

# SDODC

Special District Operations and Development Committee  
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James V. Breuer, Chair

## SPECIAL DISTRICT OPERATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

### Meeting Minutes

January 24, 2017

Downtown Committee of Syracuse  
115 West Fayette Street

3:00 pm

#### Attendance

Members: Chairman Breuer; Mss. Gagliano; Messrs. Doucette, Dunn, Fiorito, Fisher, Koolakian, Lemp, Riley, Tascarella Jr., Tripoli and Walsh

Staff: Mss. Holbrook, Maggiore, Schroeder, Sherlock, Treier

Guests: Hon. Nader Maroun – Syracuse Common Council  
Mr. Mike Intaglietta – Landmark Theatre  
Ms. Stephanie Crockett – Eric Mower & Associates  
Mr. David M. Carnie – Cushman & Wakefield/Pyramid Brokerage

#### I. WELCOME

Chairman Breuer welcomed the Board members and guests present. He also welcomed new Board member Mr. Ed Riley, Managing Member of Brines Wells Development LLC to his first meeting.

##### A. Reappointment of Board Members: David Nutting, Andrew Maxwell, Jo Anne Gagliano and Ron Tascarella, Jr.

Chairman Breuer welcomed back reappointed members: Mr. Nutting, Andrew Maxwell, Ms. Gagliano and Mr. Tascarella Jr.

##### B. Welcome Peter Dunn as Treasurer

Chairman Breuer congratulated Peter Dunn as newly appointed Treasurer for the Downtown Committee of Syracuse.

## **II. ADMINISTRATION**

### **A. Approval of Minutes of November 15, 2016**

Chairman Breuer asked the Board if there were any questions on the Minutes of November 15, 2016, and there were none. Chairman Breuer asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Lemp moved and Mr. Riley 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 reviewed by Mr. Dunn as independent director and kept in the Downtown Committee files.

### **C. Whistleblower Policy**

Ms. Treier asked the Board to review and sign the annual Whistleblower Policy which will be kept in the Downtown Committee files.

## **III. FINANCIAL REPORT AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2016**

Ms. Treier provided the financial report as of December 31, 2016. She noted that the Downtown Committee is currently at the halfway point of its 2016-2017 fiscal year. She noted under Income that there is no unordinary movement. Ms. Treier reported that the Farmers' Market did well and is projected to be ahead of budgeted income. Transportation/Franklin Street income is also performing ahead of projected budget. Ms. Treier announced that Pathfinder Bank will be the presenting sponsor for the annual meeting in June. The Downtown Committee has also received sponsorship income from distributing employee welcome bags to new businesses coming downtown. Under program expenses, Ms. Treier noted that overall, Administration is tracking close to budget. Under Operations and Administration expenses, she announced that the Downtown Committee has contracted Fust, Charles, Chambers LLP as its new auditor who has started to review the 2015-2016 financial information. Ms. Treier reported that office rent is under budget because the office space allocation charges was not as high as initially budgeted. She noted that Environmental Maintenance salaries expense line was higher due to overtime required for snow plowing. Mr. Walsh asked what role the Downtown Committee plays in regards to the City's audit process. Ms. Treier responded that the Downtown Committee's audit process is not connected to the City of Syracuse.

Chairman Breuer asked if there were any further questions on the financial report and there were none. Chairman Breuer asked for a motion to accept the financial report subject to audit. Mr. Fiorito moved and Mr. Tripoli seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously carried.

#### **IV. SPECIAL DISTRICT PROPOSED BUDGET 2017-2018**

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 2017-2018 Downtown Special Assessment Budget. She thanked board members, Tony Fiorito and Gregg Tripoli for their contributions. Ms. Treier reported that the Downtown Committee has been informed by the City's Budget Director that the special assessment level will remain at \$850,000 for the 2017-2018 fiscal year budget. Ms. Treier reviewed the Special Assessment Budget History graph and noted for 2017-2018 that 73% of primary income is supplied by the Special Assessment, while 13% is covered by event income and 11% is derived from transportation income. She added that the Arts and Crafts Festival is the biggest event income driver, followed by the Farmers' Market surplus and the bi-annual Progress Breakfasts which promote downtown and deliver additional revenue to support the Downtown Committee's programs. Ms. Treier noted that all downtown property owners pay the special assessment which is based on a formula that weighs zone location, assessed value, linear frontage, and the property's exempt status. (Exempt properties still pay an assessment, but at a lower rate.) She added that New York State, Federal Institutions, and churches do not pay an assessment. Ms. Treier reviewed the Special Assessment Budget Chart which shows what level the Special Assessment has been since 2003 and noted that it has not increased since 2010.

Mr. Doucette recommended reviewing and changing the language and tax formula of the Special Assessment statute. There was discussion about what effect the current tax cap has on the special assessment allocation limit, and Ms. Treier noted that she will ask Mr. Maxwell about a meeting to discuss the budget with the Mayor. Mr. Koolakian expressed his concern that there needs to be a balance between the increase of downtown services required and the special assessment allocation to support it. Mr. Fiorito added that that the Downtown Committee's budget also needs to keep up with inflation. Ms. Treier noted that the Downtown Committee can make recommendations to change the formula in the Special

Assessment language, but the Mayor makes the final decision on the budget number. Honorable Maroun added that he would be happy to look at the calculations and get back to the board with his recommendation. He commented that there are other BIDs asking for increases as well this year which will affect the outcome of the distribution of funds. Mr. Tripoli noted that because of the limited assessment funds, the Downtown Committee has to continue looking for other revenue generating avenues. Mr. Doucette added that the Downtown Committee could point out that if it didn't have the funds for servicing downtown, the responsibility would fall back on the City. Chairman Breuer noted that it will be important for the board to press all these issues going forward. Ms. Treier continued with her presentation by highlighting the revenue surplus the Downtown Committee raised through its events such as Dining Weeks. She noted that the Franklin Street lot income is the best performer for 2016. On the Historic Percentage Breakdown graph she noted that 19.7% of expenses are allocated to Administration costs, 21% allocated to Environmental Maintenance (which has remained consistent for the past 10 years) and 10.8% allocated for Marketing expenses (as program expenses were reduced due to the need for budget cuts). Security expenses are expected to be 15% and Economic Development will use 10.8% (as additional funds were built in to leverage potential grant sources for funding).

Ms. Treier distributed a copy of the 2017-2018 detailed budget report to the board. She noted that the report includes Actual Income and expenses from the past three years. A variance column was added to track changes from the previous year's budget. Ms. Treier pointed out under the proposed expense budget that the Reserve amount will remain the same as last year. Overall, the proposed Administration expenses are about \$7,000 less than the previous year. Under Environmental Maintenance, the salaries and fringes are higher to accommodate a wage raise. Ms. Treier noted that salaries and fringes are also higher for Marketing to support the part-time summer help with programs and events. She noted that the cost of the Progress Breakfasts will be offset with the revenue generated under Miscellaneous Income. The advertising budget was increased to \$13,000, which is about \$5,000 more than last year, but \$15,000 less than historical expenses. Under Security, the salaries/fringes line was reduced due to a part-time officer position being eliminated. The Downtown Committee will be looking for an alternate source to pay for a security detail for evening and weekend patrol to better serve the changing needs of downtown Syracuse. Ms. Treier noted that under Economic Development \$3,000 was added back into the budget to act

as a match for future requests. Under Transportation, there is an increase in the salaries and fringes budget due to the mandated minimum wage increase.

Chairman Breuer asked for a motion to approve the 2017-2018 budget proposal to be presented to the Mayor. Mr. Dunn moved and Mr. Lemp seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously carried.

## **V. DOWNTOWN RESIDENT SURVEY RESULTS**

Ms. Holbrook presented to the board the results of the downtown resident survey that was conducted in the fall of 2016 as part of the Downtown Committee strategic plan. A total of 261 residents responded of which 168 were located in the 13202 zip code target area. (The survey also found that 55% both live and work in downtown Syracuse.) Ms. Holbrook noted that approximately 33% of the downtown respondents makes \$100,000 or more and 54% make up the 25-34 age group. Their general spending habits show that they spend about \$263 per month on dining out and \$56 a month in the retail establishments. She also noted the low percentage of residents who dine out for breakfast in downtown. The survey asked residents what services they would like to see downtown to improve their experience and the 96% of the respondents noted a need for a full-service grocery store, followed by a desire for drug stores, specialty stores and restaurants have extended evening and weekend hours. Other high-rating items included more accessible parking, and more restaurant and retail options. Ms. Holbrook stated that a residential committee was formed and is working on improving two-way communication between the Downtown Committee and downtown residents. The Downtown Committee wants to grow its resident database. Ms. Holbrook asked the board for suggestions in helping to get downtown information packets to downtown residential buildings. Mr. Tripoli suggested that the board members who also have residential property to initialize the method of communication of information. A brochure rack was suggested to place in the lobbies of the buildings. Mr. Doucette asked if there was a digital opportunity to reach out to the residents.

Ms. Holbrook noted that the next steps are to:

- Create packets for residential owners to distribute to tenants
- Send a postcard to survey respondents about the Downtown Committee and how to get involved
- Share the survey results with the property owners and leasing agents

- Create focus groups to take a deeper look at specific survey responses
- Finalize residents' needs document and distribute to potential partners

Ms. Holbrook noted that by June, the Downtown Committee's goal is to create three new programs targeted to residents. She will also send a copy of the survey results to the board.

Mr. Doucette commented that board members should have meetings with the leasing agents to discuss downtown service issues.

## **VI. LANDMARK THEATRE UPDATE**

Ms. Treier introduced Stephanie Crockett of Eric Mower & Associates who is the Landmark Theatre Board of Trustees' president and Mike Intaglietta, General Manager of the Landmark to give an update on the theatre and upcoming events. Ms. Crockett commented that under Mr. Intaglietta's leadership and new management team, the theatre has seen a significant turn-around in attracting quality shows and increasing sales. The theatre has ended 2016 in the "black" and was able to pay back creditors. The theatre is now in a much better position to sustain its commitment and obligation to the city. Mr. Intaglietta noted that ticket attendance trends have improved in 2016 and are forecasting attendance to reach over 100,000 from sales inside and outside of Onondaga County. This year, the theatre is offering 39 performances including three soon to be named shows that are slated for the fall. He noted that that the Broadway show "Wicked" alone sold 3,200 tickets in one day and the recent Jersey Boys show that ran last year gave a boost to the economy because the tour stayed here for two weeks. Ms. Crockett added that they are working hard to drive more business to the theatre. Mr. Intaglietta distributed a new corporate sponsorship program the Landmark is offering. They will be sending out mailers to solicit partnerships. The Landmark will also be looking to develop relationships with downtown restaurants and hotels. Mr. Koolakian asked what the percentage of geographical pull was for ticket sales and Mr. Intaglietta responded that in 2016, 45.24% came from Onondaga County, 18.85% from Cayuga, Cortland, Madison and Oswego counties, and 35.91% from all other counties. Mr. Dunn asked how the marquee repair is being funded now that SIDA is no longer supporting the effort. Mr. Intaglietta noted that they are currently looking at other sources. He commented that the theatre seats alone would cost more than \$1 million to replace.

## **VII. DINING WEEKS**

Ms. Treier reported that this is the 13<sup>th</sup> edition of Downtown Dining Week(s) in Downtown Syracuse. This event will run from February 15 – March 1. There are currently 32 restaurants participating (5 more than last year) that will be offering a \$25 or less three-course meal. Visions Federal Credit Union is the new presenting sponsor this year. Kinney Drugs, along with several restaurants have also agreed to sponsor the event. Ms. Treier noted that this event will be promoted on television, print, and social media.

## **VIII. ART IN THE WINDOWS PROGRAM**

Ms. Schroeder introduced the downtown Art in the Window Program whose first round run from January 26 to April 15. The program is designed to showcase available storefronts as business opportunities while spotlighting the talents of local artists. It was also created as a means to expand the visual arts audience and entertain the downtown community. Ms. Schroeder also noted that the Art in the Window program follows the successful Pop-up Retail program in downtown to help stimulate usage of vacant properties in downtown Syracuse. After conducting a vacant property survey in December 2015, 82 street-level vacancies were identified in downtown. When the survey was revisited in 2016, only 66 vacant properties were identified (21 of which were filled, 7 lost, net gain of 14 street-level occupancies in 2016). With the support of grant funding from the Central New York Community Foundation, request for proposals went out and three artists have been selected to fill five different storefront window spaces. Ms. Schroeder noted the vacant building spaces that will display the art includes the Flagship Securities Building at 118 E. Genesee St., Pike Block along 320-326 S. Salina and 308-312 S. Salina (a thank you to Mr. Nutting), the Chimes Building at 500 S. Salina on the Onondaga storefront side, and the U.S. Post Office at 444 S. Salina Street will receive a refresh of the Syracuse Poster Project posters. The program launches this Thursday afternoon (January 26) and will receive press coverage and appear in the Syracuse New Times (January 25). Ms. Schroeder also updated the board on the downtown window decorating contest that was held last month. She noted the “Window Wonderland Contest” went very well and attracted 22 participating businesses. After receiving 852 votes, the first place winner was the Changing Room, Vintage Love took second place and Olive on Brooklea took third. Chairman Breuer asked Ms. Schroeder what kind of art is being displayed in the Art in the Window program and she responded it will be mixed-media.

**IX. INTERSTATE 81**

Ms. Treier gave the board a brief update on the status of I-81. She noted that two weeks ago, the Governor announced that an independent study will be conducted of the I-81 process which involves reconsideration of the tunnel. Since NYSDOT had already prepared the DEIS to include the community grid or viaduct option, the NEDA Process will now be put on hold while the independent study is conducted. Ms. Treier noted that she contacted Mark Frechette at NYSDOT for an update and he noted that they expect the study to be completed by the summer and it will either be verified or a new alternative will have to go through the DEIS process. Mr. Frechette believes a decision could still be made this year. Ms. Treier asked the board to consider what the Downtown Committee can do to raise the profile of its position and be more vocal on the benefit of the community grid and how it will support downtown revitalization (including the University area). She noted that she has another conference call scheduled this Thursday with Mr. Frechette to get an update on the time frame of the revised process. Mr. Frechette commented to Ms. Treier that the extension of the study will present more time to look at the designs for the “missing link” and the Northside design concerns.

**X. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Honorable Maroun noted that the council did support the community grid option as well. He also noted that the City is undertaking a re-zoning project (ReZone Syracuse) and will be conducting public forums in February. The proposed revised ordinance will include a new re-zone map. The original zoning ordinance is approximately 100 years old and needs to be updated to meet the current design standard and be easier to administer. Mr. Maroun encouraged the board to attend these sessions for their input. More information on the project can be found on the city’s webpage: <http://www.syracuse.ny.us/ReZoneSyracuse.aspx>

**XI. OTHER BUSINESS AND ADJOURN**

With no other business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 4:55 pm.

Next Meeting: **Tuesday, March 21<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 pm**  
**Downtown Committee of Syracuse**  
**115 West Fayette St.**