

**AURORA DOWNTOWN
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**

Minutes

February 5, 2015 – 8:00 A.M. – 5th Floor Conference Room B – City Hall

Members Present: Jimi Allen (at large), Doug Cheatham (Old Second National Bank), Kim Granholm (at large), Dan Hites (at large), Benjie Hughes (at large), Eva Luckinbill (Aurora Public Library), John Nachtrieb (at large), and Bob Reuland (ex-officio)

Members Absent (Excused): Karen Kramford (at large), Terry Michels (Hollywood Casino)

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Bill Wiet (COA), Gina Moga (COA), Cadence Peterson (Seize the Future), and Hector Ochoa (Old Second Bank)

Meeting Highlights

Call to Order and Chair's Remarks

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

Approval of Minutes

John Nachtrieb made a motion to approve the January 8, 2015 minutes. This was seconded by Benjie Hughes. The motion was unanimously approved.

Treasurer's Report – Doug Cheatham

Doug Cheatham said I don't have statements. We are transitioning over to Joe Zu from Pillar and Company to do the statements. I've got a little transition here, but I'm getting the information to him and he'll get that turned around pretty quickly, I think, so easily before the full meeting in 2 weeks. I will tell you that we have over \$200,000 in the bank. We've had a few routine checks lately, but nothing too notable.

Bob Reuland said we have the Christmas decorations coming out soon. That's \$40,000.

Doug Cheatham said okay. That will be notable.

Old Business

None.

New Business

a. General Discussion

Kim Granholm said did want to talk in depth about a few things that kind of have to do with some of the committees. We wanted to talk a little bit more in depth about some of the changes that we are making. Bill, actually, will also be talking about the parking survey that he is going to be doing and wants to get our input.

Bill Wiet said I mentioned earlier that we were going to embark on an interview/survey campaign to get feedback on the last 18 months since we implemented our new parking changes and removed the meters, did time limits, and hours of enforcement, etc. I had kicked around a few things in my mind and then I put them on paper and then I met with our internal parking committee just to get some feedback. What we're looking to roll out is we want to try to roll something out in a 2 week period in April. That's when the Community College will still be in session, that's when Les Mis will be at the show. There will be enough activity that what we are going to do, we're actually going to be using our parking enforcement vehicle and we are going to be taking parking counts every day, every hour for a 1 week period. Then we are going to reserve the additional week in the event we skip a couple of hours on a Wednesday. We'll go back the following Wednesday to do counts. We did this last year around Aurora University, so we went out and took some of our own data and it worked very well in terms of driving around, waiting, driving the next hour, waiting, and so forth until we get all these counts. Then we'll be able to start manipulating the data, plotting it, and then we'll be able to, at least from a standpoint of where the cars are, we'll be able to do it on an hourly basis. Then we got to talking about a mechanism in which we would get public opinion. We had thought about a combination of a survey monkey and we would also be putting it on the website where we can get the survey monkey on a little card that actually our parking enforcement officer will put in the tickets. We'd like to get feedback from those who got tickets. The ones that maybe don't respond will be the ones that were I was just there too long, my fault. Some actually might have an opinion as to maybe it was unfair they got a ticket or maybe the city should do this to avoid getting tickets for people like them. We're going to do survey monkey, and we're going to be putting some in the tickets during a period of time. We'll probably start maybe mid-March or so. We are also going to still do interviews. What I think we need to do first is I need to do some interviews before I can put the survey questions together. The survey monkey would go out to business owners in the downtown, it would go to a couple of the big players such as the theater goers. I know that the Paramount sends something out after a show. We're going to have to talk to Tim and see if we want to latch on a few questions on that survey or maybe provide a link on that survey to do a survey on parking. We also are going to get together with Waubensee and figure a way that we can get some student input as well. I did run these ideas by Kim. She thought maybe if you fill this out you don't have to pay your fine or something. We're going to have to work through some kind of a way that we can get people to do that, and try to find a way that maybe it can trickle down to employees as well. We broke it down into 5 categories. We broke it down into signage, enforcement, availability of parking, time limits and hours of enforcement. I just wanted to get some ideas on maybe some of the questions that come to your mind on signs. What would you want this survey to ask the public? Further discussion followed on what

questions we might want to see on the survey regarding signage, enforcement, availability of parking, and time limits.

Kim Granholm said I'm going to move on, actually Benjie if you wouldn't mind just kind of talking about what we had discussed and the structure of the Marketing Committee.

Benjie Hughes said we made it official with Marissa Amoni. I wrote her a job description this year to clarify exactly what she does for us and where that begins and ends. She is still maintaining our website and doing social media posts and press releases and monthly e-mails, which is unchanged from last year, but she works for us so if you have things that need to get out, let her know. The other thing that we've added is we've officially put her in charge of First Fridays, so that is now officially our event. I think it was unofficially our event for all of last year. We are officially making it a part of her job, so the way that I wrote it is that she is Venue Coordinator, so her job is to enlist the venues and help them know what to do if they are involved and how to participate in First Fridays, which includes getting the maps and A-frames and things that. She is also going to look into the issue of liability in terms of people attending the event.

Discussion then followed on the trolley and the issues that have come up with that.

Benjie Hughes said so here's the structure. I'm meeting with her once a month to sort of go over her job and keep her accountable. The way I've written it is me or someone from our Board will meet with her once a month. We are doing that the second week of the month so that it will always fall after First Fridays. I've also asked her to bring me just a very simple budget of like here are the 4 or 5 things I think I'm going to write about on the website over the next month and every month we'll look at sort of what actually happened. That way myself or whoever is representing the Board or the Marketing Committee will kind of stay a little bit in the loop of what she is actually doing and be able to report back to this group.

Doug Cheatham said I get bills sent to me directly from her.

Benjie Hughes said that needs to change. I'm asking her to send everything to me. I was thinking the committees are overseeing the money now, so the committee Chairs need to get the bills and then send them to you and tell you what budget they come out of.

Doug Cheatham said that's good.

Benjie Hughes said I built a spreadsheet and I'm trying to track every dollar that my committee spends, but I can't do that if the invoices don't come through me and then I won't know at the end of the year what money we have and you won't know what budget to take it out of.

Kim Granholm said I would say unless it comes directly from the committee Chairs just don't pay it. We'll have better control over how the money is spent. Since we are giving the committee chairs so much control of it, I think they should be the ones to be responsible for it.

Consultant Report

Bob Reuland said in the last few weeks, I met with Benjie, John and Kim and one of the things we talked about was First Fridays and how that is coming to Aurora Downtown this year and if we needed to set up a separate budget for First Fridays that would include the Trolley, the promotion, the printing of the maps and so on and so we've hit upon a \$30,000 budget as becoming part of the Aurora Downtown budget. I need to meet with Doug on how we are going to work that out.

Doug Cheatham said you and I should probably get together and work out with Joe what the chart of accounts looks like.

Bob Reuland said there is going to be a new budget division within the Aurora Downtown budget and I think that is going to help with the accountability and I think that First Fridays is going to take off and be a big, big issue for Aurora Downtown this year. I'm very much in favor of it. I just want us to be accountable for what we are doing.

Committee Updates

John Nachtrieb said the BAR Committee is going to meet again next Thursday. We are expanding the Rent Subsidy Program, revamping it a bit and also adding support, the opportunity for existing businesses to get some kind of support from the Aurora Downtown BAR Committee so that we can reach out and help companies that are having a struggle or want to do something of a marketing nature or some other non-budgeted item that would be important to the future of those businesses, so we are going to talk about that at our meeting next week.

Bob Reuland said the Holiday Decorations Committee met. They also met with Temple Display. They've ordered us a little extra decoration on the Benton Street bridges for next year. The decorations themselves came down the week of the 26th of January. The other lights are going to stay up a little bit longer through the winter because they're not strictly holiday. They are more generic. They haven't signed a new contract for next year as yet, but they're anticipating doing that. We have the bill that's going to be paid shortly.

Bob Reuland said for Landscaping, the flowers have been ordered. They came in under budget.

Benjie Hughes said the only other thing that Marketing has started talking a little bit about is the possibility of doing a brand update for our organization itself, like is this still the right logo for us, is this even still the right name to use, do we need a better way to describe what we do, do people understand what we do versus being a geographical area in downtown Aurora? We have started that discussion. I imagine it will go on at least another month, if not longer. If anyone else has any kneejerk thoughts or input I'd be happy to hear them.

Doug Cheatham said my kneejerk thought is that this logo can go.

Benjie Hughes said we are probably all on the same page with the logo.

Kim Granholm said I know Legislative is having a meeting this Friday at noon. Karen has sent out an agenda. She sent out some goals and some things to discuss. She is on the ball with the Legislative Committee. I'm looking forward to that being very active, as I think that we can get some things done as well.

City of Aurora Updates

Gina Moga said with the trolley, I talked to Rocky Pintozzi about the possibility of expanding the trolley service. I'm kind of doing a little research and putting together a quick one sheet for him and talking about the possibility of different partners, different stakeholders, that would pitch in for this, the casino, possibly the Paramount, Two Brothers, Rocky, obviously, and pick some key dates downtown when there are big events going on, or multiple events going on and having the trolley service then as well. I know with the re-decoration of the Meyer Ballrooms, the Paramount used to get 8 to 10 calls a week on weddings. They are getting 8 to 10 a day. The Meyer Ballrooms are beautiful. They are very well done. They took off all the curtains, so the floor to ceiling windows look out over downtown and it's really nice. So I am doing that. Hopefully I will finish that and have that to him by next week. I know he is going to kind of take the ball then and run with it and go to some different people and see if we can get this done. Another thing, I did this when I was in Special Events before, but I did not do it last year, and that is the downtown business owners letter, which lets them know all the dates for street closures for events for the year with those times and then actual streets that will be closed so everyone is aware early on that you know when the streets will be closed. I have that almost done. I really did want to wait until the middle of March to send it out in case there were any changes. I am including the tow agreement on that again, so on those dates they call those tow companies and they actually sign an agreement with us saying we will let our towing company know not to tow on these particular dates and times. I'm also asking for their e-mails so I can do a bi-weekly e-mail to them letting them know what's going on at RiverEdge Park and the Paramount and so forth so we can kind of work together in making the parking even a little easier and more accessible.

Announcements

Hector Ochoa said Aurora's Hispanic Heritage Advisory Board is in the early stages of planning for El Dia De Los Ninos. It will be on April 25th probably in the parking lot at Spring and Lincoln. If you know of any non-profit organizations, feel free to let me know or let them know about it because as in years past, we let them have booth space available free of charge so that way they can have children's activities and then they can promote whatever literature they have to the parents.

Kim Granholm said the Meyer Ballroom on February 12th from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. is having an open house, so you can go and see it. They have their different caterers there. I would recommend if you do want to go, send me something and I can send it to the Paramount and let them know that we will have more people.

Dan Hites said just a heads up, I'm planning on addressing the City Council on Tuesday about Waubensee and parking. It will be the kickoff to my, probably, number of approaches to the City Council about Waubensee over this year.

Eva Luckinbill said speaking of First Fridays, this Friday at Allen and Pepa Architects, the architect that was awarded the commission for the exterior sculpture at the new library will be there and talking about his sculpture. They will be there from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. Then in March, the First Friday will be at If These Walls Could Talk with the winners of the Art Contest that we ran that will be on the inside of the library. Our target opening for the public for the library now is mid-June.

Jimi Allen said we had an event at our studio on Friday and we had 22 foundation and technology kind of incubation folks come up there. Judy Dawson is in the building with Seize the Future. She represents SBA funding. I think it would be something to find out more about. We are going to meet with her again specifically. We once made a proposal for what is going on downtown as far as revenue. You can't access her program unless your gross revenues are over or between a certain range. It is really ideal for our downtown.

Kim Granholm said it is called "Scale Up Aurora" actually. I'm in the program. You have to be accepted. You have to be interviewed and everything. It is a pretty intense program. It is from the Small Business Administration, I believe, out of Washington, DC who put it together. There have been 8 grants throughout the United States that were given and the Small Business Association of Chicago was granted it and they brought it to Aurora. I think they have two different versions. I think they have one that is like startup and then they have one that has been in business and you have to be at a certain revenue. It is like intense business planning is what it is.

Adjourn

Dan Hites made a motion to adjourn the meeting. This was seconded by Doug Cheatham. The meeting was adjourned at 8:58 a.m.