

DOWNTOWN COMMITTEE OF SYRACUSE, INC.

November 22, 2011

**Onondaga Historical Association,
321 Montgomery Street**

3:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

Attendance

- Members:** Chairman Breuer; Messrs. Doucette, Fisher, Fournier, Koolakian, Maxwell, Shapiro and Tripoli.
- Staff:** Mss. Carrington, Erno, Reed, Romeo, Pivovarova, Sonne, and Treier; Messrs. DeJesus, Marcon, and McFadden.
- Guest:** Anthony Ortega – Armory Square Association
Brian Balash – Pyramid Brokerage
Thomas Kamide – Bonadio Group
Lindsey Speicher – City of Syracuse
Barbara Miller – Gilberti Law Office

I. Welcome and Minutes of September 20th

Chairman Breuer welcomed guests and members present. He welcomed new Board member Joel Shapiro.

Chairman Breuer asked for consideration of the minutes of September 20th. Mr. Doucette moved and Mr. Fisher seconded a motion to approve the minutes as distributed. The motion was unanimously carried.

II. Financial Report as of October 31st

Mr. Fournier stated that income is on budget and expenses are below budget. The Dinosaur BBQ parking lot continues to do well and is on track to bring in more income than projected due to the number of events held at the restaurant. Marketing and Economic Development are running below budget, both due to a change in staffing. Currently Environmental Maintenance is running below budget. The Environmental Maintenance staff has not begun the streetscape replacement program, which expenses will be starting to accrue over the next few months. Marketing is below budget, particularly in the printing line, due to the fact that Marketing is not producing as many hard copy brochures and is sending out information through social media.

Mr. Fournier asked for approval of the financial report of October 31st, subject to audit. Mr. Koolakian moved and Mr. Maxwell seconded motion, the motion was unanimously carried.

III. Administration

a. Execution of Annual Contract

Ms. Treier stated that the annual operating contract from the City had been received. She asked the Board for a resolution to allow the Executive Director to enter into and execute the annual operating contract with the City of Syracuse, noting that the only change from last years contract was the date.

Mr. Doucette inquired about the purpose of the contract. Ms. Treier stated that contract allowed the Downtown Committee to contract with the city of Syracuse to draw the Special Assessment funds for its operations.

Mr. Fisher requested that a copy of the contract be sent to the Board members.

Mr. Tripoli moved and Mr. Maxwell seconded a motion to allow the Executive Director to execute the annual contract. The motion was unanimously carried.

IV. Economic Development

a. Regional Economic Development Council

Ms. Carrington stated that Governor Cuomo announced over the summer that 10 Regional Economic Development Councils would be created to develop strategic plans for their regions that would be used as guidelines for state funding requests. The four Councils with the strongest plans will be rewarded \$40 million each and the remaining \$40 million would be split among the remaining six Councils.

The Central New York plan was submitted on November 14th and the awards are scheduled to be decided on December 8th. The Central New York plan includes 30 priority projects throughout 5 counties, which collectively represent a total investment of \$785 million that will leverage a return on investment of 28:1.

The Downtown Committee staff helped in preparation of the white papers by providing key downtown projects and recommending strategies for the area. Ms. Carrington noted that one of the projects that was included is the Merchants Bank redevelopment. This project involves the adaptive reuse and reclamation of 152,000 square feet of vacant space in the heart of Syracuse's downtown urban core for a mixed use facility that will include 25,450 square feet of commercial space, 66 residential apartments, and a 65-car parking garage. The total project cost is \$12.5 million.

Ms. Carrington added that another component of the Governor's Regional Economic Development Council initiative is a Consolidated Funding Application (CFA). The CFA is an online application to access up to \$1 billion in economic development resources currently available from multiple New York State agencies and authorities. Through it, applicants can access multiple State funding sources through one application. Nine State agencies have made funding available through the CFA process.

Mr. Koolakian asked if the old Verizon Building was one of the projects on the list. Ms. Treier responded that it was not as there is not a developer in the works for that property, however it would be eligible based on the regional strategy created.

V. Marketing and Communications

a. Creative Core Connect App

Ms. Romeo reported that in March, the Downtown Committee partnered with New York's Creative Core and CenterState CEO to launch the Creative Core Connect mobile app. The app is available to download for free on iPhone, Android and Blackberry smartphones, as well as iPad.

She explained that users can search over 3,000 businesses based on category type, by a personalized list of favorites, geographic area or by county, as well as create a "to do" list. Users can push the 'Downtown Syracuse' button at the top of the app to search downtown Syracuse businesses only. Each business listing provides a link to the business' website, a push button call option, a map, and a push button to get either walking or driving directions. The app is GPS-based, which means that the businesses are listed in order of those closest to where the user is standing. Besides from listing all downtown businesses, the app also lists all downtown public parking options under the Parking/Transportation category.

Ms. Romeo noted that each business receives a basic listing, but businesses can upgrade their listing to include a photo and a brief description of their business and also have the ability to create a coupon for their business that will appear with their listing. Downtown Syracuse businesses receive the same discounted rates on these features that CenterState CEO Chamber members do because of the Downtown Committee's involvement in the app creation.

She added that the Creative Core Connect is available on the iPads in the Downtown Security and Information Center so that visitors can create, print or email the "to do" list or directions to downtown Syracuse businesses. The two main target audiences of the app are students and visitors, who will find the direction function of the app particularly useful.

Ms. Romeo stated that the app is about to undergo its first major upgrade, which will include an overhauled databases, more specific categories and enhanced listings.

Ms. Pivovarova added downtown businesses have received window clings, coasters and coffee sleeves. These items have QR codes which will bring visitors to the site to download the app.

Mr. Shapiro asked if this app can be marketed to the hotels. Ms. Romeo remarked that the Syracuse Convention and Visitors' Bureau is very interested in this app and is looking at the different way of marketing it towards visitors to the area.

b. Holiday Program

Ms. Reed reported that the holiday decorations will be installed by the tree lighting ceremony on November 25th.

She presented the new TV spot that was produced by Solon Quinn Studios. Mr. Shapiro suggested that the spots should say Downtown Syracuse and not just downtown. This will allow a larger audience to know what downtown the spot is referring to if it is shown in other markets. Ms. Reed stated that the spots started airing on Time Warner Cable on November 21st.

c. Holiday Gift Guide

Ms. Romeo reported that the Downtown Committee has produced its first-ever Downtown Holiday Gift Guide, featuring 23 downtown businesses. The Downtown Committee invited all

downtown retailers to list an item in the guide. The guide is available on the Downtown Committee's website, as well on Facebook. A copy of the guide was provided to the Board in their binders. The Downtown Holiday Gift Guide will be used as part of the Downtown Committee's marketing efforts to promote shopping downtown for the holidays.

VI. Armory Square Report

Mr. Ortega stated that the Armory Square Association has been working with Onondaga County, Save the Rain, and the City of Syracuse regarding the Trolley Lot. The City of Syracuse will be opening the Washington Street garage on weekends and extended hours on weeknights to help with overflow that would normally park in the Trolley Lot. The Armory Square Association is working with Solon Quinn Studios to produce a commercial to let visitors know that there is still plenty of parking downtown. He also noted that a dedicated radio frequency is being setup to let people know where to find parking. The Association is partnering with Galaxy Communications for the frequency. The Association is looking into electronic vehicles as another means of getting visitors to Armory Square. A group of people from Annapolis demonstrated the Gem car, a six passenger vehicle, similar to a golf cart. The car would be an "on-call" option to bring visitors from garages to Armory Square.

Mr. Breuer asked if there are spaces opened in the Trolley Lot during the construction. Mr. Ortega responded that there are approximately 80 parking spaces, but a sign warns users to park at their own risk.

VII. Discussion

a. Boundary Expansion

Ms. Treier provided two letters to the Board members in their binders – one from the Greater Northside Business Association and one from the Connective Corridor Management Committee formally requesting the Downtown Committee expand environmental maintenance services to cover their districts. Staff has had previous discussions about expanding its boundaries to provide all of the 5 services to new areas, however, at this time environmental maintenance is the only service requested by these two entities.

She stated that on the Northside, the property owners are looking for maintenance and cleaning activities for streetscape and some small park areas that have been in existence for some time. They view the work of the Downtown Committee as a cost effective solution to bring their public areas up to the standard that is provided in downtown. There is also a strong interest for snow clearing assistance in the winter.

Ms. Treier noted that with the Connective Corridor, the conversation is being driven for a different reason. The Connective Corridor on University Avenue and East Genesee Street as well as the Warehouse Node will be ready at varying stages in 2012. There are currently no funds to allow construction work on Fayette Street through the central business district. The Maintenance Committee has been having discussions about how to maintain the infrastructure once it is built and have agreed that it makes the most sense to expand the Downtown Committee's environmental maintenance services to run the length of the corridor.

Ms. Treier explained that the Common Council has the power to amend the boundaries of the Special Assessment District. She asked the Board to consider the idea of expanding the Downtown Committee's boundaries for maintenance services on the Connective Corridor. A

timeline of activities to lay out what steps will be needed, and when, for this boundary expansion to take effect July 1, 2012, was provided to all Board members in their binders. The Board members were also provided a budget for the Connective Corridor maintenance activities. July 1, 2012 is the start date desired by the Connective Corridor. The Northside owners have agreed that their expansion could take place the following year.

Chairman Breuer summarized what the Board needs to discuss:

- (1) Request from the Northside Business Association for environmental maintenance services only;
- (2) Request from the Connective Corridor Management Committee for environmental maintenance services only;
- (3) The budget for these two expansions; and
- (4) The timing for these two expansions.

Mr. Doucette questioned if the boundaries are expanded, would this new expansion be a different zone. Ms. Treier responded that the assessment is based on the services provided. The city's Assessment Office will take the proposed budget and put that number into the formula. From this formula, the Special Assessment will be calculated for each parcel.

Mr. Doucette inquired why the boundaries should be expanded to maintain the Connective Corridor. Ms. Treier stated that if the Downtown Committee does not do this, there is a potential for another Business Improvement District (BID) to be created for these specific services which could eventually overlap the Downtown Committee's boundaries. Mr. Breuer added that the Downtown Committee's environmental maintenance crew does a great job and that another BID does not need to be created to do this service.

Mr. Tripoli noted that the maintenance for the Connective Corridor will cost more. The maintenance rate for the Corridor will be higher than the rest of downtown. He felt that the Connective Corridor team did not look at what it would cost to upkeep the Corridor. Mr. Shapiro asked who would be paying for the maintenance of the Corridor. Ms. Treier replied that the Connective Corridor is paying for the project but the property owners would be paying for the maintenance. Mr. Doucette inquired if there was a provision for maintenance of the project. Ms. Treier stated that there is \$500,000 in capital funds for the purchase of equipment that is needed, as well as trash receptacles, and furniture so that replacements would be available.

Mr. Koolakian expressed concern regarding the snow removal of sidewalks and crosswalks. The priority should be downtown first. Ms. Treier stated that downtown and the Connective Corridor zones will have their own dedicated staffs. Mr. McFadden added that with the expansion, there will be more staff and equipment available for the areas. Mr. McFadden also provided the Board with a list of his staff's responsibilities.

Mr. Tripoli asked if the Downtown Committee had a clear idea of what is being asked for maintenance. Mr. McFadden commented that he has walked the route with the Connective Corridor Committee and city of Syracuse's Department of Public Works. The responsibility of upkeep of the areas would fall with the Downtown Committee and the city of Syracuse's Department of Public Works.

Mr. Doucette added that the property owners need to agree to the assessment. Ms. Treier responded that technically the Common Council can amend the boundaries as they see fit, but the Downtown Committee wants the property owners to approve the expansion. She reported that these request are coming from some property owners but meetings are being scheduled to explain how this would affect each property owner. She said it was important to note that the Downtown Committee was being invited to look at expanding and is not the entity pushing for this.

Mr. Fisher asked that with the central business district, with its current boundaries, is the new area designed to have the budget break? Ms. Treier responded that the new area would be only charged for the services it receives and downtown property owners would not be affected. Mr. Doucette asked about cost per linear foot and property value. The assessment must be higher on University Hill since in the proposed expanded area it is less dense. Ms. Treier answered that there are different zones of assessment which factor into payment per property.

Multiple Board members expressed concern about the budget as it was handed out, particularly in regards to ensuring enough funds were being factored in for maintenance. Board members do not want an expansion to take away from the level of current downtown services. Chairman Breuer stated that this expansion should be looked at as an opportunity. Ms. Treier added that the Connective Corridor is being built and that the Downtown Committee services are needed. Chairman Breuer requested that a new budget be done that also included the current BID so that Board members could see the budget for the central business district compared to the Connective Corridor.

VIII. Public Comments

Chairman Breuer opened the floor for public comments.

Mr. Kamide added to the boundary discussion stating that no else can do what is being asked for the price. Environmental maintenance creates a positive image for downtown.

IX. Other Business and Adjourn

With no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 4:45 pm.

Next meeting: **Tuesday, January 17th at 3:00 pm**
572 South Salina Street, Board Room