

DOWNTOWN COMMITTEE OF SYRACUSE, INC.

March 18, 2014

**CenterState CEO Board Room
115 West Fayette Street**

3:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

Attendance

- Members:** Chairman Breuer; Ms. Gagliano; Messrs. Carroll, Doucette, Fiorito, Fisher, Howard, and Tripoli.
- Staff:** Mss. Finch, Hnatko, Holbrook, Reed, Romeo and Treier; Messrs. Campanie and McFadden.
- Guests:** Bob Dougherty – Syracuse Common Council
Nathan Brown – HOLT Architects
Ann Clifford – Enlighten Realty
Dave Holder – Convention & Visitors Bureau
Dave Shah – UA Properties

I. Welcome and Minutes of January 28, 2014

Chairman Breuer welcomed guests and members present.

Chairman Breuer asked for consideration of the minutes of January 28th. Mr. Doucette moved and Mr. Fiorito seconded a motion to approve the minutes as distributed. The motion was unanimously carried.

II. Financial Report as of February 28, 2014

Ms. Treier shared the preliminary February 28th financial statement, noting that income is ahead of expense.

Ms. Treier noted that Environmental Maintenance expenses are tracking slightly ahead of last year. This is due to a harsh winter that led to an increase in expenses for snow plowing, gas, and overtime. Ms. Treier noted that the Special Projects line is ahead as flowers & benches were ordered earlier this year than last. Expenses in Economic Development are also ahead of last year at 82% of budget. This is because of a reallocation of staff time in the Economic

Development Salaries & Fringes line. Also, the Transportation – Franklin Street Salaries & Fringes is running 20% ahead of last year due to a reallocation of time spent maintaining the lot.

Ms. Treier asked for a motion to approve the preliminary February 28th financial statement, subject to audit. Mr. Tripoli moved and Mr. Howard seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously carried.

A. Downtown Committee Budget Proposal

Ms. Treier reported the Downtown Committee special assessment formula currently does not allow for an automatic increase in revenue when a new or improved building is added to the district. To provide proper maintenance and services to support these new structures the Downtown Committee requested an increase in its budget by \$32,400.

Ms. Treier recommended and submitted a budget of \$882,400 to the city for approval. The city responded that the Downtown Committee budget will need to stay at \$850,000 due to changes in NYS Legislation. Ms. Treier stated that a copy of the revised budget is included in the board member's binders. The Downtown Committee's budget is now included as part of the City's tax levy. There is a 2% Property Tax Cap, which applies to annual growth of property taxes levied. Ms. Treier noted that if the tax base grows, the amount levied can grow but it still stays at 2% of the city's tax base, with some exceptions. There is a provision (tax base growth factor) and some provisions for PILOTS. It's actually an 8 step formula but is commonly called the '2% tax cap'.

Mr. Fisher reported that Governor Cuomo has also proposed a 5 year program, which is not yet enacted. Homeowners would receive a rebate if local governments manage to stay within a 2% property tax cap for 2 years and demonstrate their efforts to control costs. Mr. Fisher noted that local governments can control costs by finding new efficiencies and consolidating services. For years 1 and 2, if the city stays within 2% tax cap, property owners get a credit or rebate; for years 3-5, the city would need to start to reduce tax levy by 1% each year and look to share services, or there could be potential withholdings of State resources.

Mr. Fisher recommended looking into new avenues to increase revenue for the Downtown Committee. Mr. Howard agreed and stated that the Downtown Committee needs to invest in way to raise revenue that will continue to grow.

Chairman Breuer suggested scheduling a special meeting regarding new ways to raise additional revenue for the Downtown Committee.

B. Audited Financial Statement

Ms. Treier noted that each Board Member will find the Downtown Committee's Audited Financial Statement under their binder. She noted that the Downtown Committee is in good standing, with no findings reported. The audit was completed by Testone, Marshall and Discenza, who has worked with the Downtown Committee for many years. They were awarded the job through an RFP process.

III. Security

A. Public Safety Committee Meeting

Ms. Treier reminded the Board that at 5:30pm today there will be a Public Safety Committee meeting at City Hall with the Common Council. This meeting will contain a review of the existing Downtown Committee Security Initiatives as well as information on the Surveillance Camera proposal.

Ms. Treier noted that this meeting has been heavily publicized and she encouraged the Board Members to attend.

IV. ReThink 81

Ms. Treier noted that the community has not received any information about the I-81 process since the scoping meeting last November. She stated that there have been some recent internal changes at NYSDOT and the Downtown Committee expects more communication in the next few weeks. Ms. Treier stated that when this information does come out, she would like to call a special meeting of the Board to discuss the next steps.

Ms. Treier reported that NYSDOT asked that the community provide tangible comments as to what concerns and goals the community may have for the aging viaduct so that a design team could work to incorporate this feedback into the design and review process. The Downtown Committee called a special meeting of the Board at the OHA that was dedicated to Interstate 81, so that they could best articulate the goals the Downtown Committee had for the opportunity that lay ahead regarding the future this aging infrastructure.

Ms. Treier provided the Board a copy of the 'Goals for the future of the Interstate 81 viaduct' information sheet. The Downtown Committee goals are to:

- Restore connections
- Make the 81 Corridor a vibrant, new neighborhood
- Create transportation alternatives
- Generate new tax revenue for the city/county
- Have NYSDOT consider the economic interdependency of city & suburbs
- Facilitate growth of major employers
- Have NYSDOT consider design aesthetics

Ms. Treier asked Mr. Doucette to introduce the Downtown Committee to Rethink 81, as he is a founding member. Ms. Treier also distributed a copy of a Resolution of Support that Mr. Doucette has asked the Downtown Committee to endorse.

Mr. Doucette reported that the decision on the future of Interstate 81 needs to be looked at in the context of a "planning decision for the city". He noted that this is not just a transportation decision. Mr. Doucette stated that the area in which I-81 resides is a great piece of land that is not being used properly. Mr. Doucette noted that the demolition of the aging I-81 viaduct is the right decision for the city, and in this day building a roadway through the center of a city would

not happen. Mr. Doucette reported that of all the traffic using Interstate 81, 85% are entering/exiting the city; the remaining 15% of thru traffic could be diverted. He noted that the street grid needs to be redesigned to encourage alternate routes and traffic dispersion. Mr. Doucette encouraged the members of the Downtown Committee to endorse ReThink 81 and address the issues that are affecting the city.

In addition to the Resolution, Mr. Doucette recommended the Board Members visit the website <http://rethink81.org/>, which contains a copy of the resolution, case studies, information, a link to the facebook page, etc., and can be used as an outlet for public opinion.

Mr. Tripoli stated that there are other alternatives to the raised viaduct and that the community should be shown these choices. He noted that the problem that NYSDOT defined may not be the same problems as defined by the city. Mr. Doucette noted that the information is not being communicated properly, and it is different from all entities.

Mr. Tripoli commented that the community should be concerned with the traffic flow. They will need to be informed of the alternate routes and how the traffic will be diverted. He is concerned that there is too much information missing to make an informed decision at this time.

Ms. Treier reported that there is another group (Save81) that has been very vocal regarding their beliefs on the future of Interstate 81. Mr. Tripoli noted that if there isn't a consensus from the community, NYSDOT will decide to patch the existing viaduct and the process will end. He stated that decisions cannot be based on emotion. Groups need to come together on the same page to fight for the same outcome. Mr. Tripoli stated that neither group has enough information to bring people to their side.

Chairman Breuer stated that with the pending construction period of 2 years, the decision needs to be thought out and then initiated. He asked the Board to strongly consider endorsing ReThink 81.

Mr. Fisher stated that he agrees with the fact that the Downtown Committee should adopt a resolution, but he is not ready to commit. Mr. Tripoli stated that he would like to be able to endorse a viable alternative, but more information is needed. He stated that he wants a good solution that is specific to our community, and something to make the area great.

Mr. Fiorito suggested scheduling a special meeting to finish the discussion on ReThink 81.

V. Economic Development

Ms. Finch briefly reported on some downtown development projects and updates.

1. Herald Commons (220 Herald Place) – Will be converted into Class A office space. 46,000 square feet of office space and 6,300 square feet of retail space.
2. 221 Herald Place – This is a mixed use project with apartments on the upper floors, and 1,700 square feet of retail space.

3. Creekwalk Commons (324 West Water Street) – This is a mixed use project to be completed in the summer of 2014. There will be 75 student apartments and 9,500 square feet of retail space.
4. Amos Building Expansion (218 West Water Street) – This is a \$2 million residential expansion, with 16 new apartments and parking on the ground floor.
5. Courier Building (110 Montgomery Street) – This is the former L’Adour building. This mixed use project will be completed in the summer of 2014, with 9 apartments on the upper floor and office/retail space on the ground floor.
6. Onondaga Music Building (410 S. Clinton Street) – This \$3.5 million mixed used project is the former Daisy Dukes location. There will be 24 apartments on the upper floor, with 9,000 square feet of restaurant, banquet, and retail space on the ground floor.
7. Sky Armory (334 South Salina Street) – This will be an event space that is scheduled to open in the summer of 2014. There will be 2 ballroom spaces on the upper floor that will hold up to 350 and 450 people. The main entrance will be developed in the alley off Clinton Street.
8. WFBL and Quartier Buildings (South Warren) – These will be mixed use projects, with large apartments on the upper floors. Quartier currently under construction.
9. Tech Garden Expansion (AXA Towers) – The Tech Garden is opening a second location, and additional incubator space will be opening. Some space has already been leased, with additional space available for start-ups.
10. UA Tower (500 South Salina Street) – 31 apartments are built on the 4th-6th floors; with 1, 2, and 3 bedroom units available. They are waiting approval from NYS to become condos.
11. Landbank Acquisitions – The Landbank has acquired the Goldberg Building (476 South Salina) and the Addis Building (451 South Salina).

VI. Marketing and Communications

Mr. Fiorito noted that the 2014 Downtown Living Tour will be on Saturday, May 17th.

VII. Environmental Maintenance

Mr. Fiorito noted that the 2014 Earth Day Cleanup will be on Saturday, April 12th.

VIII. Public Comments

Mr. Fiorito opened the floor for public comments. No comments were provided.

IX. Other Business and Adjourn

With no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 pm.

Next meeting: **Tuesday, May 20th at 3:00 pm**

Location: CCEO, 115 West Fayette Street