

**AURORA DOWNTOWN  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

**Minutes**

**April 16, 2015**

**8:00 a.m. – 5<sup>th</sup> Floor conference Room B – City Hall**

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

**Members Absent (Excused):** Megan Paul (at large), Charlie Zine (at large)

**Members Absent (Unexcused):** None

**Others Present:** Bill Wiet (COA), Ed Sieben (COA), Mike Saville (COA), Cadence Peterson (Seize the Future), Birnie Harper (Wayside Cross), Michael Cobb (Hesed House), Destiny Gonzales (Bluebird Beat), Mariah Ruffin (Bluebird Beat)

**Call to Order and Introductions – Kim Granholm**

Kim Granholm called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. Introductions were then made.

**Approval of Minutes – 3/19/2015**

Karen Kramford made a motion to approve the February 19, 2015 minutes. John Nachtrieb seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

**Approval of Treasurer’s Report – Doug Cheatham**

Doug Cheatham said unfortunately we don’t have financial statements. Our accountant confused which Thursday was the third Thursday of the month. We have had some difficulty getting statements in the form that we want and the timing that we want so we’re evaluating that relationship and we’ll see how the next month goes.

Kim Granholm said Bob, Doug and I have had a conversation that we are going to put him on a 30 day notice and see how the next month goes. If we are not happy with the services after that, we’ll probably be bringing it back in-house and Doug will catch us back up and then we’ll re-evaluate that.

## Old Business

### a. Riverwalk Commission (FoxWalk) – Mike Saville

Kim Granholm said I've asked Mike to give us a little bit of a history of the Riverwalk Commission just to fill you in on the organization and what they do and then to discuss the documents that were e-mailed out.

Mike Saville said I appreciate the opportunity to be invited and speak to the Board. I think most of you know that I've had a special interest in the downtown and in the last couple of years I've been actually the Alderman of the downtown from the island west, so I'm happy to be representing that area of our city. In 1986 I proposed the idea of establishing a Riverwalk Commission for the purpose of building a Riverwalk in downtown. At that point in time, the Park District had plans, which are now implemented, of building a bike trail north and south of the downtown, but that hadn't been done yet. I thought well nobody is doing anything with the downtown. How are we going to connect the pieces of the puzzle so to speak? So I thought that we could do a Riverwalk pretty quickly, but I thought it was important not to ignore something that's as important as our downtown and our future development for our city. The City Council passed the ordinance in 1987. The Riverwalk Commission began meeting in 1988 and some of our members are still up on that Board. In fact, Bob Reuland is on the Riverwalk Commission. It is a 9 member board and what we began doing was trying to establish a concept and what we did was we hired consultants and established guidelines, so we have what is called the FoxWalk Overlay District Design Guidelines and that was approved by City Council, I believe, in 1993. What they do is guide development and redevelopment in the downtown within the parameters of guidelines, for example how the Riverwalk is built, what it looks like, street lights, Riverwalk lights, pavers, and also it lays out the parameters of the streetscape. At that point in time when we began studying this, we took an inventory and we had 13 different street light standards and in order to have a cohesive and quality development in the downtown we needed standards and we need to bring the downtown together and we thought the streetscape, the FoxWalk Overlay District and the guidelines would help to do that. I think over the years you have seen the benefits of this in a positive way. We also established what is called a Design Review Committee. Again, that oversees development and redevelopment within the FoxWalk Overlay District and so they have taken the place of the Planning Commission, which used to be the oversight body in the past. We are getting the pieces of the puzzle connected, still slower than what most of us would like, but you can see the benefits of it. People are walking along the Riverwalk. They see the beauty of our river and what we are trying to do in our downtown. A year and a half ago, Joe Hopp and I took a walking tour of the downtown because we wanted to understand what needed yet to be done with regard to the streetscape seeing how that is the most recognizable aspect of our FoxWalk Overlay District and what would be cheapest to do to implement. I think you have a copy of that as well. I think they represent around \$300,000 of improvements yet to be done. So these streetscape improvements would be like finishing off the pavers and the sidewalks, the street lights and those types of things. I think the Riverwalk Commission chose to, at Kim's request, adopt a resolution recommending that this be going forward and asking for your support and advocacy so we can at least finish something that I think is more easily produced and accomplished. The Riverwalk Commission thought that this

Board would be the most logical Board to take this to and give it your consideration and hopefully assistance in trying to accomplish our overall goals together.

Kim Granholm said thank you for your time. We definitely appreciate it and we will discuss this amongst us and take a look and see what our priorities would be and see to what capacity we can support it for you.

### **New Business**

a. Blue Bird Opening – Destiny Gonzalez

My name is Destiny Gonzalez. My assistant is Mariah Ruffin. We have pastries and coffee for everyone to try. Blue Bird Beat is going to be located in the Leland Tower under Karademas Management. We are just trying to try something new for our tenants, so the convenience part is more specifically for them. We just want to make sure they have like everyday items like toilet paper and laundry detergent, simple things that if they don't want to run to Walgreens or another place, they could just come down here. We also want to cater to the community with the conveniences, so if you think about aspirin or Tylenol there is not somewhere nearby where you can run to so you can just come right down the street and check out store out. For the coffee part, we are going to have a full on Espresso bar so any kind of latte or beverage flavor that you want we can easily slide in. We get everything exclusively from the Chicago Coffee Roastery, which is just an Illinois based wholesale coffee place. We will be open in 2 weeks. I will pass out flyers. For hours we would try a 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. to start.

### **Consultant Report – Bob Reuland**

Bob Reuland said we have our committees and they are doing yeomen work, but people are not showing up. I want you to reconsider your commitment to Aurora Downtown that if you have signed up for a committee that we need your participation. We are making lots and lots of decisions with money and so your thoughts and your opinions are very important to us. When you don't show up, 2 or 3 people are making a decision that is very binding on Aurora Downtown and we're not seeing people show up. Again, this is my plea to you. If you want to stay on the committee, please call your Chairman, tell him you haven't been coming and we'll get a fresh start going. We really need to be doing all of these kinds of things. We have a huge hole coming up on our Board in July. Benjie Hughes is leaving.

Benjie Hughes said my wife Amy is a Theology PhD. She was just offered a tenure track position with a place called Gordon College, which is about a half hour outside of Boston. It is very exciting. We are going to be heading out in July.

Bob Reuland said so this is a huge hole that we are going to have to fill in the Marketing Committee, so your commitment to Aurora Downtown is vital. It is not just coming to the monthly meeting, but really all the work is done in the committee setting, so we want to continue to do that.

**Committee Updates** – Budget/Bar/Holiday/Landscaping/Legislative/Marketing/Nominating/Parking/First Fridays

John Nachtrieb said for the BAR Committee we're funding our commitments on rent subsidy as awarded last year. The 3 businesses that are awardees from last year are doing really well. We hit 3 for 3, which at the end of last year I wasn't sure was going to happen. This year we are working on business retention efforts. We've got our program described on the Aurora Downtown website. The application for the program is at the Aurora Downtown website. We have 4 companies in the process at this point. The process begins with sending all them through the Small Business Development group over at Waubensee where they are assisted in developing a business plan and providing us with all of the financial documentation and the financial stability information that we need to assess whether or not they are a viable business. We are working with Seize the Future on getting program information out to everybody, every business and building owner in downtown Aurora by working with Cadence, who is also the secretary for the BAR Committee now. They have some grant programs that do not preclude an applicant's working with us and vice versa.

Melissa Mercado said for Holiday Decorations we have been in talks with Hollywood Casino and we are real close to getting a very generous gift from them, which will allow us to expand our budget somewhat and purchase some new decorations for New York Street. We've opted to go that direction versus recycling what we have and re-bulbing them because the cost actually was more to fix what we have versus new with the generous discount that Temple Display is going to give us on new decorations.

Kim Granholm said Joe is not here. I did see some pansies in the pots outside of City Hall this morning. Hopefully we will be getting our flowers soon. I did see the pots too. It looks like they staged them over off of River Street, just north of New York.

Karen Kramford said the Legislative Committee met on April 10. We are in the home stretch for the Economic Benefit Study of Aurora Downtown Arts and Entertainment District of Extended Liquor License until 4:00 a.m. We have received a final draft. The committee looked at it and sent it back for our final touchups. We should see it on May 8 and it should come before the Board either in May or June for final. Our next steps will be relooking at the Arts and Entertainment document that we put together so that will be the next step after we finish this document. We are still working on building relationships within the community. Our next meeting is May 8 at 52-54 W. Downer Place in the first floor conference room and anyone is welcome to attend.

Benjie Hughes said the Marketing Committee meets the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of every month. We are meeting again next Thursday at Back Third Audio. We have a lot of decisions to make, which we started discussing last month and are going to kind of finish this month. A lot of it is First Friday focus. We are going to have, I hope, our first update from Kimber on First Fridays. We started actually measuring who comes and how many of them are there. We are going to hear some actual data about First Fridays and then we are going to make some decisions about additional spending over the summer. We are looking at adding some musicians on the street and things like that to kind of make the walk from one venue to the next cooler during the

summer. We are still planning a discussion on new names for this organization. We're talking about a new name to focus the conversation on what we actually do.

Fred Harrison said for the Parking Committee some preliminary meetings have been held with some isolated people to address some of the issues that we have. We did make the decision that there will be no negotiation between the Parking Committee and, I believe, the Board with the city with the Waubensee issues or any other type of negotiations with organizations. The Parking Committee will represent all the downtown stakeholders and not select individuals. We will have maybe a couple more isolated meetings with select individuals and then we will have our kickoff meeting with the full bodied committee sometime in June.

Karen Kramford said the Float Committee met and have settled on new colors for the float. We have the application, sponsorship, and the materials. We will have characters, at least 3 characters so far. We will have Abraham Lincoln, Uncle Sam and the Statute of Liberty. We'll probably look perhaps expanding that a little bit. We think we have a truck and driver, which was our critical path last year. Our next meeting is going to be on April 24 at 11:00 o'clock up at Ed and Kaye's building.

Kim Granholm said the theme this year for the parade is Proud to be an American, so the characters that you picked fit perfectly with that theme.

John Galles said I'll make up 50 more t-shirts for you if you want.

### **City Department Updates**

Bill Wiet gave an update on the River Edge Redevelopment Zone and the State Historic Tax Credit Program.

Bill Wiet said the Hobbs Building dome is leaning. The city actually put barricades up to block a lane and a half of traffic and the sidewalk. There is a construction crew that actually is showing up and stabilizing that corner of the building. The dome is dry-rotted. According to the Review Guidelines, the dome cannot be removed. It has to be replaced. We will be working with the owners to look at a plan. That is a historic building so we are going to work to maintain it. The end game could be the temporary removal or relocation of the dome so we can take measurements of it so we might be able to rebuild it and put it back. If you see the dome gone, it is going to be replaced. We are also studying the Memory Sculptures on New York Street. They are actually kind of falling apart from the inside. We're going to be having some discussions with our Preservation Commission on how we want to treat them.

Further discussion followed on various projects going on in the city.

### **Announcements – Everyone**

Eva Luckinbill said the library is moving along. We have a lot of outside activity going on. They are tearing up what used to be Middle Avenue and preparing for the parking lot. Inside it is

looking like a library. It is getting exciting. It is at a point where we are planning our grand opening. Hopefully June 15<sup>th</sup> we will be open for a business as a library. The grand opening will be on June 14<sup>th</sup>.

Karen Kramford said August 23<sup>rd</sup> is the LaSalle Street Auto Show. They are partnering with a Veterans organization, the American Legion, Post 84, and they are going to have a helicopter. I'm just doing a save the date.

Kim Granholm said there is also going to be another one on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, which is the First Friday for the fireworks as well.

Birnie Harper said for Wayside Cross the exterior on the 3 walls that we can do the exterior is finished. You really can't see it from New York Street, but if you pull in to that parking lot, the great big window there has a gorgeous cross on it. It went up on Good Friday. It really is a handsome building. We are expecting to move in in June, but we will probably dedicate the building and have a grand opening until July.

Michael Cobb said I just met with Charlie this morning. Last fall he had raised a concern about our Comprehensive Resource Center, which is right on the river and that east wall. It is an eyesore. What we are planning on doing now is we had an Eagle Scout troop approach us and they have a thing that they need to do, so on that east wall we are going to have them do a part of it. They will do all the priming. There is another gentleman who is an artist who is involved. Eventually we are hoping to have a lot of this done by July 23<sup>rd</sup>. We are working on that and are excited about that. We do have our end of the year fundraiser. It is our Kentucky Derby. It is at the Marriott in Naperville on May 2<sup>nd</sup> from 3:00 to 7:00 p.m. If you are interested, please let me know.

Melissa Mercado said Paint the Town Blue will start in June. We will have more on that as we get a little bit closer to Blues week. A poetry contest will be in place. Karen Christensen will be sending out some e-mails for that. The April National Poetry month has been very successful. We've gotten feedback from that. Marissa had given us some space in some of her vacant windows and now there is some literature and some poems in some of the vacant windows around town and in some of the kiosks.

Helen Nowak said we are moving along with the Elks building. We are moving forward. Helen then gave an update on how the architect is doing and the progress of the building.

Mike Pfeiffer said May 2<sup>nd</sup> through May 10<sup>th</sup> is National Tourism Week. Unfortunately, in this country, 429,000,000 paid vacation days will not be taken by people who are entitled to them. So if you have paid vacation, take it. If you chose to do a staycation, I have some of our beautiful travel guides here and it tells you everything about Aurora and our beautiful surrounding areas.

Katie Arco said the RiverEdge Park lineup will be mostly announced at the State of the City lunch today. The Paramount has some big shows on top of the Broadway shows coming to the theater next year too.

Terry Michels said I mentioned before that we are looking at replacing the sign on the front of the marquee on New York Street and then on the valet parking garage that sign that is kind of a V shape that that will be coming down. It is our intent to still do that. We've been in conversation with the city because we want an LED component with the message board that's out there right now. Last week we decided on a design. We went with some local companies as well as one out in Vegas to offer some opportunities for us with different designs. We have selected one and our intent now is to go to the city. We do want the glitz and the glamour in terms of the flashing lights, etc. and that is incorporated into the design and then following with that we'd incorporate that same design across the street with the vertical valet parking sign that is on the front of that building as well and try to use some of the same design elements to replace that sign. That was not originally in the scope of the project, but once we got the numbers in on the original marquee sign we got some additional dollars that were budgeted. In conjunction with that, we are also remodeling, just some new color scheme carpet, wall covering, some updated look in terms of memorabilia with regard to the inside of the building and both the valet on the north and south side of the bridge. It is about a 2 month process.

Terry Michels gave further updates on the casino.

### **Adjourn**

Eva Luckinbill made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Benjie Hughes seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:25 a.m.