

**DOWNTOWN COMMITTEE OF SYRACUSE, INC.**

**July 19, 2011**

**Board Room, 572 South Salina Street**

**3:00 p.m.**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Attendance**

- Members:** Chairman Breuer; Messrs. Doucette, Fiorito, Fournier, Koolakian, Maxwell, Russell, Stoner and Tripoli.
- Ex-Officio:** Mr. Simpson.
- Staff:** Mss. Erno, Romeo, Sonne and Treier; Messrs. DeJesus and Peak.
- Guest:** Lindsay Speicher – City of Syracuse  
Steve Brady – Upstate Medical University  
Anthony Catsimatides – Cathedral Square Neighborhood Association  
Nader Maroun – Syracuse Common Council  
Shawan East – East Environmental Group  
Nancy Cleveland

**I. Welcome and Minutes of May 26<sup>th</sup> and June 28<sup>th</sup>**

Chairman Breuer welcomed guests and members present. He welcomed new Board member Andrew Maxwell, Director of Planning and Sustainability for the City of Syracuse. Chairman Breuer also introduced new Downtown Ambassador, Josh DeJesus.

Chairman Breuer asked for consideration of the minutes of May 26<sup>th</sup> and June 28<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Maxwell moved and Mr. Stoner seconded a motion to approve the minutes as distributed. The motion was unanimously carried.

**II. Financial Report**

**a. Financial Report as of May 31<sup>st</sup>**

Mr. Fournier reported that the financial statement as of May 31, 2011 looks to be on budget for the end of the year with income slightly above expense. The Arts & Crafts Show is ahead of budget projections. The Show was expanded to include more artists and vendors which brought in additional income for the event. The parking lot continues to run ahead of projections and there are still a few more big events downtown where we expect to add revenue to this line. The Downtown Living Tour exceeded budget projections with sponsorships, partly due to the Preserve America grant funds that were used to support the program. Mr. Fournier predicted that by June 30, 2011, the Downtown Committee will be on budget as projected. He noted that Environmental Maintenance is over budget. This is mostly due to the amount of snow received

this winter and the funds expended on supplies such as gas and vehicle repairs. Mr. Fournier also identified that Marketing is currently running below budget at 79%. This is typical for the marketing line as the major expenses like advertising and printing costs come in at year end. The Downtown Committee has started its summer advertising campaign – Great Stories Begin Downtown – with 2 new commercials which has expended the remainder of the funds. Overall, Security is on budget. He noted that the Depreciation line is above budget and this is due to the build out of the new Security and Information Center in the Galleries. Finally, transportation expenses will be slightly below budget due to a staff change mid-year.

Mr. Fournier asked for approval of the financial report of May 31<sup>st</sup>, subject to audit. Mr. Koolakian moved and Mr. Tripoli seconded a motion, the motion was unanimously carried.

Mr. Tripoli inquired about the auditor's comments about tracking expenses. Ms. Treier responded that there is now access to financial information in real time.

### **III. Administration**

#### **a. Approve Disaster Recovery Plan**

Ms. Treier reported that as part of good operating procedure, the Downtown Committee should have a Disaster Recovery Plan in place. A document has been drafted which was distributed to the Board prior to the meeting and can be found in each of the Board member's binders. The Disaster Recovery Plan is meant to be a comprehensive document that outlines strategies and activities should something happen such as fire, flood, building collapse or any other type of emergency situation. It is meant to outline the organization's basic needs to maintain its critical business functions and operations in an emergency event.

Ms. Treier asked the Board for approval and adoption of the Disaster Recovery Plan for the Downtown Committee. Mr. Doucette moved and Mr. Tripoli seconded, the motion was unanimously carried.

### **IV. Economic Development**

#### **a. Retail Recruitment Event**

Ms. Treier reported that on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Downtown Committee partnered with the City of Syracuse, Onondaga Community College's Small Business Development Center, WISE Women's Business Center, the Syracuse branch of the Small Business Administration, and Greater Syracuse Business Development Corporation to offer a half day event aimed at attracting retailers into downtown Syracuse. She stated that 50 individuals attended the event and from the phone calls that were made for the event, a list has been developed with more than 90 potential retail operations to target for downtown.

The Downtown Committee also developed the *Meet Downtown Syracuse* flipbook for the event and have been distributing throughout downtown. Positive feedback has been received on this booklet, which is meant to highlight the diversity of business owners in downtown along with a series of quick facts about the region. The goal was to get potential business owners to picture themselves opening and operating a business downtown.

Ms. Treier expressed that this is an event the Downtown Committee would like to turn into an annual event.

Mr. Tripoli inquired about the types of people who attended the event. Ms. Treier responded that the attendees were more in the food service industry and were looking for an additional location.

Mr. Doucette asked about the reference of five minute drive time numbers on the back of the flipbook and is there was a way to find out what percentage is from downtown retailers. Ms. Treier responded that the numbers come from Buxton and the five minute drive time is a standard measure when looking at national retail measurements and requirements. She stated that the Downtown Committee has tried to get retail sales numbers for just downtown in the past but has been unsuccessful. Mr. Simpson added that the numbers for downtown may have to be estimated.

Chairman Breuer inquired about the plan for following up with the attendees to the Retail Fair. Ms. Treier stated that during the process of reaching out to businesses, the lists were updated with emails and current phone numbers. Out of the list there are 90 fairly interested businesses that staff will be sending information about downtown on a regular basis. Mr. Russell added that staff needs to find a reason to keep in contact and should try to reach out to potential businesses every 4-6 weeks.

Mr. Fiorito asked what would be done differently next year. Ms. Treier responded that the seminars and exploration session would be held at the same time and that the day might be broken into a series of tracks based on experience levels.

## **V. Marketing and Communications**

### **a. Arts & Crafts Festival**

Ms. Reed distributed an article from the Post Standard that refers to this year's AmeriCU Syracuse Arts & Crafts Festival as 'behemoth'. The show has expanded to the 300 block of Montgomery Street, adding 40 new artists, which brings the total to 190. AmeriCU is once again the title sponsor for the show.

Mr. Simpson inquired about the total amount of sponsorship from the private sector. Ms. Reed responded that total is roughly \$20,000.

### **b. Summer Advertising Campaign**

Ms. Reed showed the two new summer TV spots that were produced by Solon Quinn.

Chairman Breuer asked how often ads are shown. Ms. Reed responded that they are currently running in the morning and evening. Also, Fox68 will be running them in a regular rotation in August and September.

Mr. Simpson commented that these two ads and the retail brochure reflects a quality product. Mr. Russell added that these spots show a positive message about downtown which brings people here. It shows pride in Syracuse.

Mr. Koolakian inquired how else these (retail brochure and TV spots) are getting out to people, especially out in the suburbs. Ms. Romeo responded that the items have been posted on Facebook, Twitter and on the Downtown Committee's website. Also, these items have been featured in email blasts.

**c. Meeting with Downtown Ithaca Alliance**

Ms. Romeo reported that two weeks ago, Downtown Committee staff met with staff from the Downtown Ithaca Alliance to discuss each of the BID's programs and share best practices. In addition to learning more about general programs, the Downtown Ithaca Alliance shared more about their Art in the Heart outdoor public art exhibit. Art in the Heart is 20 public art pieces that are exhibited throughout downtown Ithaca and is a program the Downtown Committee is interested in.

Staff thought this was a valuable meeting. It helped to expose staff to other programs and other cities and helped gauge the Downtown Committee's efforts.

Mr. Doucette inquired about how the art was purchased. Ms. Treier responded that if the Alliance likes a piece of art, and wanted to purchase it, fundraisers were held to purchase the art.

Mr. Russell asked if there was a plan for public art in Syracuse. Ms. Romeo stated that Syracuse Public Artist in Residents (SPAR), Brendan Rose, is installing a sculpture in the Armory Square portion of the Creekwalk. He will also be doing public art during ArtsWeek. Mr. Maxwell added that Kate Auwaerter is the Public Art Coordinator for the city of Syracuse and she has developed a master plan for public art.

**VI. Environmental Maintenance**

**a. Beautification**

Ms. Romeo reported that in June the Downtown Committee maintenance staff installed 68 hanging flower baskets on the 100 and 200 blocks of East Jefferson, 300 and 400 blocks of South Warren, 300 block of Montgomery, and 200 block of East Onondaga. The baskets are filled with super petunias from Oliver B. Paine Greenhouses, a Downtown Farmers' Market vendor. The flowers are being watered using the Downtown Committee's recently purchased watering tank. The beautification program is a partnership with the Cathedral Square Neighborhood Association, whose members are supplementing the maintenance cost for the baskets.

If there's interest from other neighborhoods, the Downtown Committee would like to expand the program into other downtown neighborhoods in the future using the Cathedral Square program as a model. Mr. Koolakian stated that Hanover Square is interested and inquired about the timeline. Ms. Romeo stated that the final plans need to be completed by January or February so the plants are ready for the spring.

Mr. Tripoli commented that he has heard a lot of positive comments about the baskets. Mr. Doucette added that this was money well spent to make an area look great.

**b. Pride in Syracuse**

Ms. Romeo reported that a new litter cleanup initiative has started called Pride In Syracuse, a partnership between Fleet Feet, King + King Architects, O'Brien & Gere, and Kitty Hoynes Pub and Restaurant. The initiative is meant to clean up the western part of the city into Tipperary Hill. Ms. Romeo wanted the Board to be aware that the staff has been in communication with organizers to see how the Downtown Committee can assist their efforts and be good neighbors. Staff has also worked with O'Brien & Gere previously to assist their Creekwalk cleanups and employee volunteer days.

## **VII. SUNY Upstate Medical University**

Chairman Breuer introduced Mr. Steven Brady, Senior Vice President of Administration and Finance for Upstate Medical University, to present to the Board about their expansion into downtown Syracuse.

Mr. Brady explained to the Board that Upstate is a landlocked institution. Upstate canvassed their students and residents to see if they would be interested in living in the area and the response was overwhelming that they were interested in being closer to Upstate. Both the students and residents have had a lot of input in the current project.

Upstate looked into Harrison House and Townsend Towers, which, at the time were only 25% occupied. Mr. Brady stated that there have been a lot of challenges to this project. The elevators in the buildings needed to be replaced since they did not meet code. There were no fire protection systems. Asbestos had to be removed from the buildings before construction could be started. Plus there was the issue with back taxes owed on the buildings.

Mr. Brady reported that construction will begin in August. Upstate's goal is to become more involved in the community and economic development. He added that companies involved in the project are local to the area. Mr. Brady stated that Upstate sees Townsend Towers and Harrison House as the west part of its campus, nothing that it also ties in 550 Harrison Street and Presidential Plaza that Upstate also occupies.

## **VIII. Board Discussion**

### **a. Marketing**

Ms. Treier stated that she wanted to take some time to start a discussion with the Board about downtown marketing. This is something that a few of the Common Councilors had brought up while she was providing an overview about downtown development. In order to set the stage for this discussion, Ms. Treier provided an overview of the items that the Downtown Committee currently engages in related to marketing and economic development marketing of downtown. The list was included in the Board's binders. The list was broken down into 5 categories that include:

- Activities undertaken for Information Sharing about downtown
- Activities engaged in for sharing Organizational Information
- Activities promoting downtown's Image
- Activities that support businesses. Ms. Treier clarified that all of the Downtown Committee's activities are meant to support business, but this category is specific to direct support to businesses.
- Activities that raise awareness about downtown
- And, activities that draw visitors and add vitality to downtown

Ms. Treier briefly went over the list with the Board. Included in her presentation to the Board was a slide that showed the map of downtown and all of the various development projects happening. This image served as the basis of the Board discussion. Ms. Treier asked the Board for input as to how to bring the marketing efforts to the next level.

Mr. Russell commented that pictures and descriptions do not tell stories, and one needs to show renderings not construction. Videos can be posted to social media that show development happening. Mr. Russell gave an example of The Tech Garden being at capacity and create a video that highlighted all of the tenants. He added that 15 years ago Armory and Hanover Square were dilapidated. Now they are in better shape and even more development is appening.

Mr. Koolakian remarked that it is not just one thing. The Downtown Committee needs to look at the target market and identify why they should be downtown. He asked staff if there was a model or city similar in size that has been successful in these efforts.

Mr. Tripoli commented that people he talks with bring up the condition of Salina and Warren Streets as to reasons why they do not come downtown. These two streets are the hub of downtown. He feels that people want to experience downtown but these two streets have not changed much. Mr. Simpson noted that Salina Street is about to see some significant changes with the Transfer Hub, Landmark Theatre, Dey's Plaza and the Pike Block.

Mr. Stoner remarked that he is always energized after meetings. The Downtown Committee needs to translate what is talked about at the meetings and convey that message to the public.

Chairman Breuer suggested that a special meeting be held before the next Board meeting of those members who are interested in exploring this topic further. Ms. Treier agreed to arrange this.

#### **IX. Public Comments**

Chairman Breuer opened the floor to the public for comments.

Councilor Maroun thanked Ms. Treier for bringing up the topic of marketing. There is a renaissance happening in downtown and the synergy is real. He also mentioned that downtown will not achieve this renaissance unless the school system is changed. The vitality of the community is the people.

#### **X. Adjourn to Executive Session**

After the regular meeting adjourned, an Executive Session was held.

With no further business, the Executive Session was adjourned.

Next meeting: **Tuesday, September 20<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 pm**  
**572 South Salina Street, Board Room**