asked for the perception of the Downtown Committee’s efforts and programs and hopefully was interpreted as such.

Ms. Maggiore reported that the top two themes that arose from the open-ended questions asking respondents what additional items would lengthen their downtown stay included more parking availability/awareness and cultural amenities (specifically a grocery store). In another open-ended question asking respondents to prioritize items related to safety, patrols was a top security desire for respondents who identified as “Downtown Employees,” “Interested in Downtown,” Downtown Residents” and “Those Who Live and Work Downtown.” Additional comments collected from respondents expressed a desire to establish programs for a 24/7 neighborhood.

Mr. Tripoli commented on how the overall residential response to the survey was low (less than 10%) and asked how the Downtown Committee would distribute surveys to this group more easily. Ms. Treier noted that the committee is working to pull together a residential committee as part of its strategic plan, and will work with the building landlords in sharing information with residents to increase resident responses to future surveys.

Mr. Howard asked if downtown employees have a list of downtown parking spots available at their offices. Ms. Gagliano commented that her office does not. Ms. Treier responded that the Downtown Committee publishes a parking brochure once a year which is also available on the Downtown Committee website. Mr. Tripoli also commented that there is a lack of public parking signs downtown to direct traffic.

Ms. Maggiore concluded that the material presented to the Board today was an overview summary and that the Downtown Committee staff will be meeting to review the survey’s data to see how it can be incorporated into the strategic plan. She will also send an electronic version of the presentation to the Board members.

Mr. Tripoli asked if there were any “big surprises” that came out of the survey. Ms. Maggiore responded that she was surprised to see downtown employees ranked the employee appreciation program as a low priority, given the success of the Coffee Break in September and Progress Breakfast in October, two new programs designed with downtown employees in mind. Another surprise noted in the survey was that prioritizing “security patrols throughout downtown Monday through Friday” was not ranked as one of the highest priorities among survey respondents. Ms. Maggiore noted this may be because survey takers don’t see security a task that the Downtown Committee should take the lead on.

Chairman Breuer commented that he felt the responses tie directly back to the proposed budget which will address the themes in the survey.

V. SPECIAL DISTRICT PROPOSED BUDGET 2016-2017

Ms. Treier reported that the Budget Committee has met to review, prepare, and recommend the budget to the Board and which upon Board approval will be recommended to the City as the 2016-2017 Downtown Special Assessment Budget. She thanked board members, Jim Breuer, Tony Fiorito, Bob Doucette, and Brian Howard for their contributions.

Mr. Nutting asked what the role of the Downtown Syracuse Foundation was in relation to supporting the Downtown Committee's programs. Ms. Treier responded the Foundation is a separate stand-alone organization established in 2012 as a 501(c) 3 and was not established as a supporting organization. It is able to utilize grant sources and secure sponsorships from organizations that only will contribute to a 501(c)3. The current board members include Ms. Treier, Mr. Doucette, Ms. Judy Cowden (AmeriCU) and Ms. Lindsay Weichert (M&T Bank).

Ms. Treier reviewed the Special Assessment Budget History graph and noted that the Special Assessment budget has remained constant since 2010 but downtown has changed a lot over the past five years. For example, downtown's population has risen 40% since 2010, and as of last year, it has 21 new retail businesses, and housing occupancy is at 99%. The Annual Arts and Crafts show contribution, as well as parking lot revenue has been helping to offset some expenses, but it is not enough to keep up with the increasing demands for services.

Ms. Treier pointed out on the Property Tax Generated by Area graph that Downtown composes 1% of the city's land area and is a significant contributor to the City's Property tax revenue; it generates approximately 10% of the City's revenue, even though 48% of the land is tax-exempt. Downtown Syracuse also has the highest land value per acre.

Ms. Treier noted that Downtown needs to be able to provide resources and services to continue this significant growth. With the addition of new businesses, residents and more visitor and convention activity, the Downtown Committee will be required to expand its services into the evening hours. The days of shutting down at 5:00 p.m. are gone. Despite this progress, the Special Assessment budget number has not changed in years, therefore, the increase in the Downtown Special Assessment Budget proposal will be dedicated to maintaining this vibrant environment. Ms. Treier emphasized that the Downtown Committee needs to re-think its current service delivery including adding weekend security and patrols, additional Environmental Maintenance resources are necessary on weekends to accommodate the increasing visitor traffic in Syracuse. Ms. Treier stated that the resources directed into Downtown will significantly enhance the quality of life and will lay the foundation for future investments to occur. It's also a direct return on investment for property owners.

Ms. Treier noted that in order for the Downtown Committee to do its best work and prevent slippage of progress due to insufficient attention dedicated to Downtown, the Budget Committee developed the following recommendations which includes an increase to the Downtown Special Assessment by \$236,120 to cover additional services proposed:

- Two new security officers for both evening and weekend patrol
- Public space improvement budget and weekend maintenance staff
- Wage increase of \$2.00/hour for Environmental Maintenance Staff to come closer to the standard established by the City.
- Annual Security Camera depreciation (required)

- Cost of living increase
- New part-time Marketing/Communications employee to execute new elements of strategic plan
- Reserve rate (change)
- Increased workers compensation rate (required)
- Economic Development special project fund (which will allow for recruitment, revitalization, and other development activities)

The Board acknowledged the hard work that went into developing this proposal and expressed support for every element. Ms. Treier asked for the Board's help in relaying the message to the City for the need for the increase. After a discussion by the Board, it was agreed that a small delegation of the Board should meet with the Mayor to present the budget proposal and outline the recommendations for the increase of the Special Assessment fund. Mr. Maxwell and Mr. Walsh will help formulate the package to be presented to the Mayor.

Chairman Breuer asked for a motion to approve the 2016-2017 budget proposal to be presented to the Mayor. Mr. Dunn moved and Mr. Tripoli seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously carried.

VI. MARKETING

a. Downtown Dining Weeks

Ms. Reed reported that this is the 12th edition of Downtown Dining Week(s) in Downtown Syracuse. This event will run from February 15 – 29th. There are currently 28 restaurants participating that will be offering a \$25 or less three-course meal. Renzi Food Service is the lead sponsor. Several restaurants have also agreed to sponsor the event. Ms. Reed noted that this event will be promoted heavily on television, print, and social media. This year, the Downtown Committee will be holding a social media contest where diners will be asked to find a chef hat with the Downtown Committee logo displayed in any of the participating restaurants and take a picture of it to send back through the Downtown Committee's Facebook page. The winning entries will be entered into drawings for donated restaurant gift cards. Ms. Reed added that the Downtown Committee has created a new Restaurant Guide with coupons which will be released when Dining Weeks concludes. The guide features a list of all restaurants by category with type of meals served along with their business hours and map location. Ms. Reed noted that six ads have been sold in the guide.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Breuer asked if there were any public comments, and there were none.

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS AND ADJOURN

With no other business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 4:40 pm.

Next Meeting: **Tuesday, March 15th at 3:00 pm**
CCEO, 115 West Fayette Street