

**AURORA DOWNTOWN
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

Minutes

January 15, 2015

8:00 a.m. – 5th Floor conference Room B – City Hall

Members Present: Jane Abe (Aurora Regional Chamber of Commerce), Jimi Allen (at large), Lulu Blacksmith (WCC), Rory Bolen (al large), Doug Cheatham (Old Second National Bank), Keith Gerald (at large), Kim Granholm (at large), Fred Harrison (at large), Dan Hites (at large), Kimber Howard (at large), Benjie Hughes (at large), Eva Luckinbill (Library), Melissa Mercado (at large), Terry Michels (Hollywood Casino), Ellen Mueller (AACVB), Helen Nowak (at large), Jorge Pacheco (at large), Bob Reuland (ex-officio),

Members Absent (Excused): Hal Beebee (at large), John Galles (at large), Karen Kramford (at large), John Nachtrieb (at large), Charlie Zine (at large)

Members Absent (Unexcused): Katie Arko (ACCA), Megan Paul (at large)

Others Present: Bill Wiet (COA), Brett Michaelson (Seize the Future), Cadence Peterson (Seize the Future), Birnie Harper (Wayside Cross), Rafael Verde (Hollywood Casino), Marissa Amoni (Aurora Downtown), Michael Cobb (Hesed House), Jennifer Rauch (If These Walls Could Talk)

Call to Order and Introductions – Kim Granholm

Kim Granholm called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

Approval of Minutes – 12/4/2014

Melissa Mercado made a motion to approve the December 4, 2014 minutes. Eva Luckinbill seconded the motion.

Bob Reuland said would the group like to have the minutes and the agenda earlier than a day or so before the meeting?

The consensus was yes.

Bob Reuland said maybe we can work the Friday before then that will give you more time to read.

The motion carried unanimously.

Ellen Mueller said she had a correction. On Page 6, the second paragraph, it should say Mike Pheiffer instead of Mike Mueller.

Approval of Treasurer's Report – Doug Cheatham

Doug Cheatham said unfortunately I ran into some software difficulties yesterday when I went to generate the reports. It is all in there, but I can't generate the reports as of yesterday. I apologize. I have to get that fixed. I can tell you that we have around \$135,000 to \$140,000 in the bank, so we are in good shape from a cash standpoint. Also 1099's are going out shortly. Also, as we had indicated, we will be transitioning to using some of Joe Zu's accounting services going forward this year.

Old Business

None.

New Business

a. Committee Assignments

Kim Granholm said I just wanted to mention the committee assignments. I did bring a report of who is the Chair for the committees that we have and who is signed up to be on that committee. The committees have already started meeting, so if you want to be on a committee or if you would like to attend, you don't have to be on the committee just to attend a few here and there. If you'd like, you can show up or put your name on the list and participate as much as you can. The real work gets done on the committee level. The Board we use more as kind of a reporting process and to get some of the formality of approving certain things done. It is very important for your participation.

Bob Reuland said that's where the budget decisions are made too, so if you are interested in how the budget is administered, that's where you go, to the committee meetings and voice your opinion.

b. Financial Outlook

Bob Reuland said when the Budget Committee met last fall, they allocated all of the money, the \$270,000, to various committees and programs, so we don't have any discretionary funds this year to speak of. There is no slop in the budget. There are no special funds. There are no allocations, so we've got to be very careful when we are approached about giving to various organizations or programs. We are not going to be able to do it this year. It is going to be a tighter situation throughout, but the budget itself and the committees have more power than they've ever had before and I think that is a good thing as long as you participate in those committee meetings. It is vital.

Kim Granholm said we did have a Board member resign after the Annual Meeting. Sylvia Washington has resigned her position. It was my recommendation to have Keith Gerald finish out her term.

Lulu Blacksmith made a motion to appoint Keith Gerald to the Board. Dan Hites seconded the motion. The motion was unanimous.

Kim Granholm said welcome to the Board. Keith does a lot of our Hump Day events. I think he is a perfect fit for what we are looking to do this year in 2015 and we are happy to have him.

Bob Reuland said his term expires in December 2015, so I assume he will be running next fall.

Terry Michels said I mentioned in December, Rafael Verde was our General Manager at our New Mexico casino. He came out in December. He is officially on board with us the 1st of January.

Rafael Verde said I just moved here from New Mexico. I have a wife and a daughter. We are living in the Aurora area. I'm glad to be here. I'm learning a lot. I'm looking forward to working with you guys.

Consultant Report – Bob Reuland

Bob Reuland said the participation in the committees is absolutely vital this year. We have more money to spend.

Committee Updates

Bob Reuland said John Nachtrieb is not here today, so I'd like to give a little report for the BAR Committee. They met. They are talking about having a cap of \$6,000 for a year on the Rent Subsidy Program. That might give us a little broader reach. There is also talk of a \$10,000 Business Retention component this year. If you look at your committee report, the BAR Committee is very large, but when we have the meetings, the meetings are very small. Those of you who do come, I congratulate. Those of you who don't, I encourage you to please come because it is very, very important. We are allocating funds that are going to help businesses and I think it is very, very useful to come to these meetings.

Fred Harrison said I will be reviving the Parking Committee. Bob and I talked about it. I will dig up all the old data so we're not repeating ourselves. We'll probably have a meeting within a month or so.

Bob Reuland said one thing I'd like to recommend to you is to talk to Bill Wiet. Bill has some new plans coming forward and some new data coming from the parking people, so I think you should meet with him first.

Bill Wiet said the data that the license plate technology readers provide, we found, is somewhat limited. It doesn't give us what I thought would be the true picture of the hot spots when things are occurring and things that we could actually use that data for to report out to this committee. What we thought might be a good idea is we would just do a series of interviews with the Board members here, local merchants, and visitors in somewhat of a formal or an informal way with just people that we know that frequent the downtown and maybe get some information that way. Also interview our enforcement officers, the daytime enforcement officer and the evening and weekend officer, just to get their input on where they see the hot spots or where their frequency visiting is and we'd be able to report out that way and I mentioned that we would be working with the committee to put that all on the table and then we could make something out of that.

Dan Hites said the meter reader's last trip out is at 6:30 p.m. Would you possibly be able to send them out at 7:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. just to do a count for the hours, I think, most people are complaining about lack of parking?

Bill Wiet said I can certainly ask to see if we can do some general. We can use the license plate technology for general vehicle counts. I can see if we can try to incorporate that into how we try to study the downtown.

Melissa Mercado said holiday decorations are still up. We convened yesterday with Temple Display. We came to a consensus that the decorations are still up and the ones that are considered more Christmas or holiday with reindeers or things of that nature, those are going to come down the last week of January. Ones that are more winter oriented will stay up indefinitely or until we're asked to take them down, so they will still be up and lighting the downtown and keeping it vibrant throughout the darker winter days. We've had some tripping of the GFI circuits and stuff and so we are trying to see if those are still under warranty and how to affect changing those over and keeping them all lit in the coming season. I'm looking into possible replacement of that. There are some offers that are good through the end of February on swapping some of those out. I have an e-mail into Joe Hopp about a possible partnership on lighting underneath the bridges in Aurora. We are entering into a conversation with them. I don't know what, if any, our involvement will be, but it looks promising.

Kim Granholm said did you discuss the umbrella project at all?

Melissa Mercado said briefly. We're not inclined to look at that at this point in time.

Benjie Hughes said the Marketing Committee is going to meet again a week from today. We meet the 4th Thursday of the month. We usually meet at 3:00 o'clock. I think I'm going to move that to 4:00 p.m. this year just because I feel like it doesn't make sense for us all go back to the office for 30 minutes or an hour at the end of the day. This is a big one because we really need to kind of hash out what are we going to do this year with our budget, what some of our focuses going forward will be, what worked well last year that we want to keep doing, and what we want to tweak and change from last year, so I think we have a lot to discuss at this first one in terms of budget. The only thing we have actively going on right now other than the website, which is constant, is we are sponsoring a trolley for the First Friday in February. That's going to be going all around downtown and making stops and dropping people off and picking people up through

our First Friday. We'll see if it works and then we'll decide if we want to continue that at future First Fridays or not.

Bob Reuland said landscaping met and we selected the flowers for the flower pots this year and for the hanging baskets. Everything is looking very, very good. Debbie Ausburg came in under budget for her flower budget. We're talking about having Riley come back and do the parks.

Lulu Blacksmith said the Legislative Committee has not had a meeting.

City Department Updates

Bill Wiet said there is an Open House next week for the Lake Street and River Street two-way conversion on January 21st from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. Development-wise I mentioned last week that we are trying to get legislation approved in Springfield to extend the Historic Tax Credits for the River Edge Redevelopment Zone communities. There are 5 of them; Aurora, Elgin, Peoria, Rockford and East St. Louis. We had a 5 year pilot program on doubling up the state and the federal historic tax credits so you could get a 45% tax credit on eligible buildings to rehab in these 5 community zones. That expires January 1, 2017, so we are trying to get a 5 year extension because all the communities have been getting an influx in development interest in some of these older buildings. However, you have to complete the project by that timeframe and these communities cannot get their projects in time, so we are trying to do that. We think it will be very helpful because the first couple of years of the pilot program were at the tail end of the recession so now the interest is starting to come forward and now that is expiring, so we are trying to get that done. I think that would be very helpful for downtowns in general.

Ellen Mueller said last night we had an exciting night. Approximately 100 people attended the burger championship. Three Aurora restaurants participated for the best burger. I did want to mention that Two Brothers recently won an award. We nominated them. The State of Illinois Tourism Department was looking for delicious destinations. That would be a destination attraction that has good food and supported the community. Two Brothers Roundhouse won 1 of those 12 awards and they have been invited to the Governor's Conference next month. Also Mike wanted me to mention that the National Table Tennis Tournament will be happening at the Vaughn Center. Approximately 300 contestants will be playing ping pong. That's this Saturday. The winner will be receiving the Aurora Cup.

Announcements – Everyone

Michael Cobb said thank you for just all of your kindness toward the year-end. It was great to see. Just a quick note on the amount of guests that we are serving. Just 2 days ago we had 205 folks. Last year when we had the vortex the highest peak we got to was 204 and that was already extremely high. I wish I could tell you exactly why. Four days before that we were at 162, which is much better. We love to see those numbers continue to go down, but it is just an extremely cold time of the year. In the evenings or anything like that, if you see someone we might be able to help when they are out in the cold, try to get ahold of us. We'll come and try to get them. In terms of all of our events that are coming up, I'll keep you apprised of those, but

right now for us it is a matter of just keeping everybody warm and safe through this challenging time.

Birnie Harper said it looks like we might have a horse race as far as whose building is going to be up first. We can't put the brick on the outside because it has just been too cold. The back side of the building is about complete. It is really going to be a handsome building. The work on the inside is going well and we still say we are going to have a grand opening in April. They started painting in the basement. The church I go to, we serve a meal at Hesed House every 5th Wednesday, so we serve 4 times a year. I just want to say if you have never had the chance to do that, to serve a meal there, you really should because it is an eye opening experience. It is rewarding. The city is lucky to have a place like Hesed House to take care of people like that and unlike most cities, it is not downtown. In this case, you've got a place and they've got all the programs to help people try to beat the homelessness. So find an organization or just go out there and serve a meal. It is a great experience.

Lulu Blacksmith said I wanted to introduce you to, but he had to leave early, the new Vice President of Strategic Planning for Waubonsee. We are very happy that he joined Waubonsee. His name is Dr. Jamal Scott.

Keith Gerald said it would be amiss to say today is Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King's actual birthday today and I think this table represents what he wanted done. The City of Aurora is participating in the National Day of Service on Monday. I was on the committee. All the high school kids are going to get the opportunity to volunteer at a number of different organizations throughout the City of Aurora, Hesed House being one, Mutual Ground, the City of Aurora Library, Sci-Tech. There are a number of sites across the city. There is a sign-up site. It is being posted in the high schools. There will be an evening event where the Mayor will award the kids a Service Award and that will be at Waubonsee High School from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. on Monday.

Eva Luckinbill said well to measure ourselves against Birnie, we still plan to open in May, so yes it is a horse race. Good luck to you. I did want to announce that as part of First Friday the library has selected their exterior sculpture. The renderings will be unveiled at First Friday at Lane Allen's studio, so come meet the sculptor and see what it is going to look like. It should be a fun evening.

Jimi Allen said we've gotten the second and third floors of our façade renovation for the Gravity Building nearly complete. We've had some trouble with the first floor doors. Everything will be finished by January 30th. That's the goal. It took 1 year to get that 3 month project done. The second thing is Saturday at 1:00 p.m. Bill Moller at WGN invited me on to talk about the struggle of what it is like to find funding and develop spaces like the Gravity Building. It is an hour program. The last thing is we are in our second round of analysis with our underwriter for the loan on the remainder of the project. So finger crossed, Lord willing it will come through and we go on to build the second phase.

Lulu Blacksmith said Waubonsee is going to be launching a Visioning project for 2015. Some of you might know that Waubonsee engaged in a plan called the 2020 Plan in 2001. We completed our plan 5 years early, so we are very excited about letting you know that we will be

inviting you to come to a summit sometime in early summer to help us create the Vision for 2015. I think the summit will also be an opportunity for all of you to think about the future and we don't want to be a blockbuster or a company that didn't make it because we weren't thinking about the future. We think it is important to think ahead and we will be sending more information later.

Bob Reuland said the rendering here is a picture of how River Street will look with reverse back in for the perpendicular parking, the two-way bike trail, the raised rib area in between and the flowers and so on. This they hope to have done this year. It is going to be real exciting over there. It is going to make the area just pop.

A discussion followed on reverse back in parking.

Kim Granholm said I'm sure that you all know that Jesse Vazquez, who was a good friend of mine and a good friend of the community, passed away on Monday night unexpectedly. He was 51 years old. I know the family is really, obviously, struggling. If you know the family at all, they are having a service and Sunday is the visitation from 2:00 to 8:00 p.m. I believe the funeral is Monday at 10:00 o'clock. Just reach out to the family, drop off dinner and let them know that you are thinking of them because it was a real loss to the community.

Adjourn

Jane Abe made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Keith Gerald seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 a.m.