

DOWNTOWN COMMITTEE OF SYRACUSE, INC.

March 20, 2012

**CenterState CEO Board Room,
572 South Salina Street**

3:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

Attendance

- Members:** Chairman Breuer; Messrs. Carroll, Doucette, Fiorito, Fisher, Maxwell, Russell, and Tripoli.
- Staff:** Mss. Carrington, Erno, Reed, Romeo, Pivovarova, Sonne, and Treier; Mr. Marcon.
- Guest:** Anthony Ortega – MOST & Armory Square Association
Brian Balash – Pyramid Brokerage
Linda Hartsock – Syracuse University
Jake Barrett – Common Council
Paul Stemkoski – Bivens + Associates Architects
Jim Monahan – Monahan Development Corporation
??? – Monahan Development Corporation
Jen Hartwich – Syracuse Police Department
Dominic Robinson – CenterState CEO
Richard Sykes, Jr. – RHS Holdings LLC
Nadar Maroun – Common Council
James Robinson – Eagle Newspaper

I. Welcome and Minutes of January 17th

Chairman Breuer welcomed guests and members present.

Chairman Breuer asked for consideration of the minutes of January 17th. Mr. Fiorito moved and Mr. Fisher seconded a motion to approve the minutes as distributed. The motion was unanimously carried.

II. Financial Report as of February 29th

Ms. Treier provided a review of the financial statement as of February 29th. Currently, income is running ahead of expenses. This is due to changes in staffing since the original submission, the AmeriCU Syracuse Arts and Crafts Festival doing extremely well last year, a number of Environmental Maintenance, Marketing, and Economic Development expenses have not come in, and the Events Grant, secured by Senator DeFrancisco, has come in since the last financial statement. Administration expenses are slightly under budget due to the change in the way office supplies and computer repairs are allocated to the organization. In Environmental Maintenance, the

Special Projects line will start incurring costs in April once the streetscape enhancements have been ordered. The advertising campaign is slated to start up again in mid-April. Economic Development will be ramping up its retail and office recruitment efforts. As event season comes into full swing, the Franklin Street Lot and Herald Place Lot are expected to be closer to budget.

Ms. Treier asked for a motion to approve the February 29th financial statement, subject to audit. Mr. Fiorito moved and Mr. Russell seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously carried.

III. Security

a. Introduction of Jen Hartwich

Mr. Marcon informed the Board that their request for more police officers on the 300 Block of South Salina Street has been met. He introduced Police Officer Jen Hartwich. Officer Hartwich is a native of Syracuse and has been with the Syracuse Police Department for 18 years, 7 of which was being a detective. She has worked in every territory in the city but really enjoys working in downtown because of the diversity. She will be covering the downtown area, from Townsend to West Streets, concentrating on the 300 Block of South Salina Street.

IV. Economic Development

a. Villa Opening

Ms. Carrington reported that with support from the South Salina Street New York State Main Street Grant program, the Label Shopper Building at 317 South Salina Street has finished its ground floor build out. The ground floor retail space is occupied by Villa, which is a Philadelphia based retailer specializing in athletic footwear, apparel, and accessories. The store opened on March 2nd. The Downtown Committee assisted in sending out a press release. This release was picked up by several media outlets.

b. Downtown Living Tour

Ms. Carrington announced that the 6th Annual Downtown Living Tour is scheduled for Saturday, May 19th from Noon to 6:00 pm. Tour Headquarters this year will be the Upstairs Function Room of the Dinosaur Bar-B-Que on 246 West Willow Street. This year the Tour will feature apartments and two cultural venues, the Onondaga Historical Association and the Erie Canal Museum. These two venues will be featuring exhibits on downtown living.

c. Centro Opening

Ms. Treier reported that Centro's Transfer Hub is scheduled to open June 25th, which will coincide with a change in bus routes. In May, drivers will start being trained to drive through the Transfer Hub. A ribbon cutting is planned prior to the opening.

Due to the Transfer Hub opening, there will be some moving of bus shelters to accommodate the new stops. The current shelters and ticket booth at Salina and Jefferson Streets will be removed. The area will be reconstructed to its current condition of concrete sidewalk and brick pavers.

V. Marketing and Communications

a. Dinner with the Masters

Ms. Reed informed the Board that the Downtown Committee has once again partnered with the Everson Museum on a Dinner with the Masters promotion to coincide with the Everson's exhibit 'From New York to Corrymore: Robert Henri and Ireland'. Dinner with the Masters features three courses for \$25 or less. In order to receive this discount, patrons will need to show their

ticket to the exhibit at participating restaurants. This will be the Everson's only ticketed exhibit this year. Two years ago, this promotion was run when the Everson had 'Turner to Cezanne'. Dinner with the Masters will conclude on May 10th and 'From New York to Corrymore: Robert Henri and Ireland' runs through May 13th.

Ms. Reed urged the Board and guests to attend the exhibit. Both Mr. Russell and Mr. Doucette agreed that it is a great exhibit.

b. Historic Walking Tour Brochure

Ms. Reed reported that the city of Syracuse submitted an application to the Recreation and Parks Society nominating the Downtown Committee's Historic Downtown Syracuse Walking Tour brochure for an award. The brochure received recognition not only at the Central New York level, but also won State wide award. The brochures can be picked up at the Downtown Security and Information Center in The Galleries, as well as many downtown venues.

VI. Environmental Maintenance

a. Spring Clean Up and Earth Day Clean Up Event

The Downtown Committee will once again be offering two volunteer opportunities for the community to help with clean up. The first one will be on Saturday, March 24th beginning at 9:00 am. There will be three meeting locations: the park at Walton, West, and Fayette Streets across from The Warehouse, Forman Park on East Genesee Street, and Walton Park on the Hill. The clean up has been picked up by Syracuse.com and will be featured on the cover of March 22nd's Weekend section of The Post Standard.

The second clean up will be held on Saturday, April 21st for Earth Day. This clean up will focus on the gateways into downtown. In the past, Earth Day clean ups have attracted around 150 volunteers and Ms. Romeo stated that some groups have already expressed interest in the April 21st event.

b. Beautification

Ms. Romeo reported that over the next couple of months there will be some visible changes in the streetscape through the Downtown Committee's beautification efforts. These efforts include:

- Benches on South Warren Street
- New trees being planted as part of a partnership with Save the Rain
- New trash cans and bike racks will be installed throughout downtown
- Tree pruning
- The hanging flower baskets will be installed once again in the Cathedral Square area and new this year the 200 and 300 blocks of South Salina Street and the Hanover Square area

VII. Inns at Armory Square

Mr. Breuer introduced the first guest speaker, Mr. Richard Sykes, to report on RHS Holdings LLC's Inns at Armory Square project.

Mr. Sykes informed the Board and guests that the project closed on financing with M&T Bank in late February and the project broke ground on March 1st. Construction is expected to last 12-15 months. The project is located at the corner of Franklin and Fayette Streets, across from Kitty Hoynes. The Inns at Armory Square will house two of Marriott's brands under one roof - Courtyard and Residence Inn. This concept is very rare and is currently the only one in New York State (there

will be a similar project breaking ground in the New York City area in a couple of months). The Courtyard is designed for more of a one or two night stay. The Residence Inn is designed more for the customer who requires an extended stay.

Mr. Sykes feels that this project will add to the already exciting development underway in the area. The project will add 200 construction jobs, costs \$37 million, and will be a seven story building. Estimated numbers, provided by the Syracuse Convention and Visitors Bureau, show that this hotel will have approximately 90,000 guests a year and bring in \$19 million to the area.

The Inns at Armory Square will feature the newest and most up to date designs from Marriott. One of the expected features will be a 50 foot TV screen that will show guests events that are happening in the area. It will also feature two bars and a bistro. There will be meeting space, for smaller meetings. The Inns at Armory Square will also feature a pool and fitness center. There will be an outdoor patio on the corner of Franklin and Fayette Streets for guests to enjoy the downtown atmosphere. There will be no retail on the ground floor but it will have the look and feel of retail given the large windows.

Mr. Fisher inquired about parking for guests. Mr. Sykes responded that there will be a drop off zone in front of the hotel on Fayette Street. There will also be a parking area behind the building with an entrance from Franklin Street.

Mr. Breuer asked if there are separate registrations for the two different Marriott brands. Mr. Sykes responded that there will be two entrances and two registrations. Both the Courtyard and the Residence Inn will be using the same reservation system, so if one is booked they can look to see if rooms are available on the other side. Mr. Fiorito inquired about the room rates. Mr. Sykes stated that those are still being finalized.

Mr. Fiorito commented that he appreciated how they considered the architecture of Armory Square and designed the Inns to complement the historic district. Mr. Russell added that the option for a smaller meeting venue is a great asset for downtown.

VIII. Land Bank

Mr. Breuer introduced the second guest speaker, Mr. Dominic Robinson of CenterState CEO, to provide an overview of Land Bank legislation in New York State and what this could mean for downtown.

Mr. Robinson explained that a Land Bank is a tool that a municipality could use in acquiring vacant, tax delinquent properties and would have more control of what happens to that property. He stated that the idea of Land Banks in New York started about five years ago through CenterState CEO's work with the Ford Foundation. This is not a new concept, since other areas have had Land Banks for over 30 years. The legislation for municipalities to form Land Banks was enacted in 2011 with the help of Assemblyman Magnarelli, Assemblyman Sam Hoyt, and Senator Valesky. The model for this legislation was based on the Genesee County Michigan Land Bank and CenterState CEO's work with the Center for Community Progress. The State legislation allows for 10 Land Banks to be created in New York, five in 2012 and five in late 2012/early 2013. The application for this area was submitted as joint Land Bank between the city of Syracuse and Onondaga County.

Mr. Robinson explained that the Land Bank can foreclose on tax delinquent properties. Properties can be strategically acquired to fit the plan for the neighborhood, which means that the property can be stabilized for redevelopment or demolished. Mr. Fisher added that the redevelopment plan has to go through the Common Council and County Legislature for approval. With the Land Bank acquiring the property, this will prevent speculators from purchasing the property and letting it go back into tax delinquency which has been seen continuously with many abandoned buildings in the City.

Mr. Fiorito asked if the Land Bank will have the power of eminent domain. Mr. Robinson stated that the Land Bank does not possess that power and can only acquire property through tax foreclosure.

Mr. Doucette inquired if this is a legal entity. Mr. Robinson responded that it will be a not for profit c3. Mr. Fisher added that it will have a Board of Directors. With this being a City/County Land Bank, it will allow for a more streamlined process of tax collecting.

Mr. Russell asked what the experience of other Land Banks has been. Mr. Robinson stated that when the Land Bank is done correctly, municipalities are made whole.

IX. Update on BID Expansion

Ms. Treier provided the Board with an update on the potential BID expansion to provide maintenance services to areas along the Connective Corridor. She has had discussions with the City of Syracuse and Syracuse University and it has been decided to postpone any expansion until July 1, 2013. The City has agreed to increase their responsibility at Forman Park and other tasks along the Corridor. Postponing one year will allow for a better understanding of the maintenance needs and will allow property owners to see what the improvements are. Ms. Treier stated that the plan is to reconvene with the City and University in May to discuss next steps.

X. Public Comments

Mr. Breuer opened the floor for public comments.

Mr. Doucette stated that he is on the Board for the Syracuse Opera. Last year they had a dinner at the City Hall Commons Atrium to benefit the Opera. He informed the Board and guests that the Opera will be doing this again this year and hopes to have the dinner outside. During this dinner, members of the Opera entertain the guests. Mr. Doucette commented that the Opera is one of the many cultural organizations that makes downtown what it is. He will bring materials about this fundraiser to the May Board meeting.

XI. Other Business and Adjourn

With no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 4:05 pm.

Next meeting: **Tuesday, May 15th at 3:00 pm**
572 South Salina Street, Board Room