



James V. Breuer, Chair

David A. Mankiewicz, Executive Director

DOWNTOWN COMMITTEE OF SYRACUSE, INC.

March 15, 2011

Board Room, 572 South Salina Street

3:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

Attendance

Members: Chairman Breuer; Ms. Littlejohn; Messrs. Carter, Fiorito, Koolakian, Stoner and Tripoli.

Ex-Officio: Mr. Simpson.

Staff: Mss. Erno, Reed, Romeo, Sonne and Treier; Messrs. Mankiewicz and McFadden.

Guest: Brian Balash – Pyramid Brokerage
John Barmundi
Ed Basta
John Butler – Property Owner
Anthony Catsimatides – Cathedral Square Neighborhood Association
Mario Colone – Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council
Nell Donaldson – Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council
Tom Greenwood – Property Owner
Bob Kukenberger – CDM
Brian Macrae – Synapse Partners
Nader Maroun – Syracuse Common Council
Lindsay Speicher – City of Syracuse
Sarah Stephens – Synapse Partners
Ron Tascarella – M&T Bank

I. Welcome and Minutes of January 18, 2011

Chairman Breuer welcomed guests and members present.

Chairman Breuer asked for consideration of the minutes of January 18, 2011. Mr. Fiorito moved and Mr. Koolakian seconded a motion to approve the minutes as distributed. The motion was unanimously carried.

II. Financial Report as of February 28, 2011

Mr. Mankiewicz noted that the financial statement represents two thirds of the fiscal year. On the income side, 61% of the income is in for the year. Interest income is running low. Three grants are still expected to come in before the end of June. He also noted that the parking lot is running ahead of budget, which should generate a small surplus for this year.

On the expense side, Mr. Mankiewicz noted a concern regarding Environmental Maintenance. Due to the winter weather conditions, there was an increase in equipment repair due to wear and tear, equipment had to be replaced, and fuel prices are on the rise. All other expense items are on budget. All expenses due to the Farmers' Market and Arts and Crafts Festival are all in.

Mr. Mankiewicz asked for approval of the financial report of February 28th, subject to audit. Mr. Fiorito moved and Mr. Koolakian seconded a motion, the motion was unanimously carried.

III. Economic Development

a. Synapse Downtown Gateway

Ms. Sarah Stephens, Director of Business Development and Public Relations, of Synapse provided an overview of the Synapse Downtown Gateway. Synapse is an environmental risk management firm that has been in Syracuse for almost seven years.

Recently, Synapse closed on the former Water Street Gym. The company has been using green technology for years and will redevelop the former Water Street Gym into a LEED certified site. In this expanded facility, the company will showcase green technologies and expand their current office space. Currently, Synapse is located at 325 East Water Street. The current office space will be renovated to create executive office space.

Synapse plans to install nine electric vehicle charging stations along the 300 East Water Street block, which will be powered by the roof mounted PV system. Green infrastructure improvements to the former Water Street Gym include porous pavers, vegetation planting, streetscape, and cistern rainwater collectors. This project is being conducted in coordination with Onondaga County's Save the Rain combined sewer overflow initiative. Synapse's construction loan is tied to LEED certification.

A grant has been submitted to create 104 charging stations throughout the community, as part of Synapse's electric vehicle charging infrastructure deployment. These units have to be installed by September 2011.

Mr. Koolakian inquired when the Synapse Downtown Gateway would be completed. Ms. Stephens stated that it should be completed by end of summer 2011. Ms. Littlejohn asked how many employees are at Synapse. Ms. Stephens responded that Synapse has 30 employees.

b. Main Street Application

Ms. Treier reported that New York State is currently soliciting proposals for the next round of New York Main Street Funding with an application deadline of April 29th. The Downtown Committee has had significant success with this program in the past. Since 2006, the Downtown Committee has utilized \$667,000 in grant funds to support the renovation of more than 30 buildings that has leveraged over \$12 million in downtown investment. Ms. Treier stated that the area targeted for funds for this round of funding are Warren and Jefferson Streets and the Downtown Committee is eligible to apply for up to \$500,000 in grant funds. Based on the Application guidelines, the strategy would be to apply for an anchor grant for the former HSBC Building to assist the new ownership in renovations, as well as apply for façade and building renovation grants and streetscape funds.

Mr. Breuer inquired how the grants funds are split among the anchor grant and other recipients. Ms. Treier responded that \$250,000 will go to the HSBC building, \$60,000 for streetscape and the remainder of the funds would go towards façade and building improvements. Mr. Simpson asked for further explanation of the coordination of this grant. Ms. Treier stated that the Downtown Committee works with the City on areas where there is current development. The Downtown Committee notifies all property owners in the eligible area about the grant.

Ms. Treier asked the Board for a resolution to submit the application, which will be executed by the Executive Director. Mr. Carter moved and Mr. Koolakian seconded a motion, the motion was unanimously carried.

c. Downtown Living Tour

Ms. Treier announced that the 5th Annual Downtown Living Tour will be held on Saturday May 21st. This year the Tour will feature both residential units and highlight a few workspaces as well to show the benefits of both living and working in downtown Syracuse. Due to the Sewer reconstruction project taking place in the northern part of downtown later this year, the Tour will focus on the Armory Square, Salina Street, and Columbus Circle districts this year. Planning is well underway and all of the marketing for the event will start during the first week of May.

d. ICSC Program

Ms. Treier reported that the Downtown Committee is part of the advisory committee for the NYS ICSC Alliance Program, which has the mission of bringing both public and private sector representatives together to achieve common development goals. Past partnerships in other cities and states have focused on how to attract retail to specific areas and a focus on white elephant properties in communities. Events serve to inform the communities on how to make retail successful from the public sector and what it takes to do a successful development project, in addition to looking at what type of climate needs to be here. Ms. Treier shared with the ICSC Alliance an outline for a Retail Fair event that she is planning for this summer and the Alliance team is interested in working with the Downtown Committee to plan it, particularly because of its focus on retail. The focus of the event would be retail recruitment and development and contain a number of tracts including an overview of the downtown market, financing options for businesses and also tracts that explore how to improve the retail environment. The morning sessions would be informational and the afternoon would include deal making sessions and a possible tour of spaces.

IV. Presentation on County's Sewer Separation and Combined Sewer Overflow Project

Mr. Robert Kukenberger and Mr. Nicholas Capozza provided an overview of the County's sewer separation and combined sewer overflow project. Mr. Kukenberger stated that green infrastructure started with County Executive Joanie Mahoney. Currently there are 50 projects that are being built with green infrastructure funds.

The sewer separation project will be on the north side of downtown. The streets affected will be North Franklin Street from West Genesee Street to Herald Place; West Willow Street from Clinton Street to West Genesee Street; and West Genesee Street from Clinton Street to the West Street Overpass. The purpose of this project is to separate storm water runoff from the sanitary sewer lines. New smaller diameter sewers will be installed to handle the sanitary flow and the existing larger diameter sewers will be used for storm water flows. Mr. Kukenberger stated that some of the construction will be done through a trenchless technology to reinforce the existing lines but others

sections of this project would require open excavation of the street. This project is expected to begin in July or August of 2011 and be completed before the end of 2011, with final restoration and green components of this project in the spring of 2012.

Mr. Tripoli noted that this project looks like it is of a larger scope than what was recently completed on Montgomery Street. He expressed the concern that the Montgomery Street project took much longer than originally scheduled and he hoped that the County and its consultants would study that one, to make sure that it did not happen here. Mr. Kukenberger responded that from what he knew of the Montgomery Street project, that this one is larger, and that he would talk to the City to see what lessons were learned on that project. Mr. Mankiewicz inquired if all streets will be closed during construction. Mr. Kukenberger stated that the goal is to keep a single lane of traffic open, hopefully two lanes in some areas. Mr. Breuer asked for further explanation of the spring restoration work. Mr. Kukenberger said that some paving may need to be done, the Pocket Park and some sidewalk replacement work.

Mr. Kukenberger reported on the combined sewer overflow (CSO) storage facility that will be constructed in the Trolley Lot in Armory Square. The project consists of the construction of three tunnels, which will be 40 feet underground and run the full length of the Trolley Lot. The tunnels will capture up to 6 million gallons during any one rain storm and will pump out the combined sewage from the tunnels to the Syracuse Metropolitan Treatment Plant on Hiawatha Boulevard. Mr. Capozza added that the tunnels will capture all storm water from the parking lot to flush out the tunnels. There will also be two buildings constructed on either end of the lot, which will mimic the style of buildings from Armory Square.

Mr. Capozza stated that there will be a parking lot constructed above the tunnels that will have about 420 spaces available. Construction on this project will begin this summer and will be completed in 2013. To help alleviate construction vehicle traffic from downtown, a temporary bridge will be installed to West Street from the site. Currently, the Downtown Committee is working with the City and County to help with alternative parking while construction is occurring. Mr. Capozza added that the engineers did a feasibility study to have temporary parking available when there is down time during construction.

Mr. Koolakian inquired if there is anything stored in the tunnels when there is no storm water and if there would be heavy odors coming from the tunnels. Mr. Capozza responded that there is nothing stored in the tunnels. There are carbon filtration units to help with eliminating odor. Mr. Capozza also noted that they discovered ground water at the site that had three times the salinity of the ocean. They will construct a “bathtub” to keep the water on site and not allow it to reach Onondaga Creek.

V. Marketing Report

a. Results of Dining Week

Ms. Reed reported that restaurants had great success with Dining Week. This is the seventh year of this program. Dining Week had 22 restaurants participating this year, which is more than previous years. Restaurants reported high attendance during the two week promotion and there was more media coverage than in the past. Ms. Reed reported that restaurants said that they had up to 100% more business than a typical week during this time of year and that business was up 75% in sales over last year’s Dining Week. AmeriCU, the title sponsor of Dining Week, has already given a preliminary indication that they are on board for next year. Also, Ms. Reed

stated that another potential sponsor has approached the Downtown Committee regarding Dining Week sponsorship.

Ms. Littlejohn asked if there were any thoughts of expanding Dining Week or have another week later in the year. Ms. Reed responded that the Downtown Committee did try the program during the summer but the restaurants had to pay for the promotion of it since the Downtown Committee budget only is budgeted for one event. With the potential of another sponsor for this event, another week could be added without the restaurants having to pay for the promotion. She added that another option to expand this program is to add a lunch option during Dining Week.

b. Update on Branding

Ms. Reed reported that the branding effort is moving forward. She provided a recap to the Board that Stress Design was selected by the Branding Committee to develop the brand. Mark Stress and his team have been working to develop some options for a brand, which may potentially include a new name for the Downtown Committee. The Branding Committee has met with Stress Designs to review the options and will reconvene these meetings later this month. The final step will be to bring the Branding Committee's recommendations back to the Board for final selection.

Mr. Breuer asked about the timeframe of the branding process. Ms. Reed responded that it should be completed in the next couple of months.

VI. Transportation

a. Presentation on Transportation Demand Management Project

Ms. Nell Donaldson of the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council reported on the finding of the Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Project. TDM is the outgrowth of the Downtown Parking Study. When the parking study was done, it was found that there was an additional need for parking. A way to reduce parking demand is through TDM. TDM is a set of strategies for people to use transportation alternatives and to use them more efficiently.

Ms. Donaldson reported that an employee survey was conducted. For current transportation methods used by employees, it was found that 80% of them drive in a car alone. This number is relatively high for a central business district. When it came to the price of parking, 72% of respondents thought that the price of parking near work is expensive. It was found that there is a lot of interest in sustainable modes of transportation. Ms. Donaldson stated that the modes that employees were interested in are the most easiest to implement, for example the use of CuseCar. Another question that was posed to the employees was what they would do if their employer offered them parking cash out. What was found was that a majority of employees would still use that money on parking.

An employer survey was also conducted. Employers are concerned about visitor parking, bike and pedestrian safety, and conditions of bike routes. It was also reported that by 42% of employers that employee recruitment is negatively impacted by transportation in downtown. The types of TDM options employers like are pre-tax transit passes, bike racks, and incentives for car pools.

Ms. Donaldson indicated that the TDM study will be complete in the next 3-4 months.

VII. Environmental Maintenance

a. April Clean-Up Events

Mr. McFadden stated that with spring approaching, it is time for the annual clean up in downtown. In addition to the Earth Day clean up on April 30th there will also be a clean up on April 2nd to prepare downtown for the US Women's Bowling Congress. The Downtown Committee will provide snacks, gloves, trash bags and a voucher for lunch for all volunteers.

Mr. Breuer inquired how the word is getting out to get volunteers for the clean ups. Mr. McFadden responded that Ms. Romeo has been sending out email blasts to past volunteers and has posted it to on our website and Facebook page. Ms. Romeo stated that since the Downtown Committee has Constant Contact to send out emails, it also allows people to sign up to receive certain emails (i.e.: events, news or volunteer opportunities). She indicated that the email list grown quite a bit since January.

VIII. Security

a. Security and Information Center Status

Ms. Treier reported that the Downtown Security and Information Center was formally opened March 4th. The Women's Bowling Championship starts at the Oncenter on April 7th and Ms. Sonne has been meeting with the Convention and Visitors Bureau to discuss the event and her role. Ms. Sonne will be participating in an orientation session next week and during the event will be in direct communication with the Hospitality booth at the Oncenter.

Mr. Breuer asked if the Downtown Committee had received any feedback. Ms. Treier said that it has been received well. Mr. Koolakian thought the Center is unique with the information center housing the downtown security officers. He feels that this is a valuable asset for downtown and visitors.

b. Campaign for Real Change Discussion

Mr. Mankiewicz presented to the Board, on behalf of the Crouse Marshall Business Improvement District (CMBID), the Campaign for Real Change. The Campaign addresses what other communities have done for panhandling. The goal of this program is to convince the public to not give money to panhandlers. Mr. Mankiewicz gave the Board a packet of information regarding panhandling. He stated that there has been a variety of responses to curbing panhandling from where it has been very successful (Chapel Hill, North Carolina) to discontinuing the program (Portland, Oregon). In Chapel Hill, the success was due because the program had a lot of buy in from many community organizations. Mr. Mankiewicz reminded the Board that this is number six under the Security section of the Strategic Plan, he asked for discussion on this topic for him to bring back to CMBID.

Mr. Tripoli stated that we should do what is right. Buy in is needed from the Rescue Mission, Samaritan Center, and other places that offer help to homeless. This will help educate the public to where they should donate their money instead of giving to the panhandlers.

Mr. Stoner said that after looking through one of the articles, it appears like Armory Square is being hit up by the same professional panhandler. He is wondering if a better solution to this issue would be to have a law on aggressive panhandlers. Mr. Mankiewicz responded that Chapel Hill also has aggressive panhandling laws. For example, panhandling is prohibited after dark and within 15 feet of an ATM. The problem with the laws is that they are sporadically enforced.

Councilor Maroun indicated that this problem is expanding into the neighborhoods. People are going door to door asking for money. He will share the packet of information Mr. Mankiewicz handed out and will share with the rest of the Common Councilors.

Mr. Koolakian stated that he has had panhandlers come into his store. Not only do they ask him for money but they have also asked his customers. He does believe that the public needs to be educated about giving money to panhandlers. If the panhandler says they are in need of food or shelter, they should be referred to the Rescue Mission, Samaritan Center, or other places where they can be helped. He feels that you can say no but they still come back.

Mr. Tripoli indicated that CNY Speaks has asked this topic before and the public sees this as a problem.

Ms. Littlejohn believes one of the best approaches to a problem is how to get rid of the problem. If one of the root causes for people to panhandle is due to substance abuse then the program needs to be partnered with places that help with those issues. The message to the community should be that downtown is welcoming to all people. Mr. Tripoli responded that a person cannot be forced to go into rehab. People have the legal right to live on the street and some panhandlers make a decent living doing this.

Mr. Breuer stated that the question on the table is does the Downtown Committee want to work with CMBID to explore the feasibility of addressing panhandling. What he has heard is that there needs to be a broad base partnership for a program to work, this message needs to be stressed to CMBID.

IX. Public Comments

Mr. Breuer opened the floor to the guests present for any comments.

Mr. Greenwood passed out a packet with a letter to the Board and questions. He would like the questions addressed.

Mr. Basta questioned the relationship between the Downtown Committee, the former MDA and the Syracuse Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Mankiewicz responded that the Downtown Committee is a separate organization. The connection that is shared is back office support to help with running the Downtown Committee more cost effectively.

X. Other Business and Adjourn

With no other business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 4:50 pm.

Next meeting: **Tuesday, May 17, 2011**
Board Room, 572 South Salina Street