

DOWNTOWN COMMITTEE OF SYRACUSE, INC.

May 26, 2011

Board Room, 572 South Salina Street

3:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

Attendance

Members: Chairman Breuer; Ms. Littlejohn and Sayles; Messrs. Doucette, Fournier, Koolakian, Robbins, Russell, Stoner and Tripoli.

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

Guest: Tom Greenwood – Property Owner
Alan Isserlis
Don Kirnan – Property Owner
Nader Maroun – Syracuse Common Council
Judy NuHavun – Eagan Reality

I. Welcome and Minutes of March 15, 2011

Chairman Breuer welcomed guests and members present.

Chairman Breuer asked for consideration of the minutes of March 15, 2011. Mr. Koolakian moved and Mr. Fournier seconded a motion to approve the minutes as distributed. The motion was unanimously carried.

II. Financial Report

a. Financial Report as of April 30th

Mr. Fournier stated that on the revenue side most items were ahead of budget. This is due to the Arts and Crafts Show, Downtown Living Tour and parking revenues being above what was budgeted. On the expense side, some items went over budget. Due to the harsh winter, some items in environmental maintenance were higher than expected. He stated that the budget will still break even.

Mr. Greenwood asked if there could be a presentation of the percentages of costs and expenses between the MDA and the Downtown Committee. Chairman Breuer acknowledged Mr. Greenwood's request, but noted that there are few shared expenses between the Downtown Committee and other organizations. (Note – most relate to administrative personnel and equipment.)

Mr. Fournier asked for approval of the financial report of April 30th, subject to audit. Mr. Koolakian moved and Mr. Robbins seconded a motion, the motion was unanimously carried.

b. Audit for 2009-2010

Mr. Mankiewicz stated that the 2009-2010 audit had been emailed to all Board members. A hard copy will also follow in the mail. If you have any questions, please let Mr. Mankiewicz know.

III. Administration

a. Conflict of Interest Policy

Mr. Mankiewicz stated that a copy of the Downtown Committee's Conflict of Interest Policy had been distributed to all Board members in their binders and a copy will also be emailed. This policy has to be reviewed annually by all members of the Board. Mr. Mankiewicz asked that all Board members fill out and sign the policy and return to the office. Chairman Breuer restated to the Board that these forms were needed back to the office as soon as possible.

Mr. Greenwood asked if he could also receive a copy of the Conflict of Interest Policy. Mr. Mankiewicz will send him one.

b. Request From Connective Corridor

Ms. Treier reported that the Downtown Committee has been approached by groups such as Syracuse University and the near North Side about expanding the boundaries of the business improvement district. Most immediately, Syracuse University has approached the Downtown Committee about expanding the boundaries to maintain the small park located just across Fayette Street from the Syracuse University Warehouse between West and Walton Streets. She noted that the park area is owned by NYSDOT and in order for Syracuse University to lease and develop the land, the University needs to provide a maintenance plan for the area. Syracuse University has provided the Downtown Committee with the site plans and planting schedule for this park and has asked the Downtown Committee to provide a proposal to them for maintenance of this site. Ms. Treier noted that the Board would find a draft proposal for maintaining what has been called the "Warehouse node" in their binders. This is just a proposal and no action by the Board is needed at this time. However, as this proceeds, action will be needed by the Board or the Executive Committee, but it is something Ms. Treier wanted the Board to be aware of for future discussion purposes.

Mr. Mankiewicz stated that the first phase of the construction of the Connective Corridor is on the Hill and by The Warehouse. The Downtown Committee has been asked to work with University on the maintenance portion since one of the recommendations of the Connective Corridor team was to create a special assessment district. He also noted that this agreement would be for one year.

Mr. Robbins inquired if the Board had seen a picture of what this would look like. Ms. Treier will email the diagram to the Board.

Mr. Stoner questioned if this is a contract obligation or a change in special assessment. Mr. Mankiewicz responded that there would not be an immediate change to the special assessment. This is a typical agreement that other special assessment districts take part in.

Mr. Koolakian asked if there would be enough manpower. Ms. Treier stated that the 2nd page of the draft proposal addresses hiring another maintenance employee.

IV. Economic Development

a. Downtown Living Tour

Ms. Treier stated that the 5th annual Downtown Living Tour was held on Saturday, May 21st. The Tour broke records this year with over 1,900 tickets sold for the event. The Board was provided copies of the special Tour Guide which the Downtown Committee produces in conjunction with the Post Standard. The Tour Guide provides a page specific to each tour stop and also includes stories of our choosing to round out the concept of living, working and playing in downtown. This year for the 5th anniversary the Tour included 5 residential buildings, 5 office spaces and a historic tour of the Cathedral of Immaculate Conception. The inclusion of workspaces this year was well received and tourists commented that they enjoyed learning about green amenities and seeing these spaces. The goal with this year's event was to promote the idea of not only living in downtown Syracuse, but also positioning downtown as a great neighborhood to locate businesses.

Chairman Breuer asked Mr. Doucette what type of feedback he had received from his staff in regards to the Tour. Mr. Doucette stated that the staff thought the Tour was terrific and had a big impact. Mr. Russell added that there were a lot of positive comments from people who toured the Eric Mower & Associates space.

Mr. Tripoli stated that the Cathedral Square Association had a great program at Columbus Circle during the afternoon of the Tour.

b. Dey Brothers and Housing Marketing Effort

Mr. Doucette reported that all 45 units of the Dey's Plaza Apartments were all leased. He noted that all apartments were rented 2 months after construction was completed. The apartments range in rent from \$950 to \$1,800 per month. Mr. Doucette feels that there is a strong market for housing in downtown.

Mr. Tripoli asked if the Dey's building was easy to convert. Mr. Doucette responded that even though the spaces were previously renovated for office use, the space still needed to be rebuilt, especially with electrical and plumbing services. Mr. Tripoli also inquired if Mr. Doucette had more a preference for historic buildings rather than new. Mr. Doucette indicated that he preferred historic since a developer can apply for both state and federal tax credits.

Chairman Breuer asked what amenities the Dey's Plaza Apartments offer to make it more attractive than other housing options. Mr. Doucette responded that the washer/dryer hook-ups, indoor parking garage and 24 hour security were great selling points.

Ms. Sayles inquired about the age of the tenants. Mr. Doucette stated a majority of the tenants were in their 30's but there were some empty nesters. Mr. Mankiewicz also commented that it has been very evident on the last few Downtown Living Tours that empty nesters are looking to move into downtown. The challenge is to build to that market since a majority of housing is built for tenants in their 20's.

c. Hotel Syracuse

Mr. Mankiewicz reported that an Indian Israeli investor now owns the Hotel Syracuse. The investor paid several million to acquire the majority of the shares of the LLC that owns the Hotel. The investor wants to redevelop the properties and the investor is working with a developer from New York City. Eli Braha is interested in the project but may not be involved in it. Mr. Braha did apply for Empire State tax credit before they expired, so that might be something the new investor is interested in. The investor is working with an architect named Howard Spivak. Mr. Spivak has been in the area studying the Hotel Syracuse and downtown. The final plan for the Hotel is not available yet. Mr. Mankiewicz also noted that the County is continuing to work with Wilmorite on the Oncenter Hotel.

Chairman Breuer inquired if there was a way to remove the temporary fencing around the new tower since it is an eyesore and collects debris. He added that fencing usually requires permits and they may be expired. Mr. Mankiewicz responded that he will contact Hayner-Hoyt.

Mr. Robbins asked if there is a timetable about the project. Mr. Mankiewicz expects that more information will be available in the next couple of months.

d. Retail Recruitment

Ms. Treier announced that on Wednesday, June 22nd, the Downtown Committee is organizing a retail recruitment event for downtown Syracuse. The Downtown Committee has partnered with the City of Syracuse, the US Small Business Administration, the WISE Women's Business Center, OCC's Small Business Development Center and the Greater Syracuse Business Development Corporation to plan a series of informative panel sessions geared at informing retailers about the development taking place in downtown Syracuse, the components of the market, information on financing, and the opportunities that are available.

A targeted mailing list of retailers is being created. The postcard to the targeted businesses will be mailed next week. Starting June 8th, follow-up phone calls and emails will be made to this list inviting them to attend. The targets are independent retailers that are locally or regionally owned (rather than chain stores) to attend this event with the goal of getting them to consider Syracuse as their next business location. In addition to the panel sessions, the Downtown Committee has developed a deal-making session where there will be leasing agents, property owners, financial institutions, and resource providers at individual tables so interested parties can meet with them one-on-one and discuss available retail spaces and loan requirements, as well as the resources that exist to assist new businesses. All downtown leasing agents or property owners with available retail space were notified of this event and lending institutions were invited last week. For those individuals who do not staff a table, they have the opportunity to provide either a flyer specific to their downtown space that can be distributed or their space will be included on an overall downtown Syracuse available spaces list.

Ms. Littlejohn inquired on the target number for this event. Ms. Treier responded that 30 would be ideal. The main focus is for retailers to see what downtown Syracuse has to offer.

Mr. Koolakian asked if the roundtable discussion consisted of existing retailers. Ms. Treier responded that five retailers will be on the roundtable discussions. The Downtown Committee is developing a retail brochure featuring local retailers and restaurateurs and why they picked downtown.

Chairman Breuer asked if Buxton was assisting in the Retail Fair. Ms. Treier responded that the information the Downtown Committee received from Buxton targeted chains will be shared with prospects. The information that is being used from Buxton is the demographics that they did for the downtown area.

Mr. Russell suggested that the sessions be videotaped for those who are interested in downtown but are unable to attend the event.

V. Environmental Improvement

a. Renovation of the Onondaga Historical Association

Mr. Tripoli stated that the Onondaga Historical Association is undergoing a major renovation. Work includes plumbing, new security system, new research center, complete redesign of the first floor, façade renovation, 44 new windows, brickwork and a new retail store. The main goal is to increase pedestrian traffic and experience through the Montgomery Street corridor.

The OHA will have a grand re-opening on July 13th from 4:00pm-8:00pm; tickets are \$40 for members and \$45 for non-members.

b. Cathedral Square Flowers

Ms. Treier reported that starting shortly after Memorial Day Weekend, hanging flower baskets will start to go up in the center of downtown. This was a program in which the Downtown Committee partnered with the Cathedral Square Neighborhood Association to develop and implement. The Downtown Committee purchased the brackets, baskets and flowers and the Neighborhood Association is supplementing the maintenance cost.

In total, about 65 baskets are being installed and will be maintained by the Downtown Committee throughout the summer. The targeted blocks include the 100 and 200 blocks of East Jefferson, the 300 and 400 blocks of South Warren Street, the 300 block of Montgomery Street and the 200 block of East Onondaga Street. She expects that this program will be popular and sought after for other areas of the district and believes there has been a good partnership model established to make this happen. The idea would be to brand different districts using different colors of flowers.

c. Tree Pruning

As part of the Downtown Committee's 50/50 streetscape replacement agreement with the City of Syracuse, the Downtown Committee is seeking to undertake a tree pruning project this year. Ms. Treier asked the Board for authorization to allow the Executive Director to execute a contract with Lumberjack Tree Services in the amount of \$14,830 for tree pruning services to start in June. The project was bid out and the work will be complete this summer.

Mr. Russell motioned and Mr. Doucette seconded a motion to allow the Executive Director to execute a contract with Lumberjack Tree Services. The motion was unanimously approved.

VI. Farmers Market Opening

Ms. Romeo reported that the 2011 Downtown Farmers' Market will start on June 14th in Clinton Square and will run every Tuesday through October 11th. On opening day, the band "Southern Comfort" will perform.

Five new vendors have been accepted into the market this year, including Phoenix Flower Farm, which sells a variety of perennials and other plants and flowers; Flour City Pasta, which makes homemade pasta (and was featured in the Post Standard about a month ago as a Regional Market vendor); Green Hills Farms Markets, which sells handcrafted breads and baked goods; Common Thread Community Farm, which sells organic vegetables; and American Farmstead, which sells homemade cheeses. The Downtown Committee is also looking into letting in some temporary vendors until we can find them permanent spaces, including a homemade granola vendor, a homemade candy vendor, a homemade fudge and peanut butter topping vendor and a Middle Eastern dip vendor.

We have created a Farmers' Market Committee, made up of long-time market vendors, and a meeting was held to discuss promotions of the Market. The Market will utilize social media heavily this year to promote the market, including Facebook and Twitter posts, email blasts and YouTube videos. The Farmers' Market section of the Downtown Committee's website will be enhanced to include a map and listing of all vendors, as well as a 'Meet Your Vendor' feature profiling a different vendor each week. The Market Committee is also exploring the idea of holding live events, such as cooking demonstrations, during the Market season.

Mr. Koolakian stated that if there is inadequate space for vendors in Clinton Square that the Hanover Square Association would be willing to have some vendors set up in Hanover Square on Genesee Street. Ms. Romeo will forward the information to Mr. McFadden.

VII. Security

a. Report on the Ambassador Program

Ms. Sonne provided the Board a report of her 6 months of being the Downtown Ambassador. She is a second pair of eyes on the street and is in contact with maintenance and security when she sees anything. She also has a bicycle which helps her cover more of the downtown area quicker. She has assisted visitors with disabled vehicles, directions and questions about downtown. Ms. Sonne also checks-in with vendors and businesses on a daily basis. She has also been handing out cards to all visitors to tell the Downtown Committee about their experience.

Ms. Sonne also visits the Oncenter on a daily basis. She talks with the bowlers in the Oncenter and around downtown. She is also able to check in on new places and get hours and menus for the Downtown Committee. She staffs the Security and Information Center for one hour during lunch. She is also working with management to install a sign outside to draw people into the Center.

Mr. Russell asked what types of comments have been received from the cards. Ms. Treier responded that the cards are new and we have not received any comments as of yet.

Chairman Breuer asked that if any comments are received to please summarize and bring to the Board.

VIII. Parking

a. Herald Place Parking Lot

Mr. Mankiewicz stated that an agreement had been reached regarding the Herald Place Parking Lot. The Downtown Committee will begin operating the lot for events beginning June 1st. The lot surplus for the first full year of operation are projected at \$7,000.

IX. Public Comments

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

Councilor Maroun addressed several items: (1) there is a major sewer construction this summer, (2) how to better utilize parking garages and lots on non-business hours. He stated that he is concerned about maintenance and upkeep of garages. He has a meeting with DPW to put this process together, (3) he is very appreciative of what the Downtown Committee is doing. He is encouraging the other Councilors to attend these meetings to see what the Downtown Committee is doing.

Mr. Greenwood stated that he is disappointed in the amount of time that the public is allowed to speak during a Board meeting. He feels that work cannot be done if people are excluded, needs to be inclusive.

Mr. Kirnan expressed his concern regarding the Pike Block project and his property at 307 South Clinton Street. Ms. Treier will set up a meeting with Mr. Kirnan and the developer to discuss this matter further.

X. Adjourn

With no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned.

Next meeting: **Annual Meeting – Tuesday, June 28th at Noon**
 Oncenter