

**DOWNTOWN COMMITTEE OF SYRACUSE, INC.**

**November 16, 2010**

**Board Room, 572 South Salina Street**

**3:00 p.m.**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Attendance**

- Members:** Chairman Breuer; Ms. Littlejohn; Messrs. Cowin, Fiorito, Fournier, Koolakian, Mokrzycki, Stoner and Tripoli.
- Staff:** Mss. Reed, Romeo and Treier; Messrs. Mankiewicz, Marcon, and McFadden.
- Guest:** Anthony Catsimatides – Cathedral Square Neighborhood Association  
Tom Greenwood – Property Owner  
David Holder – Syracuse Convention and Visitors Bureau  
Thomas Kamide – Bonadio Group  
Tom Kogut – O'Brien and Gere  
Sean O'Key – Oncenter  
Bill Ryan – Syracuse Common Council  
John Sayer – Pyramid  
Ron Tascarella – M&T Bank

**I. Moment of Silence**

Chairman Breuer asked the Board to observe a moment of silence for Downtown Committee Board member Steve Krause, who passed away in October.

**II. Welcome and Minutes of September 21, 2010**

Chairman Breuer welcomed guests and members present.

Chairman Breuer asked for consideration of the minutes of September 21, 2010. Chairman Breuer moved and Mr. Cowin seconded a motion to approve the minutes as distributed. The motion was unanimously carried.

**III. Public Comments**

Mr. Greenwood asked for clarification on board member terms and who appointed members. Chairman Breuer responded that Board members are appointed by the Mayor with terms of four years. After that term the member has to be reappointed by the Mayor in order to continue on as a member of the Board.

No other public comments were presented to the board at this time.

#### **IV. Financial Report**

Mr. Fournier provided the financial report as of October 31, 2010. He noted that on the expense line, administration was ahead of budget because of the October audit and the annual report. Security was also ahead of budget due to last year's vehicle purchase. Mr. Fournier stated that all of the income and expense from the Farmers' Market and the Arts & Crafts Festival are in for the year.

Chairman Breuer asked for a motion to approve the financial reports subject to audit. Mr. Koolakian moved and Mr. Fiorito seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously carried.

#### **V. Economic Development**

##### **a. Landmark Theatre Project**

Chairman Breuer stated that construction has begun on the Landmark Theatre's stagehouse expansion. Asbestos remediation has taken place and the auditorium has been isolated from the stagehouse. The existing stagehouse will be removed and the new stagehouse will be constructed. The theatre will reopen next fall. The Landmark Theatre Board is currently undertaking a capital campaign to do improvements which will be announced shortly. The renovation projected is being funded through a combination of grants, historic preservation tax credit equity, and construction and permanent financing being provided by a consortium of banks including KeyBank, M&T, Alliance Bank and the Community Preservation Corporation. Assemblyman Magnarelli secured the largest of the grants, \$6.5 million, from the New York State Assembly.

##### **b. Bank Street Project**

Ms. Treier provided the Board with an overview of the proposed Bank Street Project. As a result of the development taking place on the east side of the 300 block of South Salina Street, the Downtown Committee, the City and a property owner have started the formation of a Task Force to look at Bank Street and start to address some of the barriers to further redevelopment of the block. For many years, Bank Street has been used as a service alley, with a number of dumpsters located on the street. Due to the development of Peter Muserlian's Syracuse Trust Building (which will add four residential condos) and a neighboring building anticipated to start soon, there is a need to re-examine the use of Bank Street and try to make this more of a pedestrian friendly environment. Ms. Treier provided the Board with a proposed concept of changes that could be made. The proposal looks at the possibility of adding street parking, but also finding a solution to the dumpsters that are currently located on that block. The task force has started conversations with all of the property owners to explain the need to reexamine Bank Street's use, to better understand who the haulers are and what their pick-up schedules are, as well as to understand the implications of these changes in terms of cost and pick up frequencies.

##### **c. Preserve America Agreement**

Ms. Treier explained that the Downtown Committee was awarded a \$150,000 grant from the National Park Service in January 2009, and that the contract had finally been received. The grant is a matching grant, but 50% of the match can come from in-kind services, such as staff time spent on projects. Only municipalities can apply, so the Downtown Committee worked with the City of Syracuse to apply on the Downtown Committee's behalf, with the Downtown Committee providing all of the required matching funds. This grant expands the Downtown Committee's existing Marketing and Economic Development marketing efforts.

Ms. Treier asked the board for a motion to approve the execution a contract, subject to approval from the Downtown Committee's attorney, with the City of Syracuse relative to the Preserve America grant funds. Mr. Stoner moved and Mr. Fournier seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

## **VI. Marketing**

### **a. CNY Veterans Parade**

Ms. Reed stated that the Downtown Committee has supported the efforts of Assemblyman Magnarelli's office with the CNY Veterans Parade. The Downtown Committee helped promote the parade, as well as facilitated the donation of the parade program and the creation of a website. The Downtown Committee also helped organize a poster contest amongst Onondaga and Oswego County middle and high school students. The posters were displayed at the Museum of Young Art and along the parade route. The MOST donated close to 80 admission tickets for the classes of the winning artists. The parade program and winning posters were distributed to the Board for review.

### **b. Holiday Program**

Ms. Reed explained that although the City has cut back on many of their holiday lighting programs, these cut-backs will not have a significant effect on downtown Syracuse. The City will continue to decorate Clinton and Hanover Squares, as well as Columbus Circle and Fayette Park. They will also continue to share the cost of downtown decorations with the Downtown Committee. The Downtown Committee has contracted with a local firm to supply pole decoration on Montgomery, Warren and Salina Streets, part of Clinton Square and lights in the trees in Armory Square. The cost will be the same as in previous years, but the new decorations and tree lights will use LED bulbs which will save 90% of the energy used before and cut the cost of the power bill by 90%. Installation is in progress now.

The Downtown Committee is working with Solon Quinn again to produce the new holiday television ads, which will include a call to action for shopping and dining downtown. He and his crew have been filming in various downtown locations over the past few weeks. The ads are scheduled to begin next week.

The Downtown Committee is also organizing performances at the Landmark Theatre and in Hanover Square on the night of the Clinton Square Tree Lighting. Chairman Breuer suggested that the Downtown Committee contact building owners in the future to encourage them to decorate their buildings for the Tree Lighting as well.

Mr. Stoner inquired about the status of the branding effort. Ms. Reed reported that the Downtown Committee had entered into a contract with Stress Design.

## **VII. Security**

Ms. Treier stated that one of the goals outlined under the Development & Revitalization section of the Downtown Committee's strategic plan was to better meet the demands of a growing visitor base in downtown. The new security and visitor storefront space at the Galleries provides a tremendous opportunity for the Downtown Committee to realize this goal. The Downtown Committee's former security visitor information center at the Dey's building was marketed as a visitor center as well, however, visitors found it difficult to find and it primarily functioned as a security center, with the occasional walk-in. The new space at the Galleries offers 2 adjacent storefronts, and one has great

visibility to pedestrian traffic. It is also closely located to the OnCenter, as well as the Hotel Syracuse. The Downtown Committee would like to assure that they are doing everything they can in terms of getting downtown information in the hands of visitors so that they can capture all of the spending potential and tourism spin-off effects in downtown. Board member Mark Russell assisted staff to lend his expertise on how they could best utilize this space. From his visit and a discussion of goals, he provided a conceptual design and elements for the new security and visitor information center, which Ms. Treier distributed at the last Board meeting for review.

Ms. Treier also pointed out that the Downtown Committee was awarded a grant from the Preserve America program, so there are sufficient funds in place to print brochures, maps and information to stock the visitor center. Also, thanks to funding secured by Assemblyman Magnarelli, the Downtown Committee has funding in place to hire two Ambassadors to improve the visitor experience downtown, providing directions and information to anyone within the district. The Ambassadors will compliment both the Downtown Committee's security and environmental maintenance teams. The Downtown Committee has received a good number of resumes and will interview candidates starting next week.

The Downtown Committee is working in partnership with the CVB to assure that when the Bowlers Congress is in town next year, there is a coordinated effort to get the information in their hands. The Visitor Center will have furniture to allow visitors to sit and review the information, as well as iPad technology. The Downtown Committee is also exploring development of a specific downtown app for the iPads. The Visitor Center will have a reception desk where the iPads will be secured, which will also provide a place for the current staff to work and an area for brochure display. The Downtown Committee is also exploring ways to play the Downtown Committee's commercials and Syracuse recruitment videos to provide a sense of activity inside to visitors passing by.

Ms. Treier stated that after much research and pricing, she believed the Downtown Committee could equip the space for \$15,000. The only item missing from this Visitor Center is a restroom facility for visitors and staff. The Security officers and police officers currently have to use the public restrooms in the Galleries, which is not ideal. The Downtown Committee is currently investigating the cost of installing a bathroom in this space. Ms. Treier stated that she believed the cost will be around \$5,000, making the total expenditure for the visitor and security center \$20,000.

In the event that the Galleries terminates the Downtown Committee's agreement before the term of the lease has expired, the Downtown Committee will be able to move and relocate all items except for the bathroom improvement. The Downtown Committee would be reimbursed for expenditures unable to be removed from the space.

Ms. Treier asked the Board's permission to spend \$20,000 from the Downtown Committee Reserves to properly outfit the Security and Visitor information center to allow them to capture the visitor market in downtown. Mr. Cowin moved and Mr. Koolakian seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

### **VIII. Environmental Maintenance**

Ms. Treier stated that the Downtown Committee's strategic plan identified that the Downtown Committee should become more involved and undertake beautification efforts in downtown. Also, when the Downtown Committee met with the Common Councilors to review the Downtown Committee contract this year, one of the chief concerns from the Councilors was the image and

aesthetics of downtown Syracuse, and they had asked the Downtown Committee to look at projects that would physically improve the image of the area. This ranged from vacant buildings, which the Downtown Committee is working to address through the various grant programs they administer or secures in downtown as well as to concerns with public spaces.

Ms. Treier stated that the Downtown Committee had invited Anthony Catsimatides to come in today to talk about a program called Design Your Street, which the Downtown Committee has been working on in partnership with the Cathedral Square Neighborhood Association.

She stated the Downtown Committee has committed funds toward this effort to purchase planters or hanging baskets and filler materials. She described that one of the concerns from the City was who would provide insurance for this program. The Association cannot provide the coverage but the Downtown Committee has the liability insurance that would provide what the City is looking for. Covering this program will not result in increased cost for the Downtown Committee which the Association cannot.

Ms. Treier described maintenance as another concern. She stated that the Downtown Committee was working with the Cathedral Square Neighborhood Association on a maintenance plan and would be looking to partner with the Downtown TNT to make this happen, as well as start discussions with the Parks Department on potential summer assistance. The Downtown Committee may need to put more resources into the program eventually.

Mr. Catsimatides explained that the program was intended to attract more potential to the neighborhood, make the neighborhood more attractive and encourage the community to be more active in the neighborhood. He stated that the program could expand to other neighborhoods if successful.

He emphasized the importance of engaging in partnerships to implement the project, due to the regulations and requirements associated with the project. Mr. Greenwood described the process as difficult and suggested that there needs to be a City effort to help streamline the process. Mr. Mankiewicz stated that the Downtown Committee intended to work through the issues with this process and get started with the project.

Ms. Littlejohn offered her assistance to coordinate a meeting with members of National Grid and the City to see how to work through the issues.

## **IX. Discussion Item**

Mr. Mankiewicz described that the Downtown Committee had been contacted by two areas adjacent to downtown about expanding the special assessment district to include them. One group was the property owners around North Salina, State and Butternut Streets. They had approached the Downtown Committee about moving the district boundaries to take in the area north of downtown Syracuse. The other group was the Connective Corridor. Both groups are interested in the maintenance function of the Downtown Committee.

Mr. Mankiewicz explained that expansion of the district requires an act of the Common Council. Expanding the district instead of creating a new organization would eliminate much of the overhead associated with a new business improvement district. The Downtown Committee would not take

over City functions in these proposed areas. Any assessments would have to go to additional activities in these specific areas.

Mr. Cowin inquired about the percentage of property owners needed to expand the district. Mr. Mankiewicz replied that 51% would have to object to prevent expansion of the district. He stated that it was unlikely for the Common Council to approve expansion of the district if even a fraction of the 51% objected.

Mr. Koolakian expressed concern about the Downtown Committee not having sufficient income to better provide services to the district if expanded.

Mr. Tripoli stated that the Board would need to better understand the responsibilities for the Connective Corridor. Mr. Mankiewicz explained that the Connective Corridor's "ETM Plan" lays out roles and responsibilities and would be a good document to work from.

Chairman Breuer questioned if the Downtown Committee wanted to expand maintenance functions, or if the Committee was interested in improved programs instead. Mr. Mankiewicz stated that the Downtown Committee had reviewed the strategic plan and that expansion was discussed in it.

Mr. Koolakian emphasized the importance of marketing and maintaining downtown and stated that the Board would need to understand maintenance and improvement costs.

Mr. Stoner suggested the Downtown Committee look at where expansion might make sense and also consider the maintenance function because it could open the door into other areas.

Mr. Fournier stated that this would need to make financial sense for the Downtown Committee to expand.

Chairman Breuer suggested that the Downtown Committee reexamine the district's boundaries since it was discussed in the strategic plan, but that expansion be looked at in terms of the effect it will have on downtown. He suggested that a conversation would need to take place with the City regarding responsibilities in these areas.

Mr. Cowin suggested that a cost per foot of maintenance be calculated and also suggested that the benefits to new property owners not currently assessed would need to be defined.

Mr. Koolakian stated that research was necessary in regards to expanding the district and that the focus must remain on keeping resources downtown that downtown property owners are currently paying for.

Mr. Fiorito suggested that property owners be approached to hear their opinions regarding expansion. Mr. Mankiewicz stated that the next step would be for the Board to begin discussing expansion with property owners.

**X. Other Business and Adjourn**

With no other business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 4:25 pm.

Next meeting: **January 18, 2011**  
**Board Room, 572 South Salina Street**

**XI. Executive Session**

After the regular meeting adjourned an Executive Session was held to consider two real estate transactions and a personnel matter:

- The Downtown Committee unanimously authorized a sublease of the 18<sup>th</sup> floor of the State Tower Building to Cleveland Hughes;
- The Downtown Committee unanimously agreed to enter into an agreement to license a parking lot owned by One Webster's Landing LLC for a nighttime and weekend operation, and to enter into an agreement for a license with the New York State Department of Transportation to operate an adjacent parcel as a public parking lot; and
- The Downtown Committee unanimously voted to approve changes to the company's 401(k) plan.

With no further business the Executive Session was adjourned.