

DOWNTOWN COMMITTEE OF SYRACUSE, INC.

September 21, 2010

Board Room, 572 South Salina Street

3:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

Attendance

- Members:** Chairman Breuer; Ms. Littlejohn; Messrs. Carter, Cowin, Doucette, Fiorito, Koolakian, Mokrzycki, Robbins, Russell, Stoner and Tripoli.
- Ex-Officio** Mr. Simpson.
- Staff:** Mss. Erno, Reed, Romeo and Treier; Messrs. Mankiewicz, Marcon, and McFadden.
- Guest:** Robbi Farschman – Syracuse University
Tom Greenwood – Property Owner
Tracey Kegebein – Syracuse Convention & Visitors Bureau
Larry Leatherman – MOST
Tony Ortega – Armory Square Association & MOST
John Rennock – Centro Transfer Hub
Lindsey Speicher – City of Syracuse

I. Welcome and Minutes of May 11th and July 27th

Chairman Breuer welcomed guests and members present. He asked if Ms. Robbi Farschman could provide the Board with a brief introduction. Ms. Farschman is the new Director of the Connective Corridor at Syracuse University. She sees the Connective Corridor as a great opportunity between the art and creative community. She stated that a majority of the construction for the Corridor will start next spring and will continue of the next several years.

Chairman Breuer asked for consideration of the minutes of May 11th and July 27th. Mr. Russell moved and Mr. Fiorito seconded a motion to approve the minutes as distributed. The motion was unanimously approved.

II. Public Comments

Chairman Breuer opened the floor to comments from guests present. Mr. Thomas Greenwood stated that he had submitted a letter to the Common Council regarding the Downtown Committee. He was aware that the Board had also received copies of the letter. Mr. Greenwood is looking for a change in downtown. He has been a property owner for 30 years and he would like to see something done with the vacant storefronts and the failed projects. He is hoping that the Common Council will also want to see the same change in downtown. Mr. Greenwood understands that change will not happen

without doing something different. As being a property owner, he sees the decrease of the property values that others are also seeing. He thanked the board for inviting him and to allow him to speak.

Chairman Breuer responded that the Board had received the letter. He believes in change and the strategic plan, which was put in place at the end of last year, will offer the change. He and the rest of the Board asked for some time to digest the letter, during which the Executive Committee will meet to formulate a response to Mr. Greenwood's points in the his letter. Chairman Breuer asked the members of the Board to please send their comments as soon as possible so a formal reply could be sent to Mr. Greenwood.

No other public comments were presented to the board at this time.

III. Financial Report

a. As of June 30th

Mr. Mankiewicz provided the financial report as of June 30th. The fiscal year ended with a positive balance of \$8,713. This was mainly due to income received from grants. Under Administration, the Annual Meeting had a large turnout with around 400 guests. Expenses and income from the Annual Meeting were both over budget. In Environmental Maintenance, there were two clean-ups held (one for the NCAA and one for Earth Day). Marketing came in under budget due to a decrease in salaries and expenses. Security was over budget due to having to purchase a new vehicle. Also, Security Officer Bob Waskiewicz took an early retirement package, which increased salary expense for the year. Economic development ended the year right on track. Transportation saw an increase in income due to the success of the parking lot.

Mr. Koolakian questioned the expense of \$16,847 for the Downtown Living Tour. Ms. Treier responded that the expenses associated with the Downtown Living Tour are primarily marketing and materials. Mr. Doucette asked about why there was an increase in attendance for the Annual Meeting. Mr. Mankiewicz replied that a large number of people were interested in Urban Outfitters but there is an increasing population of people who are largely interested in the development of downtown.

b. As of August 31st

Mr. Mankiewicz provided the financial report as of August 31st. Income and expense from the Farmers' Market and the Arts & Crafts Festival is mostly in. Most other items are either at or below budget, since it is at the beginning of the fiscal year.

Chairman Breuer asked for a motion to approve the financial reports subject to audit. Mr. Simpson moved and Mr. Koolakian seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

IV. Economic Development

a. Landmark Theatre Project

Chairman Breuer stated the Landmark Theatre was very close to breaking ground on their expansion project. The delays were due to financing. Also, Clark's Ale House will be vacating their space for the expansion. The building will undergo environmental testing. Once the project is underway, there will be some lane closures on Salina and Jefferson Streets.

Mr. Fiorito asked when the expansion will be complete. Chairman Breuer stated that the Landmark Theatre is looking to accommodate fall 2011 theater schedules. With the expansion, this will allow the traveling shows to stay longer as opposed to the short stays at the Mulroy Civic Center. Mr. Mankiewicz offered clarification on the closing of Clark's. The Landmark Theatre offered to relocate them within the first floor space of the Loew's Building. The city and the Downtown Committee offered them space but the offer was declined. Indications by the owners were that they just wanted to shut down. Mr. Simpson added that they are uninterested in re-opening in the short term but may in the long term.

b. Pike Block

Mr. Simpson stated that \$29 million renovation of the Pike Block has had a financial draw back due to the deferral of the Historic Tax Credit. The developers are hoping to close on the project in the spring. Mr. Simpson recognized Mr. Mankiewicz for all of his help with securing a financial package with five different banks.

c. Status of Downtown Development Projects

Ms. Treier provided the Board with a summary of the development projects in downtown. The Downtown Committee has four grant programs running in the core of downtown, and is assisting recipients of Restore NY funded projects in moving forward. In terms of the New York Main Street program, the Downtown Committee has or will be supporting 32 renovation projects. Seventeen projects have been completed, which include façade renovations, lobby renovations, and renovation to attract new office and retail tenants. Currently there are six projects underway now, which include renovations at Darwin's restaurant, Deys Plaza, 325 South Salina Street, Niko's and the Onondaga Historical Association. Also, nine buildings are currently under contract that are being assisted through the State Historic Preservation Office process before work is able to begin. These projects are mostly façade work, or include renovations to support new retail and restaurant development. Mr. Simpson inquired as to there being any issues in finding projects in downtown for these grant funds to be used towards. Ms. Treier responded that each round of grants do receive a high level of interest.

Ms. Treier stated that the Downtown Committee is currently working with the owner of the Label Shopper building at 317 South Salina Street on assembling financing. This project is planned to include 12 apartments and ground floor retail space. The Butler Building on Clinton Street started construction last week. The project will add 12 to 14 apartment units and retail space. The Deys Plaza is underway, with the first unit being complete the end of this month. 325 South Salina Street is underway. Paperwork has been submitted to the Attorney General to allow these units to be marketed as for sale condos. The developers anticipate completion during the 4th quarter 2010. There was a groundbreaking event on August 25th at the former Hurbson Building in Armory Square which will be converted into 14 upscale apartments. The plan is to have a majority of the construction complete by early May 2011. SUNY Upstate has announced the Harrison House and Townsend Tower project on the east side of downtown. The two towers previously held 400 units of affordable housing and the plan is to convert the buildings into a total of 350 units for residents, students, and staff housing. The total project cost is \$18 million. Chairman Breuer stated that SUNY Upstate is quickly moving forward with this project and changes will be seen in the next 60 days. Mr. Russell inquired if changes will be mainly on the inside of the buildings or will there be changes of the exterior. Chairman Breuer responded that there is asbestos in both buildings. There will be a lot of internal work but there will be substantial changes to the exterior consistent with Dr. Smith's vision.

Downtown has had four new businesses open in the last two months. There are eight new restaurants in the pipeline that are scheduled to open later this year.

Ms. Treier also stated that downtown has seen two large scale tenants move into downtown, O'Brien & Gere into Washington Station and MVP Health Care into AXA Towers.

V. Status of Common Center

Mr. John Rennock provided the Board with an update on the Transfer Hub project. Currently, there is about three weeks left of asbestos abatement. Once that is completed, demolition of the buildings will begin. This demolition process will last about two months. The completion of this will be during the first week of December, with a groundbreaking. The Transfer Hub is still on track to be completed in fall of 2011.

VI. Report on Tourism

a. United States Bowling Congress

Ms. Tracey Kegebein stated that the Convention and Visitors Bureau went to Milwaukee last year to secure the USBC Women's National Tournament. This is the second time the tournament will be held in a convention center. Already, 4,000 teams have registered for this event, with a goal of 6,500 teams to register. There are five members per team and their guests. The tournament runs from April 7, 2011 – July 3, 2011. In February, the construction crews will arrive to transform the Oncenter into 48 bowling lanes with a retail and concession area. During April 1-7, 2011 there will be testing of the lanes with an opening ceremony held on April 7th. Each day 450 new bowlers and their guests will be in Syracuse to compete.

Ms. Kegebein stated that Syracuse, especially downtown, needs to be a great host to this event. The CVB will have logos throughout the area. She mentioned that a lot of these bowlers use this as their vacation, they will be looking for other things to do than just bowl. Not only will this impact be felt in Syracuse, but also the whole region, since there are trips planned to other areas of New York.

Mr. Doucette inquired why the Bowling Congress selected Syracuse and what kind of cultural activities are being planned. Ms. Kegebein responded that this event was bid on three times before Syracuse won. Also, Syracuse has a long history of bowling, plus 90% of all bowling pins are manufactured in Lowville, NY. Mr. Tripoli mentioned that the Onondaga Historical Association will have a bowling display. Ms. Kegebein also mentioned that the Everson will also have some events planned especially for the bowlers during that time.

Mr. Russell stated that social media could play a huge role in promoting this event for out of town bowlers and their guests. He mentioned creating a You Tube channel to highlight the area so they can learn more about what there is to do in see during their stay. Also, maybe including a story about the bowlers and send that to their local media. This will allow more excitement in a different region to build and have more people visit. Ms. Kegebein added that there will be a web cam installed in the Oncenter and that they will be using social media.

Ms. Kegebein reiterated that the businesses in the area need to embrace the event. The women will be bowling from 6 am till 2am. They will be working with businesses for promotions.

b. Visitor Information and Security Center

Ms. Treier stated that with the relocation of the Security storefront to The Galleries on South Warren Street, the Downtown Committee was presented with an opportunity to create more of a downtown information center than what previously existed in the Deys Centennial Building. Currently this concept is being developed and she thanked Mr. Russell for his assistance on conceptual design of this space. The idea is to move towards this being more of an expanded Visitor Center and have been working with the Convention & Visitors Bureau on programming of the space. The location offers an advantage to Warren Street's revival and proximity to the Hotel Syracuse and Oncenter complex offers strong visitor connections for the space. Conversations to utilize iPad technology as personalized visitor kiosks have begun between the Downtown Committee and the Syracuse CVB.

Also, the Downtown Committee is looking to hire two Downtown Ambassadors for the next two years to serve as welcoming and hospitable presences throughout the district. This position is made possible due to funding secured through Assemblyman Magnarelli. The job description is nearing completion. The Ambassadors would be charged with helping to make downtown visitor friendly by providing directions and information, assisting in reporting litter concern areas or damaged streetscape furniture, and will be dressed in specific uniforms. Ms. Treier stated that the Ambassadors would be full time and that their hours would vary depending on events happening in downtown.

VII. Clinton Street CSO Storage Facility

Mr. Mankiewicz stated that the Clinton Street CSO will consist of three parallel underground tunnels that will be located in the Trolley Lot. This would be almost the entire length of the current lot. In addition to the underground tunnels, there will be two small buildings built at either end of the project. Construction will start in July 2011 and will end in December 2013. Once the project is complete, the parking lot will be rebuilt to accommodate 380 cars. The Trolley Lot currently holds 700 cars. Construction will be operating 24/7 for a period of time. During the construction phase, there will be a bridge built so construction vehicles enter the site from West Street rather than driving through downtown.

Mr. Tony Ortega stated that the Armory Square Association is working closing with the project managers. The Armory Square Association is creating a Parking Committee. They are very excited about the growth that Armory Square has seen but one of the main challenges is parking. Mr. Ortega commented that there are a lot of short term solutions but the Parking Committee will need to figure out which solution and to inform the public and businesses about the parking solution during the construction.

Mr. Doucette inquired about the impact the construction will have on Armory Square. Mr. Ortega is hopeful that it will not disrupt the operations of the businesses in the area. He stated that they might have to close the bridge near Walton Street for a period of time. As for the drilling, he said that the places closest to the Trolley Lot (MOST, Jefferson Clinton Commons) will feel it but farther out (Center Armory, Walton Street) will probably not feel anything.

Mr. Leatherman expressed concerns about the future development of the lot once this project has been completed. Mr. Mankiewicz noted that no structure can be built above the tunnels. There can be development on the fringes of the lot.

Mr. Ortega commented that the lot will be very attractive once the project is completed. It will be well lit and greenery will be added.

Mr. Koolakian expressed concern about the issue of leakage of the facility since other cities have had issues with underground tunnels, Boston for example. Mr. Ortega stated that the tunnels are meant to be temporary storage and that all of the water will be pumped to the Metro Treatment Plant. Chairman Breuer asked that the project managers to make a presentation to the Board.

VIII. Parking

a. Sibley's Garage

Mr. Cowin stated that the Sibley's Building is losing its main tenant. The Sibley's Garage, in its current state, is deteriorating. Currently the plan is to close the garage once this tenant departs at the end of the year. The city will consider repairing the garage, if it will help with the Trolley Lot closing.

Mr. Mankiewicz suggested that the city and the Downtown Committee take advantage of this opportunity to look into the rehabilitation of the garage. This is one of the best locations for a parking facility downtown since it can attract daytime, nighttime and weekend activity. Mr. Simpson also added that Excellus is still in the building and they have stated that they want onsite parking for their employees.

Mr. Cowin also mentioned that the city has formed a committee for parking. This committee meets every other week. Not only have they discussed this topic but they are discussing all parking in the city.

b. Atrium Garage Project

The Atrium Garage is undergoing a transformation. Mr. Fiorito stated that it is one of the older garages in the Armory Square and is a landmark for the area. There are 830 parking spaces and the garage will be operating 24/7. It has undergone some cosmetic exterior changes. The garage is well lit and has security cameras. The work on the garage is about 60% complete.

Mr. Tripoli inquired if the garage will be staffed 24 hours or will it be card operated. Mr. Fiorito responded that the card will control the gates.

Mr. Fiorito also stated that the Shoppers Garage on Clinton Street will also be undergoing renovation. This garage holds 300 cars and will help with the current parking need in the area.

He commented that there will be all new signage on both of these garages.

c. Potential Expansion of Parking Operation

Mr. Mankiewicz announced that the Downtown Committee has been approached by a property owner to run their parking lot, in a similar agreement that we currently have in place to run the lot across from the Dinosaur Bar-B-Que. It is located on the north end of downtown. Mr. Mankiewicz will bring the contract to the Board for consideration.

IX. Marketing

a. Branding Project

Mr. Stoner reported that the Branding Committee had been meeting to identify the essence of downtown and using Mr. Russell's process of finding a new brand. The committee listened to presentations by two firms, Pinckney Hugo and Stress Design, on their ideas for a new brand. Mr. Stoner stated that both firms' presentation was outstanding and that the committee selected Stress Design for the work. During this selection process, it was brought up that this might also be an opportune time to think about a name change, since Downtown Committee does not seem to capture the essence of what we do.

Mr. Russell stated that the Board needs to decide if they would like to go through with the name change, since this is the time to do it. Chairman Breuer agreed with Mr. Russell.

Ms. Reed commented that the need for a new brand came out of the strategic plan process. She stated that by building an identity, we hope to create more visibility for our programs, uniforms, maintenance equipment and projects. The cost for the work of Stress Design came in for under \$5,000.

Chairman Breuer asked the Board to make a motion to authorize the Executive Director to sign a contract with Stress Design, not to exceed \$5,000. Mr. Stoner moved and Mr. Doucette seconded, the motion was unanimously approved.

b. Holiday Decoration Project

Ms. Littlejohn reported that they had reviewed proposals by two companies, Able Events and Downtown Decorations, for holiday decorations. Sample decorations were installed in downtown so the committee could see how they looked both from the pedestrian view but also while driving by. She stated that the committee had selected Able Events as the vendor.

Mr. Fiorito asked if the proposal was for all of downtown or would there be two concepts, where Armory Square has lights on the tree and the rest of downtown has the decorations. Ms. Reed responded that yes the lights would still be in Armory Square and the rest of downtown would have pole decorations.

Ms. Reed stated that this contract is for four years, with an average cost of \$27,000 per year. The contract with the vendor needs to be executed. Ms. Reed asked the Board for a motion to authorize the Executive Director to sign a contract with Able Events and a separate agreement with the City of Syracuse. Mr. Doucette moved and Mr. Stoner seconded a motion, the motion was unanimously approved.

c. AXA Reception

Ms. Reed reported that the Downtown Committee will be working with AXA on an event called "Spirit of Syracuse". The purpose of this event is to better acquaint AXA employees with the businesses and cultural institutions in the area. The event will be on October 12th from 10:30 am – 2:30 pm in the lobby of the AXA towers. There will be about 20 businesses taking part in this event. If any Board member would like to take part in this event, please contact Ms. Reed.

d. Downtown Advertising Campaign

Ms. Reed announced that the Downtown Committee has received an award from the International Downtown Association for the commercials done by Solon Quinn. The award will be announced at the IDA's annual conference in Fort Worth in October.

X. Other Business and Adjourn

Mr. Doucette announced he would be giving tours of the apartment in the Deys Plaza for anyone who is interested. Mr. Tripoli informed everyone that Georgie's Central Lunch had opened in the old Brick Alley spot on Montgomery Street.

Next meeting: **Tuesday, November 16th at 3:00 pm**
Board Room, 572 South Salina Street