

**DOWNTOWN COMMITTEE OF SYRACUSE, INC.**

**September 18, 2012**

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

**3:00 p.m.**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Attendance**

- Members:** Chairman Breuer; Ms. Littlejohn; Messrs. Carroll, Carter, Doucette, Fiorito, Fisher, Fournier, Koolakian, Maxwell, Russell, Simpson and Tripoli.
- Staff:** Mss. Hnatko, Pivovarova, Reed, Romeo, and Treier; Messrs. Campanie and McFadden.
- Guest:** Bob Dougherty – Common Council  
Mary Kate Hartman – Landmark Theatre  
David Holder – CVB  
Anthony Ortega – MOST  
Dave Shah – UA Properties, LLC  
Paul Stemkoski – Bivens & Associates Architects  
Damian Vallelonga – Lock 49  
Jeff Walter – Lock 49  
Brian Anderson – National Grid

**I. Welcome and Minutes of July 17<sup>th</sup>**

Chairman Breuer welcomed guests and members present.

Chairman Breuer asked for consideration of the minutes of July 17<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Koolakian moved and Mr. Russell seconded a motion to approve the minutes as distributed. The motion was unanimously carried.

**II. Financial Report**

**a. Financial Report as of August 31st**

Mr. Fournier shared the preliminary August 31st financial statement, stating that at 2 months into the year, income is ahead of budget. He stated that the parking lot on Franklin continues to perform well and the Herald Place lot is doing better than last year for this same time period. He noted that the income from the Arts & Crafts Festival was a little lighter this year due to the decision to limit the number of artist booths.

On the expense side, Mr. Fournier stated that marketing is running below budget, which is not atypical for this time of year. He noted that we will see this line increase as the holiday season draws near.

Mr. Fournier asked for a motion to approve the preliminary August 31<sup>st</sup> financial statement, subject to audit. Mr. Fiorito moved and Mr. Carter seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously carried.

### **III. Administration**

#### **a. Vehicle Purchase**

Ms. Treier reported that it's time to replace one of the Environmental Maintenance vehicles, specifically the 2003 Ford 250 pickup truck. This vehicle is used for plowing and moving equipment around downtown. They have looked at Ford, Chevy, and Dodge replacement trucks; and the one they would like to purchase is a 2013 Chevy Silverado. All vehicles for consideration were comparably priced.

The current truck has 57,000 hard miles on it, and the dealership offered \$3500 for the trade in value. The net amount that would be paid is \$32,469.46 (license and registration fee was the only estimated value).

Ms. Treier asked for a motion to approve spending up to \$33,000 for a new maintenance vehicle from the Reserve Account. Mr. Tripoli moved and Mr. Koolakian seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously carried.

#### **b. Nomination to Executive Committee**

Mr. Breuer reported that the executive committee met to discuss the vacant secretary position on the board. The executive committee would like to nominate Mr. Russell to fill the Downtown Committee Secretary position. Mr. Breuer asked for a motion to elect Mr. Russell to the executive committee. Mr. Fiorito moved and Mr. Doucette seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously carried.

### **IV. Staff Recognition**

Mr. Breuer welcomed Mr. Tom Campanie as Head of Security for the Downtown Committee; his official first day was September 4, 2012. Mr. Campanie has worked in law enforcement for over 21 years and previously worked the Downtown beat of the Syracuse Police Department.

Mr. Breuer also welcomed Heather Hnatko, who is the new Administrative Assistant for the Downtown Committee. Ms. Hnatko started on July 23, 2012.

Mr. Breuer presented a plaque to Mr. Chuck McFadden for his 35 years of service to the Downtown Committee. Mr. McFadden started his career with the Downtown Committee in 1977, and he has been instrumental in developing the Environmental Maintenance program.

### **V. Economic Development**

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

Ms. Treier reported that a Retail Recruitment Event is scheduled for October 18<sup>th</sup>. The event is meant to be a half day event to showcase downtown's development activity, learn what it's like to do business, explore financing options, and the process of opening a business. June 2011 marked the first event and more than 50 retailers attended that event. The event proved to be a successful means of gaining interest in downtown. Om Boys which opened in Armory Square was the latest retail fair attendee to open shop downtown.

For the 2012 event, the City of Syracuse, WISE, SBA, SBDC, and GSBDC will again help to plan the event. 1,500 postcards went to businesses, and a 60 second commercial will be airing in targeted markets. This commercial will start airing the week of October 1<sup>st</sup>. Also, a new demographic piece for downtown has been created that will be unveiled at this event. Ms. Treier thanked Lisa Romeo who has overseen the creation of the demographic package. Ms. Treier noted that these materials will be available to everyone who has property in downtown to use for their marketing purposes.

Ms. Littlejohn inquired about the status of the retailer Urban Outfitter. Ms. Treier responded that she has heard positive feedback from management. Ms. Littlejohn also inquired on the status of trying to attract Trader Joe's to Downtown. Ms. Treier responded that Trader Joe's real estate representative said they are not looking to make the move to Syracuse at this time. Mr. Russell questioned if he should find out why Trader Joe's opted out of the Syracuse area. Mr. Doucette stated that the demographics and income play an important part in attracting businesses to the Downtown area. Mr. Tripoli wondered what kind of numbers they need to attract a business, since Downtown already has 2,700 residents that would support a local grocery store.

Mr. Breuer asked if anyone has contacted Paul Nojaims. Mr. Doucette said he met with Paul, who is not interested in the Downtown area at this time, but he might be able to get some advice from him on the matter. He feels as though having a grocery store would bring more people into the Downtown area. Mr. Russell stated that since decisions are not made rapidly, maybe 2 years from now, with planning and land development, the dialogue could change.

Mr. Breuer inquired from Ms. Hartman the status of the new tenant of the Landmark Theatre. Ms. Hartman reported that the drycleaners are doing well, and they have met all their numbers.

**b. Update on Excellus Building**

Ms. Treier reported that she had the opportunity to meet with Robert and Derek Walker who recently purchased the Excellus Building on South Warren Street. Their company, Walker International who are based out of Utah, specializes in taking distressed properties and turning them around. They plan to do a mixed use development, ideally starting work before winter, but that may be an aggressive schedule. Their preliminary plan is to do first floor retail, floors 2-6 as office space, and floors 7-10 as luxury apartments. They would aim to upgrade the lobby first, in order to better market it as Class A office space; then do the building façade; and then start the residential units. A timeline was not provided. They were investigating this property for more than a year before closing on it, and once they do one project in an area, they tend to do more. She noted that the Downtown Committee offered to be helpful in any way possible and assist in providing information about financing, incentives, residential data and downtown development activity. Mr. Koolakian referenced the Verizon building as another underutilized building in Downtown, and if there is current development interest there. Ms. Treier reported that she was not aware of any current development interest.

**VI. Marketing and Communications**

**a. Branding Presentation**

Mr. Russell thanked the members of the branding committee and provided an overview of the branding process. He noted that the current Downtown Committee logo was outdated and that an RFP for design services had been issued. Mr. Russell added that the branding committee also wanted to look at whether or not the Downtown Committee of Syracuse was an appropriate

company name. An RFP was issued and Lock 49 won the project. Mr. Russell stated that Lock 49 did a phenomenal job and introduced Damian Vallelonga and Jeff Walter to do a presentation.

Mr. Vallelonga presented the “New” Downtown Committee. Mr. Vallelonga described the logo as having a new modernized look, and since the Downtown is energetic, the logo should identify and match it. The concept was developed by using symmetry to form the D/C, which could be described as semi-abstract. The overlapping was conceived from multi-layers, which is represented in the life and activity of Downtown itself. Mr. Walter stated that the colors used, yellow/gold and blue are complimentary in nature. The yellow/gold can be described as vibrant and energetic, and yet the blue is grounded and mature. Lock 49 is excited introduce this more professional brand.

Ms. Treier asked for a motion to set the new mark as the official branding change. Mr. Tripoli moved and Mr. Doucette seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously carried.

The board then complimented Lock 49 on a great job. Mr. Koolakian asked when they would start using the new mark. Ms. Treier replied they would like to start as soon as possible. It was noted that a formal ‘launch’ of the new brand would need to happen.

#### **b. Syracuse Style Fashion Event**

Ms. Reed reported the 2<sup>nd</sup> Syracuse Style Fashion Show is Thursday, September 20<sup>th</sup>. It is a free event, although there will be tickets sold for VIP seating, and a pre-show reception. The 100 block of Walton Street will be closed and the runway will be set up in the street. Lisa Butler is the local fashion designer who is coordinating the show. Michael Benny of CNY Central will emcee. This year 15 Downtown shops are participating by providing fashions and accessories – including Mr. Koolakian and Mr. Shapiro. The show will feature men’s and women’s styles and some familiar faces. The event has received great coverage in the media and the weather forecast is favorable. She noted that 300-400 people attended last year, and they are hoping to double that this year. All proceeds from the VIP ticket sales will benefit Mary Nelson and her Back to School Program.

### **VII. Security Update**

Mr. Campanie reported that it has been 14 days since the opening of the new Centro Transit Hub, and people are commenting on the positive changes on the 300 block. People can now walk freely up and down the street and the old bus shelters will be coming down. Mr. Doucette commented on the number of people riding their bikes on the sidewalks, and if there was anything that could be done about that. Mr. Campanie stated that it is difficult to enforce, but they do approach bikers to tell them that riding on the sidewalk is unsafe. Mr. Maxwell mentioned that the city is currently looking at bike lanes for the Downtown area. Mr. Tripoli stated that the bikes should be riding with traffic in the street. Mr. Doucette agreed, and that they are breaking the law.

Mr. Fisher inquired how the new bus area is fairing. Mr. Campanie stated that Mike Walsh, who is head of security for Centro, reported that calls were minimal. He did note some minor disturbances, such as loitering. People seem to be hanging out near the Harrison Street garage, but that was mainly for smoking, as there is no smoking allowed under the hub. A concern was raised about lack of police coverage in downtown. Currently, there is only one officer stationed downtown. Mr. Breuer suggested writing a letter to the Mayor for support, but Mr. Carroll suggested that it would be better to sit with the chief to discuss this matter.

## VIII. Syracuse Destination Market Analysis

Mr. Holder presented the findings of the recent Syracuse Destination Market Analysis. He reported that the Syracuse/Onondaga County region receives 5 million visitors each year. That number represents a significant opportunity to capitalize on visitor spending in the region. Mr. Holder noted that 87 recommendations were made in the report but he has narrowed it down to the Top 10 items that his team learned from the report.

### Top 10 Recommendations and Findings:

10. 36% of visitors come for an overnight trip
9. We offer a lot of activities but need to do a better job pushing them out there
8. We need to prioritize based on activity value
7. We haven't connected the dots around our community
  - o Help create signage
  - o Airports, Destinations, Distance, Time
  - o Visitor Services
6. We need to leverage Destiny USA
5. We need to reduce silos
4. We need to fine tune sales efficiency
  - o Short term sales plan
3. We need to grow more competitive
  - o Compete with Rochester & Buffalo
2. We need to work on our appearance
  - o Pan handling
  - o Store fronts
  - o Empty space
  - o Perception of being "unsafe"
1. We need to brand our destination

Mr. Fisher suggested speaking with the Airport regarding travel information.

Ms. Treier complimented Mr. Holder on his presentation, and asked where the Downtown Committee could be helpful addressing the recommendations. Mr. Holder offered some short term fixes, such as using the empty store fronts to show activities or community information. The store windows could show "where you are" in comparison to "attractions" and "how to get there". He also suggested street pole banners to identify neighborhood and activities.

Mr. Fisher stated that it would be beneficial to all to co-promote other things downtown. Mr. Maxwell suggested signs for Downtown, and Mr. Russell noted that Downtown is not uniformly branded. Mr. Holder mentioned the opportunity to build off of the Connective Corridor Brand. Ms. Littlejohn stated the need for a maintenance component, noting that signs are nice at the beginning but once they get worn, all people will notice is the old worn signage.

Mr. Holder also noted that the “region’s” footprint is much bigger than just our city. That tourism marketing should include the whole area, such as Skaneateles, Baldwinsville, and Auburn. He also noted that with tourism marketing, we need to surpass expectations.

Mr. Breuer suggested that Mr. Holder and Ms. Treier work together to identify some tasks to work on cooperatively and present to the Board a later date.

**IX. Public Comments**

Mr. Breuer opened the floor for public comments.

Mr. Tripoli stated that on September 27<sup>th</sup> the OHA is hosting an exhibit on the Emancipation Proclamation, which is in Lincoln’s own hand. This particular exhibit has not been shown to the public in 50 years. This free event will be held at the Oncenter from 9am-9pm. He stated that this is a great piece of art/history, and that Syracuse is only the 2<sup>nd</sup> showing of this exhibit. Mr. Russell stated that this is an opportunity for a broader look at the issues surrounding this document, and that alone should bring visitors into the area.

**X. Other Business and Adjourn**

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

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