

# SDODC

Special District Operations and Development Committee  
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James V. Breuer, Chair

## SPECIAL DISTRICT OPERATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

### Meeting Minutes

January 28, 2014

CenterState CEO  
115 West Fayette Street

3:00 pm

#### Attendance

Members: Chairman Breuer; Mss. Gagliano and Littlejohn; Messrs. Doucette, Fiorito, Fisher, Howard, Koolakian, Nutting and Tripoli

Ex-Officio: Mr. Simpson

Staff: Mss. Finch, Hnatko, Holbrook, Reed, Romeo, Treier; Messrs. Campanie

Guests: Hon. Helen Hudson – Syracuse Common Council  
Brian Balash – Pyramid Brokerage  
Elias Everett – Pyramid Brokerage  
Karen Hawkins – Gilberti, Stinziano, Heintz and Smith

#### I. WELCOME AND MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 19, 2013

##### a. Introduction of New Board Members

Chairman Breuer welcomed the Board members and guests present. He welcomed new Board member Mr. Brian Howard, Senior Vice President-Market Manager of Key Private Bank. He also welcomed back reappointed Board members Mr. Tim Carroll and Mr. Gregg Tripoli.

##### b. Approval of Minutes

Chairman Breuer asked for a motion to approve the minutes of November 19, 2013. Mr. Koolakian moved and Mr. Tripoli seconded. The motion was unanimously carried.

#### II. FINANCIAL STATEMENT AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2013

Ms. Treier stated that the December 31 statement represents the halfway point of the organization's fiscal year. Income is running at 50% as budgeted. Ms. Treier reported that Interest Income is at 10% and that is because rates are low. All income from the Farmer's Market and Arts & Crafts Festival are in for the year. Ms. Treier stated that the parking lots are running 5% below budget, but she expects that to pick up during the summer with the planned events. The Downtown Living Tour takes place this spring, so there is currently 0% income

reported for that event, and income from Dining Week is expected to start coming in at the end of February. Ms. Treier reported that there are no major changes to the Expense lines. Ms. Treier noted that Economic Development, Salary & Fringes line, is ahead of budget due to a reallocation of staff time.

Chair Breuer complimented the Environmental Maintenance department for keeping on top of the snow removal this year. Mr. Tripoli asked what specifically led to the Travel line being above budget. Ms. Treier reported that two Downtown Committee staff members attended the IDA Conference in NYC this past October. Board members are welcome to view their presentation of findings from the event.

Ms. Treier asked for a motion to approve the December 31<sup>st</sup> financial statement, subject to audit. Mr. Doucette moved and Mr. Fiorito seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously carried.

**a. Purchase Request**

Ms. Treier reported that there is \$4,500 that was not used from the CNY Community Foundation grant the Downtown Committee received for the hanging flower program. She received approval to reallocate those funds for the purchase of a new tractor for the Environmental Maintenance department, to be used to help with the watering of the flowers. The tractor cost \$8,290 plus tax and it will be purchased using the \$4,500 grant funds and the Downtown Committee would need to contribute the \$3,790 plus tax.

Ms. Treier asked for a motion to approve the tractor purchase from the Downtown Committee's Reserve Funds. Mr. Doucette moved and Mr. Koolakian seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously carried.

**III. SPECIAL DISTRICT PROPOSED BUDGET 2014-2015**

Ms. Treier stated that a Budget Committee was formed to review, prepare, and recommend the budget to the Board. She thanked board members, Jim Breuer, Tony Fiorito, Bob Doucette, Gregg Tripoli, and Ed Koolakian for their contribution.

Ms. Treier provided members of the Board with a packet detailing an Analysis of Income & Expenses of the Downtown Committee for the last 10 years, which also included current fiscal yearend projections.

Ms. Treier reported that the Budget Committee recommends asking the City for an increase in budget this year. The Downtown Committee special assessment formula currently does not allow for an automatic increase in revenue when a new or improved building is added to the district. Ms. Treier reported that this year she worked with the Department of Assessment, and taking into consideration the 8 new buildings with changes in assessed valuation, the Downtown Committee could increase its services to support these new structures and increase its budget by \$32,400 without affecting payments made by other property owners. This increased amount is factored into the current budget proposal.

Ms. Treier presented the Budget Overview. She discussed the Breakdown of Annual Income graphs. The graphs depict that income is generally increasing. However, the percentage contributed by the special assessment has been decreasing as a percentage of total income. Ms. Treier reported that within this next year, less income is projected from Events. The Downtown

Committee is looking into sponsorship opportunities for the annual meeting and other events to make up for this loss.

Ms. Treier reported that revenue from Transportation is projected to remain steady.

Ms. Treier reported that the Hanging Flower Basket Program is typically included in the Miscellaneous Income, but for this next year it has been separated out into its own income line. Revenue from this program is projected to increase as the program expands.

Ms. Treier noted the increase in funds shown under Grant Income. This increase can be attributed to a new \$200,000 NYS Main Street Grant that was recently awarded to the Downtown Committee. Mr. Koolakian asked if administration and staff time will be included in the grant funds. Ms. Treier reported that no administration fees are included in the grant funds and they have typically been provided through the Economic Development line.

Ms. Treier reviewed the Historic Analysis of Expenses of the past 10 years. She noted the following trends in expenses: Administration at 22%, with Maintenance close behind at 21%. Marketing averages about 20% of total yearly expenses, with Security at 14%, Economic Development at 10%, Events at 8%, and Transportation at 5%. Ms. Treier discussed the Breakdown of Annual Expenses. She reported that expenses are generally increasing. In the areas of Environmental Maintenance, Marketing, and Security, although increasing in size, they are still reporting fairly stable percentage of total expenses.

Ms. Treier reviewed each of the program lines. She reported that under Administration, the Downtown Committee office rent is lower, but the cost of insurance increased, resulting in a slight change to the Administration percentage. She also noted that there was an increase in expenditures for the Maintenance budget, but expenses remained stable at 20% of the budget. The increased Special Projects line reflects the increased attention on the condition of public space, including planting/removal of trees, hanging flowers, etc. Ms. Treier noted that the Depreciation line increased because of a new tractor purchase and that the Horticulture/Watering line includes both the cost of the flower basket maintenance as well as a \$6,000 contract to water the tree pits. Ms. Treier noted that the Downtown Committee Environmental Maintenance department has taken on a lot of additional duties in regards to trees, trash cans and beautification efforts in downtown.

Mr. Koolakian asked if it was possible to expand the Downtown District to increase the flow of income. Mr. Koolakian noted that the Downtown Committee needs more money to make the area more attractive. Ms. Treier agreed, but noted that any other area under discussion for expansion needs to be aware of how expectations of service relate to expenses incurred for these same services.

Mr. Doucette stated that sufficient money isn't being spent on downtown, which is frustrating taking into consideration the new buildings and new revenues coming into the city that the Downtown Committee does not benefit from. With these new revenues, the Downtown Committee could do so much more. A small monetary increase in revenue to put back into infrastructure would benefit all and encourage development. Mr. Doucette stated that the Downtown Committee needs to invest more money to make money, but it can't be done with the current resources. Mr. Nutting asked how the Downtown Committee defines their role in maintenance, with regards to the duties that should be handled by the City and by Property owners. Mr. Fiorito stated that the property owners need to put forth more effort on their part.

Ms. Treier stated that the Downtown Committee is not intended to replace city services, but is meant to enhance the downtown environment. She noted that one of the goals of the Downtown Committee is to maintain a healthy working relationship with the City. Mr. Tripoli stated that the basic special assessment formula needs to be re-examined.

Ms. Treier reported that with regards to Security, expenses are expected to increase by \$5,900 with the installation of the camera system and added expenses and maintenance associated with the program. Ms. Treier noted that the Downtown Committee continues to work with VPN, the Mayor and Common Councilors. She is planning a public meeting to roll out the existing security initiatives and the new camera program.

Ms. Treier reported that she met with the Mayor and discussed a proposed increase of \$32,400 to the Downtown Committee. She reported that the Mayor did not give a specific answer, as there may be implications associated with the city tax cap. Ms. Treier recommends submitting the increased budget to the Mayor.

Chairman Breuer made a motion to approve the proposed 2014-2015 budget. Mr. Nutting moved and Mr. Koolakian seconded a motion to approve the proposed budget. The motion was unanimously carried.

#### **IV. DOWNTOWN COMMITTEE CONSTITUENT SATISFACTION SURVEY**

Ms. Romeo stated that the Downtown Committee distributes its constituent satisfaction survey to garner feedback from stakeholders and to better prioritize Downtown Committee programs. For the 2013 Constituent Satisfaction Survey, the Downtown Committee continued to offer its survey in both an electronic and hard copy format. The electronic version was posted on the Downtown Syracuse website and shared via social media networks and email marketing. The hard copy version was mailed out to the Downtown Committee's database of residents, business and property owners. A total of 455 survey responses were received, which is a 31% increase in responses from 2012.

Ms. Romeo noted that the response profile is similar to previous years with Armory Square and Heart of Downtown having the most respondents.

Ms. Romeo reported that this year's survey recorded a positive increase in perception of downtown's strength as a neighborhood, continuing a trend seen in the previous two surveys. Compared with earlier surveys, the number of people who strongly or somewhat agreed with the statement 'Downtown is fundamentally strong and not likely to decline' exhibited a dramatic increase in the 2013 and 2012 surveys. Since 2011, the Downtown Committee has concentrated communications efforts to publicize the large amount of high-profile development projects recently completed or underway in Downtown Syracuse, which could explain the positive effect on people's perceptions of the city center.

Ms. Romeo noted that compared to the 2012 survey, four of the top five priorities remained the same, while organizing special events to support downtown businesses replaced retail recruitment. Ms. Romeo stated that the Downtown Committee is trending their programs to reflect this priority on special events, introducing a new event in the last year called Jingle Mingle and building on existing events such as Dining Week and Syracuse Style.

Ms. Romeo reported that survey respondents were given a list of 31 of the Downtown Committee's main functions performed in its economic development, marketing and communications, environmental maintenance, security and parking and access programs and asked to rank their awareness of the programs stating themselves to be 'aware,' 'somewhat aware' or 'not aware' of the programs. As in 2012, respondents were more familiar with the Downtown Committee's marketing and communications efforts and less familiar with security and environmental maintenance initiatives.

Four of the five most familiar programs remained the same from the 2012 survey. The percent aware of the hanging flower basket program increased this year. Ms. Romeo noted that perhaps this was caused by the further expansion of the program. Three of the five least familiar programs remained the same from the 2012 survey, with 'repairs street furniture' and 'operates the Downtown Security & Information Center at 440 South Warren Street' replacing 'removes gum from sidewalks' and 'can provide quarterly office and retail reports.'

Ms. Romeo noted that three questions regarding downtown safety were added to this year's survey to gauge perception of downtown safety, as well as of the proposed downtown surveillance camera program. Ms. Romeo reported that of the responses received, 70% indicate that people feel safe in downtown always or almost all of the time. Ms. Romeo also reported that 59% of responses indicated support for the proposed surveillance camera program, and 85% feel that surveillance cameras are a viable tool to assist in downtown police efforts.

Ms. Romeo stated at the end of the survey there was an open-ended question where respondents could provide additional feedback. She noted that the theme of the comments were very thoughtful and constructive, and focused on the excitement of the momentum currently in Downtown. Ms. Treier noted that a press/media release will be issued this spring to highlight the positive remarks.

Mr. Koolakian asked if a building owner was to have a problem on a Saturday, when the Downtown Committee Security department is not on duty, who should be called. Mr. Campanie stated that they should call 911. Ms. Treier noted that attention on weekends as the residential population grows would be a conversation worth having.

Mr. Nutting stated that the Downtown Committee was originally formed by people who own property in downtown, but now it's formed by people who live there. The Downtown itself is different as it is now a community and not working on an 8am-5pm schedule. He noted that there is a difference in the Saturday retail community versus the Saturday residence community.

## **V. DOWNTOWN REVENUE STUDY**

Ms. Treier reminded the Board Members of the upcoming meetings with Mr. Joe Minicozzi. The first meeting is planned for 8am on Thursday, February 6<sup>th</sup>. This interactive meeting will be with Mr. Minicozzi regarding data gathered to show Downtown's strengths and will include information on trends, the workforce, residences and future assessments. The second meeting is scheduled for Friday, February 7<sup>th</sup> at 3pm in the auditorium at National Grid. This meeting will be in a presentation format and will be for a larger audience. Mr. Doucette urged the board members to attend the meetings.

## **VI. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

### **a. NYMS Grant Award**

Ms. Finch reported that in December the Downtown Committee was awarded a New York Main Street Grant of \$200,000. This money will be used to fund building renovations and façade work of properties located from 200 East Jefferson Street to 200 West Jefferson Street and the 400 block of south Warren Street.

The Downtown Committee is currently in the contract execution phase of the grant, and plan to hold a public meeting for interested property owners to roll out the NYMS program in February. Ms. Finch noted that at this meeting the Downtown Committee will also make the Main Street application available. Property owners will have two months to complete the application. In April the applications will be reviewed and awards will be made.

Ms. Finch stated that she is looking for three to four Downtown Committee Board Members to help review the grant applications. The group will initially meet in April where Ms. Finch will review the program and distribute the completed applications. The Board Members will have two weeks to review the applications. After that, all will review and select the projects to receive funding. Mr. Doucette, Mr. Tripoli, and Ms. Gagliano volunteered to review applications.

## **VII. MARKETING**

### **a. Downtown Dining Weeks**

Ms. Reed reported that this is the 10th year of Dining Weeks in downtown Syracuse. This event will run from February 16 through March 1. Ms. Reed noted that the Downtown Committee started Dining Week as a 1-week promotion in 2005 with 17 restaurants. This year, 24 downtown restaurants have signed on. Ms. Reed reported that to celebrate the 10th anniversary, Dining Weeks now has new art that ties in with the Downtown Committee's new brand.

Ms. Reed also reported that Dining Weeks has a new title sponsor this year, SYSCO, which is the largest food distributor in the country. Ms. Reed noted that the hope is to nurture that relationship for many years to come. Ms. Reed encouraged everyone to get out and enjoy Dining Weeks.

Mr. Tripoli stated that Dining Weeks is a great program, and that restaurants really benefit from this event as this is normally a slow time of time of year for them. Ms. Littlejohn noted that it would be interesting to get a video of commentary from the visitors as they participate in Dining Weeks.

## **VIII. SECURITY MEETING**

Ms. Treier reported that the Security Meeting regarding the camera system will be scheduled after the Common Council briefings. She stated the exact date is forthcoming.

## **IX. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chair Breuer recognized Common Councilor Hudson and thanked her for attending. Councilor Hudson commented that she was a 29 year resident of the South Side and is now a renter in Franklin Square. She stated that she loves downtown and it is most beneficial to keep spreading

