



Tony Fiorito, Chairman  
Merike L. Treier, Executive Director

**DOWNTOWN COMMITTEE OF SYRACUSE, INC.**

**July 21, 2020**

**Via Conference Call**

**3:00 p.m.**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Attendance**

**Members:** Messrs. Fiorito, Bianchetti, Breuer, Bryant, Donnelly, Dunn, Nutting, Tascarella, Tripoli; Mss. Angrand, Zell

**Staff:** Mss. Holbrook, Maggiore, Schroeder, Reed, Sherlock, and Treier; Mr. Young

**Guests:** Mr. Joe Convertino, CH Insurance  
Ms. Linda Fitzgibbons, MONEY Federal Credit Union  
Mr. Matt Funicello, JF Real Estate  
Mr. Cory LaDuke, Pyramid Brokerage  
Ms. Debbie Ruthven, MONEY Federal Credit Union

**I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Mr. Fiorito welcomed members and guests present.

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MAY 19, 2020**

Chairman Fiorito asked the Board if there were any questions on the Minutes of May 19, 2020 and there were none. He asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Ms. Zell moved and Mr. Tripoli seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously carried.

**III. FINANCIAL REPORT AS OF MAY 31, 2020**

Mr. Dunn reported on the Financial Statement as of May 31, 2020. He noted that the budget is in the 11<sup>th</sup> month of the fiscal year and Income and Expenses are tracking as expected. He noted that there was no revenue to report for the Progress Breakfast because the event was cancelled. Parking lot income through May also reflects a lack of revenue due to the lot's temporary closure since mid-March. Under Income, sponsorship dollars were received for Dining Weeks. Mr. Dunn noted that the financial statement's full year projections will be reported at the next Board Meeting in September. Ms. Treier added that the parking lot was re-opened

mid-June and next month's financials will reflect a slight increase in parking lot revenue as businesses start to re-open.

Chairman Fiorito asked if there were any questions on the May 31, 2020 Financial Statement and there were none. He asked for a motion to accept the financial report subject to audit. Mr. Nutting moved and Mr. Tripoli seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously carried.

#### **IV. ADMINISTRATION**

##### **A. Authorize Executive Director To Sign Annual Contract**

Mr. Fiorito noted that the fiscal year special assessment budget that was presented by Ms. Treier to the Common Council in April received approval. Due to the municipal financial crisis due to COVID, the Downtown Committee did not get an increase in the funding requested, so the Downtown Special Assessment budget will remain at the same level as last year.

Ms. Treier asked the Board for a resolution to allow the Executive Director to enter into and execute the annual operating contract with the City of Syracuse provided that the only change from the previous year's contract is the date. Mr. Dunn moved to approve the resolution and Ms. Zell seconded the motion. The resolution was unanimously approved.

#### **V. DOWNTOWN COMMITTEE PROGRAM UPDATES**

##### **A. Summer Dining Weeks Deals**

Ms. Reed announced that the Downtown Committee will be organizing and promoting a summer edition of Downtown Dining Weeks called Summer Dining Weeks Deals that will run from July 27 through August 15. The intent is to give a boost to restaurants that have lost business due to the pandemic and encourage people to come back downtown and dine out safely. Ms. Reed thanked Mr. Ryan Benz of Oh My Darling for getting the ball rolling on this initiative. She noted that 32 restaurants will be participating and will offer deals for eat in or take-out. The prices will be \$15 or less for lunch and \$35 or less for dinner. Restaurants will also be required to follow the safety guidelines, including seating at 50% capacity, social distancing and requiring masks for staff and patrons that are not seated. Menus will be posted on the Downtown Committee website as they come in. Since there is no major sponsor of the event, most of the promotion will be done through social media. Advance Media is offering about \$2,000 in free advertising in the Post Standard, Syracuse.com and some Facebook ads. Oh My Darling has dedicated some of their radio air time to the program, and both Ms. Treier and Mr. Benz will be appearing on Channel 9's Bridge Street.

## **B. Virtual Arts & Crafts Festival**

Ms. Reed reported that this year was to be the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Syracuse Arts & Crafts Festival and while necessary to cancel the event protect public health, it was a disappointment. She announced that the festival was named one of the top 200 shows in the country by one of the trade publications. Extensive research showed many other shows were going virtual, so the Downtown Committee reached out to its web designer, Cowley who quickly set up the structure to accommodate a virtual presentation on the Downtown Committee's website. Ms. Reed thanked Cowley for their help. The site was populated with images from all 181 of the juried artists that were accepted to the show and can be found on the Downtown Committee website:

<https://downtownsyracuse.com/events/signature/syracuse-arts-crafts-festival/ac>

Ms. Reed noted that the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration will be postponed to July 2021.

Ms. Maggiore noted that the Downtown Committee created a virtual art show event on Facebook and has created a Facebook event for the summer edition of Dining Weeks. She encouraged the Board to visit the Downtown Committee's Facebook event to click on it as "going." She noted that every Monday and Thursday they will be highlighting categories of artists and tagging artists where they can. On Instagram, an image per artist is shared (10 per day) and is usually posted between 2-4pm. Ms. Maggiore noted that downtown arts organizations and retailers will also be highlighted. Mr. Fiorito thanked Ms. Reed and Ms. Maggiore for the great job that they did. Mr. Tripoli also commended the team for creating the virtual event for the arts show as well as the summer Dining Weeks promotion.

## **C. New Storefront Tips Guide**

Ms. Schroeder presented the Downtown Committee's new Storefront Tips Guide. She noted that this was a strategic time to release the brochure to help the businesses and retailers downtown with reopening. Ms. Schroeder thanked Ms. Reed who was a tremendous force on this publication. Both Ms. Reed and Ms. Schroeder provided the content and worked with Integrated Marketing on its design and production. She noted that the brochure focuses on four elements of design that make the biggest impact: signage, lighting, windows, and outdoor space. The goal of the brochure is to inspire people with ideas for how to add a personal touch to their particular store so all stores and windows don't look the same, and to share some best practices to make use of. Pasta's storefront was highlighted in the brochure as a local example for inspiration. Five hundred copies of the Storefront Tips Guide were printed through Integrated Marketing. About 200 brochures were distributed to reopened businesses downtown and the Downtown Committee has additional copies to provide. It is also in a PDF format and was published in the general newsletter and business newsletter that goes out on Wednesdays.

Ms. Treier added that the Downtown Committee worked closely with the City and County to understand which businesses downtown have signed affirmations that they have a safety plan in place and are open. Along with the physical distribution of brochures the team checked with businesses that were open but did not yet show as “affirmed” to make them aware of the safety requirements and the process for moving forward. Ms. Schroeder added the Storefront Tips was part of a whole packet that was hand-delivered to reopened businesses. They also shared the City’s revised 2020 Right of Way guide to make business owners aware of sidewalk sale and outdoor dining opportunities, the NYS Reopening requirements, as well as Google Tips on how to get your business online and operating. The link to the Storefronts Tip Guide can be found on the Downtown Committee’s website: [www.Downtownsyracuse.com/downtown-guides](http://www.Downtownsyracuse.com/downtown-guides).

#### **D. Consumer Confidence Campaign**

Ms. Treier presented to the Board an update on the progress of the Consumer Confidence Campaign that was developed with Mower. She thanked the Executive Committee, Mr. Fiorito, Mr. Dunn, Ms. Zell and Ms. Gagliano, as well as Ms. Angrand, Mr. Tripoli and Mr. Riley for the time they have taken to participate in a couple of different presentations with the Mower team as they continue to develop and fine tune what the campaign will look like. She noted the team worked with Mr. Justin Sayles and Ms. Isabelle Harris with Onondaga County to make sure the County was involved with advising on the message, but also from the timeframe in which the message would be delivered. They have also been working Ms. Carol Eaton, Vice President of Marketing from Visit Syracuse to make sure they are supportive of the message and contributing that visitor perspective as part of this campaign. Mr. Steve Butler of CNY Arts, a six-county regional arts organization, was also asked to participate. When the campaign is rolled out it will be important to have a unified message and provide agency outreach to a number of different constituent groups. Ms. Treier also noted that Ms. Angrand of the City of Syracuse has been involved in making sure the message is in line with the Mayor’s Office and the City of Syracuse. She recapped that based on feedback from the last Downtown Committee Board meeting, the campaign team wanted to make consumers feel safe and comfortable coming back downtown in addition to highlighting that variety and uniqueness of experiences that downtown has to offer. It was also discussed that when people do come back they will know that the quality of customer service still exists and those familiar faces and business owners would welcome them back. The committee also needed to be mindful with the timing of the opening businesses relative to the virus and roll out the campaign in different phases. Down the road the campaign can be used as an opportunity to brand Syracuse as a destination compared to larger, denser cities. Ms. Treier commented that the community

has done a fantastic job on responding and adjusting quickly to the pandemic thanks to county and city leadership.

Ms. Treier reported that the committee initially reviewed 15 different concepts produced by the Mower team and the following campaign message was selected: *“Put the “U” Back in Syrac\_se.* The campaign is envisioned as a series of real people (community leaders, business owners and community residents) sharing and building on that emotional connection to our community so the viewers of the message can actually connect with it. Both the County Executive and the Mayor are on board as being part of this campaign. She noted that a lot of the campaign and the variety of experiences to make people feel comfortable and welcoming will rely heavily on the visuals chosen. Putting the “U” in Syracuse slogan could be used in the longer term and work to attract more people to the region. The Downtown Committee will be working with the Mower team for the deliverables including: outdoor billboard advertising, posters, and potentially putting up giant SYRAC\_SE letters that can serve as that selfie moment but can also be moved to other areas of the community. Other tactics that were developed to build buzz for the campaign include photo shopping out “U” from notable Syracuse business signs; a wall painting graphic where the “U” would be missing and someone can stand between the letters to share on social media; and a scavenger hunt/road rally where QR Codes would be found in noticeable places around the county to direct someone to the landing page to find hints. This can also help track how many people are visiting. Ms. Treier noted that Zoom meetings will be set up with downtown businesses and toolkits will be delivered to help incorporate the message into some of their activities.

After sharing a few other promotional ideas, Ms. Treier noted that the next steps will be to work with Mower to develop a list of media outlets understanding who has the relationships and who can be approached to be spokespeople for this campaign. Mower will also try to build as much free advertising and social media as possible and get community leaders on board. Mower projects a minimum of \$50,000 in cost for developing a campaign. Ms. Treier proposed the following to the Board to fund the campaign: (1) Mr. Fiorito and Ms. Treier will issue a joint letter to various contact groups asking for tax-deductible contributions for a downtown re-emergence campaign through the Downtown Syracuse Foundation, a 501(c)(3); (2) utilize up to \$25,000 from the reserve account (used to fund capital and strategic initiatives that are not part of the regular annual budget) to support campaign development; and (3) contribute up to \$12,000 from the Downtown Committee June 30<sup>th</sup> balance to the Downtown Syracuse Foundation to support this strategic initiative.

Mr. Fiorito noted that the committee should be congratulated for putting together an exciting and do-able program for the Consumer Confidence Campaign to get the results we are looking for. Mr. Bianchetti inquired if there were any anticipated purchases during the year that would put the reserve fund at a disadvantage, and Ms. Treier responded that several of the larger purchases or upgrades were done this past year and that using funds from the reserve would not put the fund at a disadvantage. Mr. Fiorito asked the Board for approval to withdraw up to \$25,000 from the reserve account and contribute up to \$12,000 that will be a surplus from non-DSA revenue at the end of June 30, 2020 year. Mr. Fiorito asked for a motion and Mr. Nutting moved, with Mr. Tripoli seconding the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

## **VI. OTHER BUSINESS AND ADJOURN**

Mr. Tripoli commented he has been appointed by the Mayor to the action group discussing the issues surrounding the Columbus statue in Columbus Circle in Downtown Syracuse. The OHA will provide the substantiated historical perspective. Ms. Treier noted that she had spoken to the Mayor about participating on the committee and looks forward to a better understanding the history of the monument.

Mr. Dunn noted that the Gifford Foundation, the Allyn Foundation and Community Foundation through their dialogue efforts with InterFaith Works, funded a dialogue session a year and a half ago on the statue, so the foundations came together again to support the recent dialogue of this mayoral committee. Mr. Tripoli also added that it is likely the circle's physical design will be changed from what we know today and the Downtown Committee may be involved in that component of it.

With no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 3:55pm

### **Upcoming Board Meetings**

**September 15, 2020**  
**tba**